

M. Rasoul Tayebi (DE): Omission in SI- Interpreters' insights

Introduction

Simultaneous interpreting (SI) is a cognitive and linguistic task, frequently subject to the challenge of omission. Omissions occur when interpreters leave out parts of the original message, either intentionally or due to external pressures (Barik, 1971; Gile, 1999). This study explores the phenomenon of omission in SI through a survey of professional interpreters, aiming to shed light on the most common causes and the linguistic units frequently omitted. The present study is based on the premise that omissions are a common phenomenon in SI, influenced by factors like time pressure and cognitive load (Chernov, 2004; Seeber, 2011).

Methodology

The study is based on a survey of 42 professional interpreters with varying levels of experience and language pairs. The questionnaire gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, asking interpreters to reflect on specific instances of omission in their work. Participants were asked about the types of linguistic units they typically leave out during SI (Braun, 2013; Gernsbacher & Shlesinger, 1997). They were also asked to provide insights into the reasons behind these omissions, including time pressure, terminology, and environmental noise (Roziner & Shlesinger, 2010).

Results

The survey revealed that non-literal language forms are the most commonly omitted linguistic units. These elements present significant challenges due to their nuanced meanings and the difficulty in finding equivalent expressions under time pressure. Proper names were also frequently omitted, especially when interpreters encountered unfamiliar or complex terminology. Furthermore, rapid speech delivery was identified as a critical factor leading to omission. When speakers deliver their messages too quickly, interpreters are often forced to leave out parts of the original message to keep up with the pace.

Discussion

Omissions are not only a result of linguistic complexity but are also influenced by cognitive and situational factors (Shlesinger, 2008). Many interpreters reported experiencing memory lapses or difficulties recalling equivalents in the target language, often worsened by the mental strain of multitasking and managing large amounts of information in real-time (Seeber, 2011; Chernov, 2004). External distractions, such as overlapping speakers, and environmental noise, further increase the cognitive load, making omissions more likely (Moser-Mercer, 2000; Roziner & Shlesinger, 2010). These findings support existing theories of cognitive effort in interpreting, which suggest that SI is highly susceptible to external and internal disruptions.

Conclusion

The study delves into the causes of omission in SI, illustrating that both linguistic challenges and external factors significantly impact interpreters' ability to deliver accurate, complete rendition. Idioms, metaphors, and rapid speech delivery are among the primary contributors to omissions. Additionally, cognitive load and environmental factors enhance the difficulty of maintaining a seamless performance. The findings highlight the need for interpreter training programs to address these challenges, focusing on strategies for managing cognitive load and handling complex linguistic elements.

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