Common Errors Encountered by ESP Students during English-Vietnamese Interpreting Tests

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Abstract: *Interpreting is recognized as one of the most challenging subjects in ESP training at University of Foreign Language Studies, the University of Danang (UFL-UDN). This study aims to find out the most common errors that ESP students often encounter when taking the English-Vietnamese Interpreting tests. Data collection is audio recordings of students' interpreting tests. The most popular type of error found in the study is content errors, including omissions, additions, and substitution and errors. The study also reveals some of reasons why students made these kinds of errors.Research results derived from the study could be the premise for further studies the solutionsto help students overcome these errors, which is believed to enhance interpreting teaching and learning quality at the Faculty of ESP, UFL-UDN.*

Keywords: Interpreting, content errors, English-Vietnamese interpreting test, ESP students

1. Introduction

The rapid development of globalization and integration has increased the demand for international cooperationand this will result in the high requirement for language skill as well as international communication skill.On that trend, interpreting is becoming increasingly important in education sector, especially higher education. Therefore, at the Faculty of ESP, University of Foreign Language Studies, Interpreting- which focusing only in consecutive interpreting, is designed as a core subject, aiming to provide students not only language knowledge but also interpreting skill. Teaching for ESP students, including students in English for Business and English for Tourism classes, shows that students frequently make mistakes during their interpreting tests, especially in English-Vietnamese interpreting section. This must have influenced not only their academic results but also their learning quality at university. Therefore, this study aims to find out common errors, specifically the content errors, that students encounter when performing their English-Vietnamese interpreting tests, in an attempt to promote the language learning quality for ESP students at UFL.

2. Literature review

There are many language researchers studying the translation errors of students. Pratiwi (2016) in the article "Common errors and problems encountered by students English to Indonesian consecutive interpreting" found some common errors student made when translating from English into Indonesian, which were caused by nervousness, lack of language proficiency, time pressure, lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, concentration and environment.

A study on "Interpreting Errors in Translation " of Séguinot (1990) cited some basic errors such as grammatical and pragmatical errors, and described that learners made different kind of errors at different developmental stages.

In the article "Translation errors in the process of translation", Rahmatillah (2013) illustrated different types of errors including pragmatic errors, cultural errors, language errors. In addition, some solutions were also suggested to help the translators overcome these errors.

Setiawan (2014) in "English Translation Errors in Abstracts of Educational Administration Students of Post Graduate School of State University of Medan" investigated some types of translation errors in abstracts, classified into two groups including grammatical errors and content errors. He added that the former was caused by the confusion in the use of English grammar systems while the later was caused by the lack of vocabulary mastery.

In Vietnam context, the study of Dang (2010) entitled "A Study of Mistakes and Errors in Consecutive Interpretation from Vietnamese to English "pointed out two main types of errors namely mistakes in pronunciation and grammar and lexical errors. He also suggested some solutions for both teachers and students.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1 Consecutive interpreting

Pochhacker (2004) described interpreting as an immediate form of translational activity, in order to help people who want to involve in communication but have language and cultural barriers. Russel (2005) defined consecutive interpreting as the process of interpreting after the speaker has completed one or more ideas in the source language (SL) and pauses while the interpreter transmits that information to the target language (TL).

3.2 Translation errors and classification

According to Aveling (2002), translation errors occur when translator does not achieve the equivalence, adequacy and accuracy. Many scholars provided a variety of ways to classify translation errors. Newmark (1995) classified translation errors into two principle categories that are referential errors and linguistic errors. Keshavarz (1993) suggested that translation errors should be divided into three

main types including grammatical errors; semantic errors and pronunciation errors; and pragmatic errors.

Barik (1971) categorized in more details and focused on the "content errors", which are classified into three main types (p201):

a) Omissions: this error only refers to "clear omissions", not omissions resulting from substitution. It is determined basing on the final content of TL message, including four main types:

- Skipping omission: skipping an unimportant word/ phrase without changing the grammar structure or meaning of the sentence;
- Comprehension omission: omission results in a define loss in the meaning of SL.
- Delay omission: only occurs in simultaneous interpreting when the interpreter bypass some information to catch up with the speaker;
- Compounding omission": omitting or and recombining elements which causing some slight changes in the meaning of the SL though the gist may be preserved.

b) Additions: This error occurs when the interpreter adds new elements to the translation, distorting the meaning of the SL. It is also divided into four groups of errors, consisting of qualifier addition; elaboration addition; relationship addition; and closure addition.

c) Substitution and errors: this error occurs when a new element, either a word or a whole clause, is substituted by the interpreter. This new component may or may not significantly affect the meaning of SL. According to Barik, the substitution and errors could be a combination of the omissions and additions, but is seen as an independent category. He also divided this kind of errors into five types: mild semantic error; gross semantic error; mild phrasing change, substantial phrasing change and gross phrasing change.

