DPSI – Frequently Asked Questions

Fatal errors

A fatal error is an error which is so serious that it alone will result in a different outcome from the one intended in the role play or the source text. A fatal error may lead to an automatic fail.

However, the seriousness of an error has to always be considered in the context of the actual task and therefore to state categorically and unequivocally what is or is not a fatal error is not possible.

Examples of serious errors which could be potential fatal errors

- Distorting the meaning of the source text by omission/s, addition/s or by leaving out keywords or crucial information which would or could lead to an outcome other than the one intended in the task, eg leaving out some of the symptoms described by a patient can potentially lead to a misdiagnosis; leaving out a crucial piece of information on how to proceed in a legal case could lead to a miscarriage of justice

- Failing to switch competently between the source and target languages

- Interpreting or translating part/s of the source text word for word without producing coherent sentences

- Interpreting using the third person format

- Interpreting the whispered interpreting section as consecutive interpreting or vice versa

- Asking for excessive repetition

- Using excessive paraphrasing

- Knowing very little of the specialist vocabulary in the chosen option

- Not being audible to clients (in the examination to interlocutors and the examiner)

- Delivering or completing the tasks excessively slowly

- Using English words excessively in the other language parts of the test or vice versa, where good equivalents in the other language exist or the term can be paraphrased

- It is not acceptable to provide several alternative translations for a term in the source language. In cases where candidates provide two or more alternative translations, thereby forcing the recipient to choose between them, they will be penalised as this is not acceptable translation or interpreting practice. Where, as a result of this, the recipient

cannot take appropriate action due to the confusion caused, it will be considered a fatal error and cause for a 'Fail' result. Please refer to the DPSI Handbook for Candidates on pages 9: 'All Tasks – Alternative Translations and Interpretations' and 16: 'Assessment Criteria for Task 3: Written Translation', 1st para., www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/DPSIHandbook.pdf.

Examples of fatal errors

- Failing to complete the task (eg an omission of 5% of the text will lead to an automatic fail result)
- Making basic grammatical mistakes which could lead to a misunderstanding or a serious distortion of the meaning as conveyed in the source text, eg mixing singular and plural forms, using the wrong tense of the verb, using an affirmative instead of a negative or vice versa, getting the gender wrong
- Getting numbers or figures wrong:
  - An incorrect dosage on a medical prescription could be fatal e.g. if a patient is supposed to take 'one tablet every four hours' and the interpreter or translator renders the instruction as 'four tablets every hour'
  - Times and periods of time can be crucial, eg when gathering information to advise a client whether s/he can take a case to an employment tribunal, the length of the employee's service of 'one and a half years' rendered as 'half a year' could completely alter how to proceed in the case
- Rendering key words wrongly in a way that could fundamentally change the outcome of the task.

Here are some examples from recent DPSI examinations:

- 'personal licence' rendered as 'premises licence'

- 'disabilities' rendered varyingly as 'upset'/ 'ailment'

- 'authority' rendered as 'independent'

- 'immigration service' rendered as' local services for immigrants'

- 'recycling facilities' rendered as 'new services'

- 'joint operations' rendered as 'inspections'

- 'prospective tenant' rendered as 'previous tenant'

- 'tenant' rendered as 'landlord'

- 'employee' rendered as 'employer'

- 'stroke' rendered as 'heart attack'

- 'incontinent' rendered as 'polluted'

- 'inflammation' rendered as 'information'

- 'suspended meter bays' as 'hanging meter bays'

- 'a licence' rendered as 'sabbatical leave'

- 'to sell alcohol' rendered as ' to buy alcohol'

- using a language/ a language variant other than the one opted for or using the wrong
   script for the language option

- transliterating a word in such a way that it leads to misunderstanding