Error Analysis in Consecutive Interpreting by Interpreting Students

[Analisis Kesalahan Penjurubahasaan Konsekutif oleh Mahasiswa Penjurubahasaan]

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Abstract

This study analyzed the errors demonstrated by students in a consecutive interpreting course at Master's Program in Linguistics at Universitas Brawijaya, explaining common issues and suggesting ways to promote better training. We adopted a qualitative approach that involved an analysis of 28 utterances from recorded videos of interpreting practice. The results indicated that 18 errors occurred in four main categories: inadequate language proficiency, distortion, omission, and non-conservation of paralinguistic elements. No literal translation errors were observed, indicating that the training was probably biased toward positive learning of the translation of context. However, the frequent errors made by the student interpreter showed that training is needed to overcome these issues. The recommendations include focusing on vocabulary development, practices that develop real-time usage and speech fluency, and cognitive load and/or anxiety training. These findings can be useful for future research in consecutive interpreting error analysis and in designing comprehensive training frameworks toward professionalism among novice interpreters.

Keywords: error analysis, consecutive interpreting, inadequate language proficiency, distortion, omission, non-conservation of paralinguistic elements

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis kesalahan mahasiswa dalam mata kuliah penjurubahasaan konsekutif di Magister Linguistik Universitas Brawijaya, Malang serta menjelaskan masalah umum dan menyarankan cara memberikan pelatihan yang lebih baik. Peneliti menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menganalisis 28 tuturan dari rekaman video praktik penjurubahasaan di kelas tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 18 kesalahan dalam empat kategori utama: kemahiran berbahasa yang kurang memadai, distorsi, penghilangan, dan kegagalan mempertahankan unsur paralinguistik. Selain itu, tidak ditemukan adanya kesalahan penjurubahasaan secara harfiah, yang menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan tersebut mungkin bias terhadap pembelajaran positif tentang penerjemahan konteks. Namun, temuan kesalahan yang ditunjukkan oleh mahasiswa penjurubahasaan menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan diperlukan untuk mengatasi masalah ini. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan beberapa hal, termasuk pengembangan kosa kata, latihan yang mengembangkan penggunaan kosa kata dan kelancaran berbicara dalam waktu nyata, serta pelatihan beban kognitif dan/atau kecemasan. Temuan ini dapat berguna untuk penelitian selanjutnya terkait analisis kesalahan penjurubahasaan konsekutif dan dalam merancang kerangka kerja pelatihan yang komprehensif untuk mewujudkan profesionalisme bagi para juru bahasa pemula.

Kata kunci: analisis kesalahan, penjurubahasaan konsekutif, kemampuan berbahasa yang kurang memadai, distorsi, penghilangan, kegagalan mempertahankan unsur paralinguistik

INTRODUCTION

Consecutive interpreting is a sophisticated cognitive process involving the interpreter who listens to the original message, takes notes, and then renders the message in the TL after the speaker has stopped speaking (Bao, 1997: Russel, 2005). In other words, interpreters consecutive use predictive processing where TL representations are activated during SL comprehension to deliver the interpreted message on time (Zhao et al., 2022). This parallel processing is crucial for handling the cognitive load presented by interpreting tasks because interpreters, from the beginning, should anticipate the content of the utterance to prepare their response. In supporting this process, note-taking plays a crucial part in consecutive interpreting because an effective note-taking form can lead to quality and successful interpreting (Wang and Wu, 2022).

Master's Program in Linguistics at Universitas Brawijaya has a Dialog and Interpreting subject and the students are frequently asked to practice in their class. As novice interpreters, training in the class is needed because it is crucial to sharpen their skills in consecutive interpreting. Training, like working memory training, is needed to update students' abilities in addition to language training and non-intentional bilingualism (Dong et al., 2018). This means that cognitive functions that are necessary for interpreting can be trained, which would potentially lead to better-performing results. Moreover, training in consecutive interpreting is also needed to promote interpretation competencies in students, especially in building novice interpreters' skills (Wasy, 2023). However, many issues can impair the performance of interpreters, beginning such as major omissions, distortions, and insufficient language proficiency (Tahir, 2023). Furthermore, novice interpreters may lack the experience to self-monitor and identify their performance errors which potentially result in unnoticed errors during the act of interpretation. Therefore, error analysis in this case is needed to find out what errors are made by the students and how these errors are produced.