Building on the above studies, the researcher has come up with a list of content errors, in which the classification system of Barik (1971 is regarded as the foundation for the error analysis.

4. Methodology and data collection

The study aims to find out common errors that ESP students of UFL-UDN often encounter while doing the English-Vietnamese interpreting test. In this test, students will listen to a one-minute recorded audio in English, and then they are asked to translate it into Vietnamese.

Data collection is 50 audio recordings of students' interpreting tests which were randomly selected. Descriptive qualitative method is used to analyze and classify errors, while quantitative methods are used to statistically report the frequency of common error types as well as the reasons why students often made these errors.

5. Findings and Discussion

The study focuses on analyzing content errors, which is the most common errors encountered by ESP students. The foundation of this study mainly based on the classification system of Barik (1971), with three main types of errors including: omissions additions, and substitution and errors. Among these three types, omissions and substitution and errors are the two most popular groups, accounting for 44% and 47% respectively, while additions only took 9%.
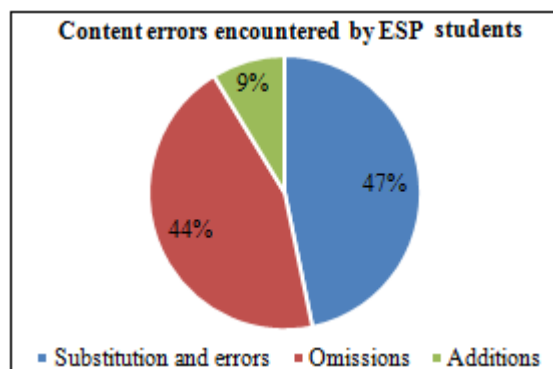

Figure 1: Content errors encountered by ESP students

5.1. Omissions

This error is related to elements in the SL that have been removed by the translator. In some cases, the omissions do not affect the quality of the translation usually because the words omitted are not keywords, such as proper names, or sometimes students combine words, clauses together. It may lead to a change in the meaning of the TL, but basically still convey some of the main ideas.

For example:
SL: "**Research** says people live near the sea are happier than those who live inland"
  - TL: "Nhữngngườisống ở biểnhạnhphúchơnngườisống ở vùngđồngbằng"
(People living near the sea are happier than those who live inland)
SL: "California's **governor** also cut water use in cities by 25%"
TL: "Ở California họđãgiảmviệcsửdụngnước ở thànhphốxuống 25%"
("In California, they reduced their water use in the city by 25 %")
However, in some cases, omissions are considered to be more serious, when students omit key words because they did not catch up what had been said nor could not interpret it into TL. This leads to the disruptions or misinterpretation.

For example:
1. SL: "It looked at the CO2 emissions from transport, events, hotels, restaurants and shopping"
TL: "Nhiệmvụchínhhiệntạilàcắtgiảmlượngkhíthoát ra do giaothông"
(The main task now is to reduce the amount of gas released by transports)
2. SL: "Climate scientists in Australia say tourism causes over 8% of greenhouse gasses"
TL: "Ở Úc, lượngkhí gas chiếm 8%"
("In Australia, the amount of gas accounts for 8%")
3. SL: "According to a study by BMI Research, the number of coffee chains in Vietnam has risen sharply over recent years"
TL: "Theo bàinghiêncứucủaviện BMI, sốlượngcủaViệt Nam

đãthayđổi"
(According to a study of BMI, the number of Vietnam has changed)
More seriously, the omissions in some situations lead to the incompletion in TL, which is one of the main reasons why students get low scores on the interpreting test.

