

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH-INDONESIAN
INTERPRETING IN THE ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITAS
MUHAMMADIYAH MAKASSAR**

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ABSTRACT

Interpreting is an essential skill for students in English Education Programs, particularly in multilingual contexts such as Indonesia where English is learned as a foreign language. In academic and professional settings, students are required to interpret spoken English into Indonesian accurately and fluently in real time. However, many students still experience difficulties that hinder their interpreting performance. This study aims to analyze the types of difficulties faced by students in English-Indonesian interpreting and to examine how these difficulties affect their performance. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method involving five seventh-semester students of the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar who had taken or were taking an interpreting course. The participants were selected purposively based on their interpreting experience. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using qualitative procedures consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that students mainly experience linguistic difficulties, particularly limited vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Vocabulary problems include academic vocabulary, polysemy, and idiomatic expressions, while sentence structure difficulties involve long sentences, passive constructions, and dense noun phrases. These difficulties increase students' cognitive load and negatively affect accuracy and fluency. This study concludes that linguistic competence plays a crucial role in English-Indonesian interpreting, and interpreting instruction should emphasize vocabulary development and strategies for processing complex sentence structures.

Keywords: *interpreting difficulties, english-indonesian interpreting*

ABSTRAK

Interpreting merupakan keterampilan penting bagi mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, khususnya dalam konteks multibahasa seperti Indonesia di mana bahasa Inggris dipelajari sebagai bahasa asing. Dalam konteks akademik dan profesional, mahasiswa dituntut untuk menginterpretasikan tuturan bahasa Inggris ke dalam bahasa Indonesia secara akurat dan lancar secara langsung. Namun, masih banyak mahasiswa yang mengalami berbagai kesulitan yang menghambat performa interpreting mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis kesulitan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam English-Indonesian interpreting serta mengkaji pengaruh kesulitan tersebut terhadap performa mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan lima mahasiswa semester tujuh Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa

Inggris Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar yang telah atau sedang mengikuti mata kuliah interpreting. Partisipan dipilih secara purposive berdasarkan pengalaman mereka dalam kegiatan interpreting. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan prosedur analisis kualitatif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa terutama mengalami kesulitan linguistik, khususnya keterbatasan kosakata dan kompleksitas struktur kalimat. Permasalahan kosakata meliputi kosakata akademik, polisemi, dan ungkapan idiomatik, sedangkan kesulitan struktur kalimat mencakup kalimat panjang, konstruksi pasif, dan frasa nomina yang padat. Kesulitan-kesulitan ini meningkatkan beban kognitif mahasiswa dan berdampak negatif terhadap akurasi serta kelancaran interpreting. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kompetensi linguistik memegang peranan penting dalam keberhasilan English–Indonesian interpreting, sehingga pembelajaran interpreting perlu menekankan pengembangan kosakata dan strategi pemrosesan struktur kalimat yang kompleks.

Kata Kunci: kesulitan penerjemahan, penerjemahan inggris-indonesia

A. Introduction

In the era of globalization, effective oral communication across languages has become increasingly important. English functions as an international language and is widely used in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language, and students in English Education Programs are expected not only to master basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also to develop advanced communication skills, including interpreting. Interpreting plays a crucial role in facilitating spoken communication by transferring meaning accurately and appropriately from a source language into a target language in real time.

Interpreting is a complex cognitive activity that requires interpreters to simultaneously listen, comprehend, analyze, and reformulate messages. This process demands a high level of linguistic competence, concentration, and cognitive control. According to Gile (2021), interpreting involves a heavy cognitive load because several mental efforts—listening, memory, and production—operate at the same time. For students who learn English as a foreign language, these demands often become challenging, particularly when they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures.

Previous studies have shown that linguistic factors are among the main sources of difficulty in

interpreting activities. Students frequently struggle with limited vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and syntactically complex sentences, which can disrupt comprehension and lead to inaccurate interpretation (Dina & Sparingga, 2022; Budiarti & Saehu, 2023). When students fail to understand key lexical items or sentence patterns, they tend to hesitate, omit information, or produce literal interpretations that do not fully convey the intended meaning.