Previous studies on error analysis in consecutive interpreting have been conducted. Malau, Lubis, and Mono (2021) studied the types of errors in consecutive interpreting (CI) in the process of trial proceedings of Jessica Kumala Wongso on Kompas TV. Using Gonzales' theory within the framework of the descriptive qualitative method, they analyzed three court-related videos that were composed of justifications from Jessica's lawyer, toxicologist, and forensic pathologist, and found a total of 67 errors into six categories: non-conservation of paralinguistic features, poor language skills, addition, omission, distortion and register conservation. In the context of high-stakes environments such as courtrooms, the study found the complex nature behind mistakes in controlled court environments, where the requirement for linguistic precision along with the necessity for paralinguistic accuracy remains crucial. In a similar case, Zhao, Cai, and Dong (2023) studied the characteristics of speech errors in CI by focusing on the role of language proficiency, working memory, and anxiety in student interpreters working from English (L2) to Chinese (L1). The findings showed that more proficiency in the source language resulted in fewer speech errors, while greater anxiety led to more lexical and syntactic errors, with no cognitive traits affecting phonological errors. The findings emphasized the complexity of speech production in CI and reported the role of anxiety reduction and improved language ability in lessening errors and enhancing the quality of interpreting performance.

In the academic setting, error analysis has been a crucial part of finding problems for interpreting students and in the enhancement of their training. Wang (2015) studied this using Daniel Gile's cognitive processing paradigm and found that numbers, nouns, and logical relationships are among the frequent weaknesses of students during consecutive interpreting (CI). The findings showed ways to tailor interventions to help students overcome these challenges. On the other hand, Chang (2018) analyzed samples from competency examinations (n = 146) for the Chinese-English combination observing that lower delivery scores were allocated for slower speech rates, disfluency markers, and incomprehensible utterances, whereas grammatical and lexical errors were equally distributed across performance levels. Chang concluded that training of interpreters should focus as much on fluency and delivery as on linguistic correctness. Moreover, Tahir and Pinilih (2023) found CI errors in English to Indonesian among undergraduate students and identified eight types of errors. The most common one is non-conservation of paralinguistic features. Language proficiency, confidence, and time pressure were mentioned as obstacles, emphasizing the need for extensive training and practice. Together, these studies emphasize the need for structured error analysis and targeted training programs to improve academic interpreting skills.

Considering the previous studies above, this study filled the gap by analyzing errors made by dialog and consecutive interpreting students in the postgraduate program. Therefore, a study focusing on this type of analysis for the error of CI would be highly welcome, especially when placed within the framework such as of error analysis of CI class in the Master's Program in Linguistics at Universitas Brawijaya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error analysis in consecutive interpreting is an important line of research, especially for novice interpreters who are still at the beginning of professional development. There have been various studies that identify the types of errors made by novice interpreters, the explanations for these mistakes, and the conclusions for interpreter training. Zhao (2022) found that the frequency and types of speech disfluencies in the speech of novice interpreters were directly affected by their level of language proficiency, with more frequent errors appearing amongst student interpreters with lower levels of proficiency. In addition, L2 proficiency also becomes one of the major factors that lead to individual differences in the development of consecutive interpreting competence among novice interpreters (Liu et al., 2023). They also found that the output of novice interpreters is often attributable to the interaction between language proficiency and cognitive factors where they struggle with both the comprehension and production of information. Consequently, the cognitive load of consecutive interpreting leads to error prevalence. The frequency of speech errors does not change significantly regardless of how far along students are in their training, while the type of errors is determined by individual differences, which can hint at the concept of cognitive load and task complexity influencing linguistic performance (Bakti, 2023).

Other errors affecting the performance of novice interpreters are related to anxiety and self-monitoring of errors. In her study, Zhao (2022) found that anxiety levels could even worsen the disfluency of speech of novice interpreters and affect their overall performance. For new interpreters who usually do not yet have the confidence to balance their cognitive load with a riotous environment, this awareness about how to manage cognitive load could be extremely beneficial. In conclusion, the factors influencing errors made during consecutive interpretation for novice interpreters are both numerous and interrelated, including language concentration, cognitive load, anxiety, and contextual factors, affecting the interpreters' performance, especially for novice interpreters.

Error Types in Consecutive Interpreting

One of the most relevant things to consider in consecutive interpreting is several types of errors that can deeply compromise the quality level of interpretation and introduce an error against what the interpretants (or the clients) need to hear. Using the framework provided by Gonzalez, Vasquez, and Mikkelson (2012) and Barik (1971, as cited in Malau et al., 2021), the discussion below synthesizes the main types of errors identified in Consecutive interpreting.