For example:
1. SL: "Those who live within one kilometer of the coast were 22% less likely to have mental health problems"
TL: "Cứcáchkhoảng1 km sẽcónhữngngườicóvấnđềvề …uhm…"
("Every 1 km there will be people with problems ... uhm ...")
2. SL: "Eating nuts instead of unhealthy snacks could reduce weight gain by 0.4 to 0.7kg over four years"
TL: "Đốivớinhữngloạihạt so vớiloạibữaănnhẹchỉtừ 0.4-0.7kg trongvòng 4 năm" ("For nuts, compared with snacks, took only from 0.4-0.7kg within 4 years")
3. SL: "Industry will then produce more, at higher prices, to satisfy demand"
TL: "Trongthịtrườngđósẽsảnxuất ra nhiềuhơn"
(That market will produce more)

5.2. Additions

This error occurs when students add new elements to their translation. Sometimes students added words that had not been said in the SL to elaborate the translation, or to avoid repetition, or just to close the speech. This addition usually doesn't change the meaning of the SL.
For example:
1. SL: "Researchers say people who sit down a lot must exercise for one hour a day"
TL: "Cácnhà khoa họcnóirằngnhữngngườithườngngồitrênghếcảngàyphảitậpthể dụcítnhấtmộtgiờ"
(Scientists say that people who often sit **on chairs all day** must exercise for at least one hour)
2. SL: "The number of jobless people worldwide is very high"
TL: "Tỉlệnhữngngườingườitrẻthấtnhiệpdạogầnđâykhálàcao"
(The rate of **young people** unemployed **recently** is quite high)
However, there are some more serious additions, when students misunderstood of what was said in the SL.
For example:
1. SL: "Sitting for 8 hours will increase the risk of dying early by 60%"
TL: "Nếuchúng ta ngồiquá 8 tiếng 1 ngàyvàchỉngồichơithìnguycơbịbệnhlà 60%"
(If we sit for more than 8 hours a day and **just sitting and relaxing**, the risk of getting sick is 60%)
2. SL: "They did not want to be the only ones to have to use less water"
TL: "Vìhọvẫnchưachuẩnbịtốtđểcóthểsửdụngítnướchơntrongviệcs inhhoạthàngngày"
(Because they are not **well prepared** to use less water in their **daily activities**)

5.3. Substitution and errors

Substitution and errors occur when a new element might be a word, a phrase, or a whole clause is substituted by the translator, and this new element can affect the content of the translation. Students made this kind of error usually because they get confused with the meaning of the message in SL, or they misunderstood due to some homophones.

In some cases, the substitution just causes small changes in the TL and the main ideas in the SL still be maintained.
For example:
1. SL: "Research from Harvard University says nuts could be a useful **slimming aid**"
TL: "Mộtnghiêncứutừtrườngđạihọc Harvard chorằnghạtrấthữudụngchosứckhỏe"(A study from Harvard University that nuts are very useful **for health**)
2. SL: "**Farmers**will now help"
TL: "Đầutiênđóchínhlàviệctrồngtrọtvàchănnuôi"
(Firstly, it is **cultivation and breeding**)
3. SL: "UNDP also works in close partnership with other UN **agencies**in Vietnam to bring poverty-stricken people a better life"
TL: "ChươngtrìnhpháttriểnLiênHợpQuốccũngđốitácvớicácquốcg iakhácnhằmgiúpnhữngngườinghèođóicócuộcsốngtốthơn"
(The United Nations Development Program also works with other **countrie**s to help the poor have a better life)
However, some substitution leads to a significant change which mayseriously affected students' test results. Students made this error often due to lack of content knowledge of the topic in SL.
For example:
1. SL: "Poorer people living within **sight of the coast** were 40% less likely to have problems"
TL: "40% ngườisống ở Nam Phi cónhiềuvấnđềvềsứckhỏe"
(40% of people living in **South Africa** have many health problems)
2. SL: "The researchers looked at data on the happiness, lifestyle and income of 26,000 people"
TL: "Nghiêncứuchothấysựvuivẻbắtđầutừnhữngnguồnthunhậpcủa họ"
("Research shows that happiness resulted from their income")
3. SL: "Local **chain** The Coffee House now has over 100 stores, receiving over 20 million visitors annually"
TL: "Ở địaphươngđãthayđổiđộngọt café ở 100 cửahànglênđến 200 triệuđônghàngnăm"
(The local has **changed** the sweetness of coffee in 100 stores to 200 million VND annually)
4. SL: "The process of growing old follows a biological timetable which is controlled by genetic information in our bodies"
TL: "Nhữngnguyênnhânkhácđólàsựthayđổicủacơthểlàmchochún g ta giàđihoặcmấtkiểmsoátvìnhữngthayđổicủacơthể"
(Other causes are changes in the body leading the aging or be out of control because of body changes)
Regarding to the substitution and errors, students also made mistakes when translating numbers and figures. This error is often resulted from poor listening skill or note-taking skill, leading to the inaccuracy in the translation.
For example:
1. SL: "… 22% less likely to have mental health problems"
TL: "… cóíthơn 52% tỉlệmắcbệnhtâmlý"