Despite the importance of interpreting skills in English Education Programs, research that specifically investigates English–Indonesian interpreting difficulties among university students in Indonesia remains limited. Many existing studies focus on written translation rather than oral interpreting. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the types of linguistic difficulties faced by students in English–Indonesian interpreting and to explore how these difficulties affect their interpreting performance. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of students' interpreting challenges and to provide pedagogical insights for improving interpreting instruction.

B. Research Method

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding of students' difficulties in English–Indonesian interpreting. The participants were five seventh-semester students from the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar who had taken or were taking an interpreting course. The participants were selected purposively based on their experience in interpreting activities.

The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview. The interview questions focused on students' experiences, perceived difficulties, and strategies when performing English–Indonesian interpreting. Each interview was conducted individually and recorded with the participants' consent.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis procedures, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and categorizing relevant information related to interpreting difficulties. The data were then presented in descriptive form, and conclusions were drawn by

identifying patterns and linking the findings with relevant theories.

C. Results and Discussion

The results of this study The results of this study reveal that students in the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar experienced notable linguistic difficulties during English–Indonesian interpreting. These difficulties mainly relate to vocabulary limitation and sentence structure complexity, which significantly influence students' interpreting performance in terms of accuracy, fluency, and message completeness.

Vocabulary limitation emerged as the most dominant difficulty faced by the students. Participants reported that they often struggled to interpret academic vocabulary, technical terms, and words with multiple meanings. When encountering unfamiliar or ambiguous vocabulary, students tended to pause, hesitate, or provide inaccurate equivalents in Indonesian. In some cases, students relied on literal translation, which resulted in distorted meaning. This finding supports Kormos (2020), who argues that limited lexical knowledge restricts

language processing capacity and slows down real-time language production. Furthermore, difficulties with idiomatic expressions were frequently mentioned. Students admitted that they were unfamiliar with many English idioms and often interpreted them word by word, leading to misunderstandings. This indicates that insufficient exposure to contextual and cultural aspects of language contributes to interpreting problems.

Sentence structure complexity was identified as another major challenge. Students found it difficult to interpret long and complex sentences, especially those containing passive constructions, embedded clauses, and dense noun phrases. Such structures made it hard for students to identify the main ideas and relationships between sentence elements. As a result, important information was sometimes omitted or incorrectly reordered in the target language. This finding is consistent with Gile's Effort Model (2021), which explains that increased structural complexity raises cognitive load and reduces the interpreter's ability to allocate attention effectively.

In addition, this study found that vocabulary limitation and sentence structure complexity are closely interconnected and often occur simultaneously. When students failed to understand key vocabulary items, they also struggled to process sentence structures, which further increased their cognitive burden. This interaction frequently led to loss of meaning, reduced fluency, and decreased confidence during interpreting. Zhu and Aryadoust (2022) emphasize that linguistic difficulties significantly contribute to cognitive overload, which can negatively affect interpreting performance, particularly among novice interpreters.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that interpreting difficulties experienced by students are not solely caused by a lack of practice but are deeply rooted in linguistic competence. Vocabulary mastery and sentence processing skills play a fundamental role in enabling students to interpret effectively. Therefore, interpreting courses should incorporate systematic vocabulary enrichment, explicit instruction on complex sentence patterns, and

guided practice in handling long spoken texts. By addressing these linguistic challenges, students may gradually improve their interpreting accuracy, fluency, and overall performance.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that students in the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar face considerable linguistic difficulties in English–Indonesian interpreting. The main difficulties include vocabulary limitation and sentence structure complexity, which often occur simultaneously and negatively affect interpreting accuracy and fluency.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that interpreting instruction emphasize vocabulary development, exposure to academic and idiomatic expressions, and training in processing complex sentence structures. Future research may investigate instructional strategies or learning models that can effectively reduce students' linguistic difficulties in interpreting.

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