- 1. Literal Translation. Interpreters perform word by word with no second thought and frequently remove the context or the idiomatic expressions of the source language. Errors like this can cause misinterpretation and loss of meaning. Literal translation was one of the most frequently identified types of errors in interpreting, demonstrating the prominence of this type of error in actual interpreting practice (Malau et al., 2021; Tahir, 2023).
- 2. Inadequate Language Proficiency. This includes two subcategories: grammatical and lexical errors. Grammatical errors can be as simple as using the wrong verb tense or subject-verb mismatch, and lexical errors may consist of using words that do not fit the context or use of imprecise words. Suboptimal language proficiency leads to common errors and persistent barriers to the accuracy and fidelity of interpretations (Malau et al., 2021). In addition, Tahir (2023) found in his study that 159 errors were related to the language skills of student interpreters.
 - Grammatical errors refer to mistakes in syntax and sentence structure specifically, which can shift the meaning of the message being sent because these errors can change the relationships between words and phrases.
 - Lexical errors refer to single-wordlevel errors in the use of vocabulary. An interpreter may use a certain word that is technically correct in strict terms but contextually wrong and it does not render in context the speaker's intent. So as interpreters, they need to have a good knowledge of vocabulary in the source language and the target language (Malau et al., 2021; Tahir, 2023).

- 3. Errors in Register Conservation. Register conservation is the interpreter's ability to keep the appropriate level of formality and style in the interpretation. In addition, the register is an important thing in the process of communication (Malau et al., 2021). Mistakes in this area may lead to an incoherence of the speaker's tone and the interpreter's delivery. Tahir (2023) found that register errors dominate students' work, reflecting their inability to relate to the social context of interpretation.
- 4. Distortion. This happens when the interpreter does not convey the original message correctly, either purposely or unintentionally, and shifts too much from the source. This is because the interpreters have personal biases and misinterpretations of the person speaking. Along with this, Malau et al (2021) and Tahir (2023) emphasize that distorting is the most important kind of error that would mislead the audience.
- 5. Omission. This refers to the simple neglect to convey certain parts of the message during interpretation, which can cause incomplete or misleading information. This occurs when the interpreter cannot interpret everything fast enough or she misunderstands what needs to be interpreted. A study by Malau et al. (Tahir, 2023) has reported cases of omission and its negative impact on interpretive quality. There are sub-classifications of this error (Barik, 1971, as cited in Malau et al., 2021) as can bee seen below.
 - Skipping omission. The interpreter deletes a word or short phrase which cannot change the structure.
 - Comprehension omission. The interpreter is unable to understand a few parts of the text which consequently causes a loss in meaning.
 - Compounding omission. The interpreter composites two sentences by deleting some phrases.
- Added information. This means an interpreter provides information that does not exist in the original message which leads to consequences of the distortion of

speaker's intent and mislead the audience. Tahir (2023) found that this type of error is also the most common mistake made by student interpreters (Tahir, 2023). Moreover, this addition is allowed as long as there is no new information introduced. There are sub-classifications of this error (Barik, 1971, as cited in Malau et al., 2021):

- Qualifier addition. When an interpreter adds adjectives or adverbs which don't exist in the source language.
- Elaboration addition. When an interpreter devotes some unconnected information which consequently can alter the meaning a little bit.
- Relationship addition. When an interpreter adds some outside conjunctions in the source language.
- Closure addition. When an interpreter can rephrase, omit, and misinterpret a few parts in the target language and give closure as well to the unit of the sentence, without adding anything substantial to it.
- 7. Protocol, Procedure, and Ethics. Error in these areas can damage the integrity of the interpreting process. Such violations could be breaches of confidentiality or not following established interpreting protocols. Mistakes of such nature can lead to severe consequences, especially in legal or medical environments. Malau et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of ethical considerations in interpreting, while Tahir (2023) stressed the importance for interpreters to be conscious of their ethical obligations.
- 8. Non-conservation of Paralinguistic Elements, Hedges, and Fillers. The lack of paralinguistic elements, such as tone, pauses, and fillers, are not conserved in interpretation, which can truly influence the delivery and reception of the interpreted message. These elements often serve an important purpose and can hold emotional weight and excluding them can result in a loss of nuance. Errors in

these areas are usually faced by students during practice, and they usually struggle to deal with these (Malau et al., 2021; Tahir, 2023). There are sub-classifications of this error (Malau et al., 2021):

- Filler. When the interpreter makes sounds "emm, eee, hmm". This happens because the interpreter pauses, and the impact will make some sentences incomplete.
- Incomplete sentence. When an interpreter feels under pressure during interpreting because of not fulfilling ideas and lacking vocabulary that makes it difficult for them to express the ideas.
- Repeated words or phrases. It is repetition in interpreting activities that can affect speech fluency. The impact will confuse the speech sounds and distract the product of interpretation.