(... less than 52% have mental problems)

2. SL: "Over 18 months, researchers looked at tourism in 189 countries"

TL: "Trong 80 thángtiếptheo, con sốnàysẽtănglêntrong 82 nước"

(In the next 80 months, this number will increase in 82 countries"

3. SL: "… receiving over 20 million visitors annually"

TL: "…hàngngàyđạtđến 20.000 lượtkháchmỗingày"

(…reaching 20,000 visitors per day)

5.4 Causes of errors in interpreting test

In order to find out the reasons why students often make mistakes in interpreting test,a survey on students' opinions has been carried out. Up to 80% of students participated in the survey said that the main problem they causing the errors in interpreting test is memory skill, in other words, they fail to memorize all the ideas in the SL. Poor listening skill and lack of vocabulary are also other reasons affecting the quality of the test results, accounting for 76.7% and 75.6% respectively. In addition, 73.3% of students surveyed said that poor note-taking skill also prevented them from good performance in the test. The others factors like lack of content knowledge and re-expression skill took nearly 50% each, while lack of confidence makes up 52.3%. Very few students think that carelessness is the cause of poor test result (12.8%). One of the remarkable point is that 68.4% of students participating in the survey believed that poor sound quality of the recorded audio is one of the factor affecting their performance in interpreting test.
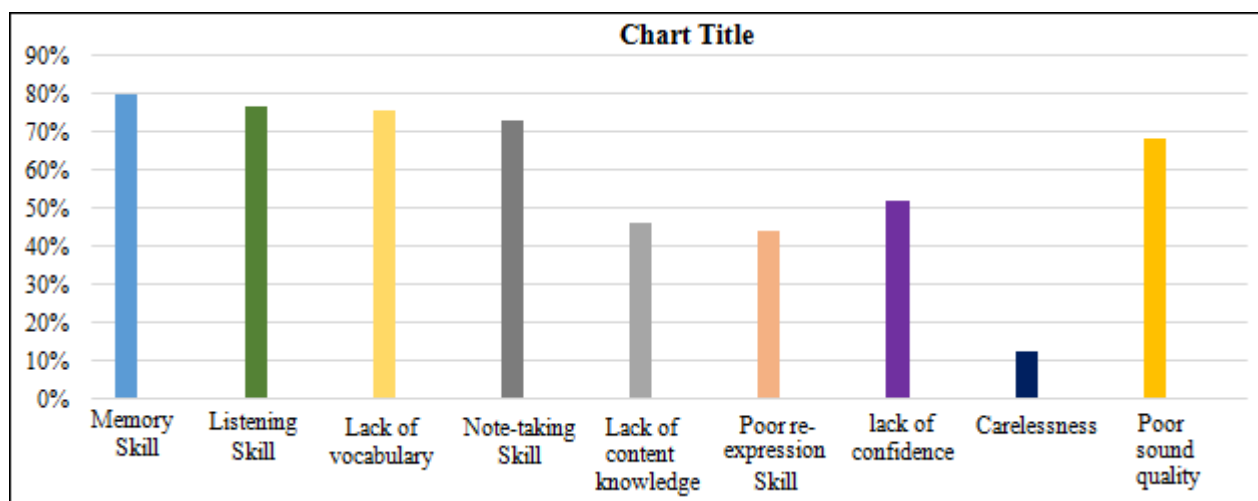
From the analysis of errors and the causes of making these errors, it can be concluded that the first important factor leading to errors is students' target language competence. Being not equipped with sufficient language skills, especially listening comprehension skillprevents students from understanding the content of the SL, so they could not accurately convey information from SL to TL. In addition, lack of interpretingskills such as note-taking skill, memory skill, re-expression skill is another cause of students making errors. Besides, students' lack of content knowledgecould also result in students not being able to do well on the interpreting test.Last but not least, in some cases, the quality of the recorded audio is not as good enough, which may have significant effects on the students' test result.

6. Conclusion

The study focuses on analyzing the errors that students often encounter during their Interpreting test. Through the research, nearly 90% of students made mistake in their interpreting test, including three main types of content errors: omissions, additions, substitution and errors. The findings suggest that these errors are resulted from a variety ofcauses, but mainly due to the students' lack of proficiency in language skills and interpreting skills.The study is also the prerequisite to investigate into the solutions to help students overcome these errors in interpreting test , thereby promoting the teaching and learning practice at the Falcuty of ESP, UFL-UDN.

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