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research approach to identify, and analyze the errors of student interpreters in Dialog and Consecutive Interpreting class at the Master's Program in Linguistics, Universitas Brawijaya. During the class, the interpretation practices were recorded and uploaded to YouTube. There are 4 videos uploaded, and this study chose one of the four videos for analysis.

The selected video was downloaded from this link (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7zsXCF kciM). After that, the video is transcribed by the researcher himself based on what is displayed on the video without any omission or addition. The transcription then was analyzed to identify and analyze the errors based on error categories proposed by Gonzalez, Vasquez, and Mikkelson (2012): translation, inadequate literal language proficiency, grammatical errors, lexical errors, errors in register conservation, distortion, omission, added information, protocol, procedure, and ethics, as well as nonconservation of paralinguistic elements, hedges, and fillers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A study of errors made during consecutive interpreting showed some factors that affected the quality of interpretation. Based on 28 data of utterances being analyzed, the researcher found 18 errors in the video of consecutive interpreting practice. One (1) lexical error arose due to a lack of publicly useful vocabulary knowledge. Three (3) distortion errors illustrated how deficient speaking skills and interpreting skills can change the message and the flow of the interpreting activity. Three (3) omission errors arose due to comprehension omissions which indicate that the interpreter is unable to catch certain information produced by the speaker. Among other errors, non-conservation of paralinguistic errors is the most common one, in which filler is the most common one with ten (10) errors and repeat with one (1) error. The details of them can be looked at on the table below.

Table 1. Main types of error and their subcategories

No.	Main Types of Error	Subtypes of errors	Quantity
1	Inadequate Language Proficiency	Lexical error	1
2	Distortion	-	3
3	Omission	Compre- hension omission	3
4	Non-conservation of Paralinguistic Elements, Hedges, and Fillers	Filler	10
		Repeat	1

Gonzalez, Vasquez, and Mikkelson (2012) said that there are 8 common errors in consecutive interpreting. Among these 8, only 4 main errors are found, based on the data tabulation in the table above. There is an interesting finding that no literal translation was found in the dataset. When compared to other studies on consecutive interpreting, literal translation error is one of the common problems found in interpreting (Tahir, 2023; Hu 2021). The absence of this type of error in the dataset suggests that the student interpreter already has some knowledge or has been trained to have escaped this type of error, which indicates a greater focus on contextual understanding during their training which might have reduced this bias (Liu et al., 2023). Even so, there is a need to access the other issues to find out why there are still various issues found during the interpreting activities.

Inadequate Language Proficiency

This type of error includes two subcategories: grammatical and lexical errors. However, in the dataset, only a lexical error was found which is only related to one utterance below:

- SL: My two older kids have come back from school with runny noses. Maybe there's something going around at the school. My husband is the one who has been really sick. He went to the doctor yesterday, and the doctor told him that he has strep throat.
- TL: Eee... Dua anaknya itu pulang dalam keadaan sakit, kayaknya <u>umbelen,</u> <u>mbeler</u>, kemudian suamiku juga sakit kata dokternya dia mengalami eee (apa itu) sakit tenggorokan.

The highlighted words in the TL showed that there is a lexical issue with the choice of words produced by the interpreter. The word *umbelen* or *mbeler* is taken from the Javanese language. Since interpreting is conducted in real-time, the word choice might be influenced by the interpreter's background which is Javanese, affected by the student interpreter's working memory (Zhao et al., 2023) so that those words are the only choices he can produce at that time very fast. In this case, interpreters need to have a good knowledge of vocabulary in the target language (Malau et al., 2021; Tahir, 2023) to overcome this issue.

Distortion

This error happens when the interpreter does not convey the original message correctly, either purposely or unintentionally, and affects the flow of the language production. This error can be looked at below:

- SL: Apakah maksudnya dia tidur sepanjang waktu, atau dia lemas?
- TL: Ee... what do you mean by laying always lying down? Is he... (<u>apa itu)</u> Is your child.... <u>(lemah itu apa sih?)</u> in a weak condition.

The highlighted parts in the TL showed that the student interpreter has deficient speaking skills or even interpreting skills. This type of error cannot be assessed as a lack of language proficiency because, in the end, the student interpreter can deliver the message successfully even though it takes a little more time. This might be due to the student interpreter's anxiety (Zhao et al., 2023) because he looks like he lacks confidence in delivering the message.

Omission

Among the omission categories discussed earlier, the dataset only showed comprehension omission issues with a total of 3 errors. These can be looked at below:

- SL: My child has been acting funny. I don't know what's wrong with him, doctor...He's cranky, he doesn't eat anything, **what he eats** he throws up... He just wants to lie down all the time...
- TL: Dokter, anakku agak agak aneh. Jadi susah diatur, kemudian susah makan, <u>dia</u> <u>memuntahkan lagi</u>, jadi pengennya hanya... hanya berbaring.

The highlighted parts in the TL showed the omission of "what he eats" that should be delivered as "saat dia makan, dia memuntahkannya lagi". This omission occurs when the student interpreter cannot interpret everything fast enough or he misunderstands what needs to be interpreted. Moreover, this omission caused incomplete information, even though it did not mislead the receiver because the word *"muntah"* showed that something was being eaten, so there was no fatal effect from this error.

Non-conservation of Paralinguistic Elements, Hedges, and Fillers

Among three non-conservation of paralinguistic error categories: two of them are found in the dataset: filler with 10 occurrences and repetition with 1 occurrence. The student interpreter frequently used fillers when delivering this message like in the table below.

Source Language	Target Language			
Ada demamnya?	Is there any eeee fever?			
Yes, he's hot all the time.	Dia selalu ini, panas.			
Apakah ada yang sakit di rumah?	Is there any adult ee. that is sick in your home?			
Yes, but I don't know the name. Could it be an antibiotic?	lya tapi aku gatau resepnya apa, eeeee mungkin antibiotik.			

Table 2. The occurrence of fillers in the dataset

The lack of paralinguistic elements, such as tone, pauses, and fillers, are not conserved in interpretation which can truly influence the delivery and reception of the interpreted message. These issues are usually related to working memory because the student interpreter should interpret everything fast enough. Errors in these areas are usually faced by students during practice, and they usually struggle to deal with these (Malau et al., 2021; Tahir, 2023).

Based on the analysis above, the researcher highlighted the important challenges faced by student interpreters, focusing on the reliance of the student interpreter on language mastery, interpreting competency, and mental resources. Inadequate language proficiency should have been avoided as this was caused by the working memory of the interpreter. Moreover, a lack of mastering the vocabulary of the target language can lead to inaccurate translation (Tahir, 2023). To manage this matter, it is necessary to set vocabulary development focusing on the necessary words used in a real-life interpreting situation as a top priority in training programs.

In other cases, even though the student interpreter went on to communicate the intended meaning, fragmented delivery and hesitation are still found due to anxiety and lack of confidence. These types of errors indicate the need for focused practice in realtime language production, building fluency and minimizing anxiety in the context of interpretation. In addition, comprehension showed difficulties omission errors in processing and retaining every detail of the source language within a limited timeframe. Even though it did not lead to severe misrepresentation, this error showed that the gaps in understanding and memory can undermine the integrity of the interpretation (Malau et al., 2021).

The high non-conservation of paralinguistic errors, especially fillers with 10 occurrences, indicated the difficulty in maintaining the fluency and paralinguistic aspect. These issues can prevent the speaker's message from ever being heard by the receiver. To overcome this error, there should be targeted exercises to enhance cognitive load management and paralinguistic increase the quality of awareness to interpretations (Zhao et al., 2022; Amos et al., 2023). Based on these, the findings showed the complexity of linguistic, cognitive, and emotional factors that interact in consecutive interpreting, so extensive training that will equip interpreters to deal with these challenges is crucial and needs to he conducted.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the multiple-level difficulties faced by novice interpreters in their actual consecutive interpreting practice about four major error types: inadequate language competence, distortion, omission, and non-conservation of paralinguistic elements. The results showed that the errors were caused by limitations in working memory, limited mastery of vocabulary, and anxiety. These issues require the introduction of exercises to increase cognitive load management and paralinguistic awareness.

The study is an essential contribution to our understanding of consecutive interpreting, highlighting the intricate relationship between communicative, cognitive, and emotional constructs. It emphasizes the importance of proper, systematic, and thorough training that should aim not only for vocabulary mastery but also for anxiety management and cognitive skills improvement to provide more qualitative and accurate interpretations. The findings provide useful information for improving interpreter education and preparing students for future career challenges in the interpreting field.

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