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**UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN PRACTICING THE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING****Vitha Ama Matuate<sup>1</sup>, Udur Delima Sibatuara<sup>2</sup>**

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*vitha\_ama@widyadharm.ac.id***Abstract**

*Simultaneous interpreting is one of the most difficult forms of interpreting because it requires interpreters to convert one spoken language into another in real time. Despite its significance, students frequently find it difficult to acquire this ability, particularly those who are only now beginning to learn the basics of interpretation. The purpose of this study is to look into the challenges that students have when practicing simultaneous interpreting. The information was gathered from the sixth semester of Widya Dharma University Pontianak's English Language and Culture Department. 26 students were selected for this study based primarily on the outcomes of their simultaneous interpretation practice. Additionally, the data's outcome was described using the descriptive qualitative method. Questionnaires, interviews, and tests were done as research instruments to collect the data. The results showed that when it came to English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting, the students felt more comfortable than when they performed Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting. Moreover, there are certain difficulties when doing simultaneous interpreting. The students encountered eight challenges while practicing simultaneous interpreting. These include finding it difficult to keep up with the speaker's speed, lacking vocabulary, having to deal with emotions while simultaneous interpreting, not getting used to do simultaneous interpreting, losing focus in simultaneous interpreting process, lacking practice, lacking cultural knowledge in both source and target language, and having unprepared tools for simultaneous interpreting.*

**Keywords:** *Interpreting, Simultaneous Interpreting, Students' difficulties*

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**Introduction**

Interpreting, also known as interpretation, is the spoken translation process from one language to another. It has the same function as the translation to transfer the message from source language to target language that requires its acceptance and consistency in meaning (Yasin, Fata, & Husyitiara, 2018). Listening to the speaker, comprehending the message, and communicating the information in the target language are all parts of the interpreting process. It is an essential skill that is used in a variety of settings and tasks, including international conferences, court cases, legal proceedings, medical consultations, diplomatic agreements, etc.

The purpose of interpreting is to facilitate communication between speakers of different languages (Pratiwi, 2022). Having an in-depth comprehension of both the source and target languages, as well as of cultural backgrounds and other important information, is essential for interpreters. In order to accurately convey the message, interpreters must also have strong language skills, both in speaking and listening, as well as a high level of concentration and memory (Ma, 2013). There are two primary modes of interpreting: consecutive interpreting, in which the interpreter speaks after the speaker of the source language has finished, and simultaneous interpreting, in which the interpreter interprets in real-time (Djurayeva, 2023)

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Simultaneous Interpretation is one of the modes of interpreting that includes the interpretation while the speech in the source language is presented (Pochhacker & Shlesinger, 2002). It is listening to spoken words, comprehending them, and translating them into another language instantaneously (Daminov & Kizi, 2024). As compared to consecutive interpretation Simultaneous interpreting involves the interpreter quickly rendering the message in the target language in order to communicate the meaning while the speaker of the source language speaks continuously (Aminzadeh, 2023). Because of the real-time nature of the process and the need for quick responses, simultaneous interpreting can be difficult for some interpreters (Korpál & Stacowiak-Szymczak, 2020). Due to its real-time situation and need for quick responses, simultaneous interpreting can be challenging at times (Korpál & Stacowiak-Szymczak, 2020). However, it can also present complex challenges in simultaneous interpreting process.

This study focuses on simultaneous interpreting, specifically the difficulties that university students face when practicing simultaneous interpreting at a basic level. In general, most of the issues that showed up during the interpretation process had to do with non-linguistic challenges and other issues outside of language (Ghaza'ee & Ali, 2019). When it comes to interpreting, personality issues such as poor confidence, endurance, flexibility, punctuality, active listening, and memorization skills are seen as major difficulties. The interpreter's lack of active listening and memorization skills can be critical because the interpreter is listening to two speakers at the same time during the simultaneous interpreting process (Saleskovitch, 1978). In simultaneous interpreting, the most significant challenges can be found in speaking, listening, and understanding (Mukhtarova, 2022). The skill of listening in simultaneous interpreting relates to the way the interpreter listens to the speech in source language. Understanding relates more to the interpreter's comprehension of the information that was delivered by the speaker. Lastly, speaking is how the interpreter conveys the speech's meaning to the intended audience in the target language.

Interpreting culture can be quite difficult for interpreters. Because an interpreter not only interprets spoken language but also cultural meaning. This difficulty occurs because it is impossible to determine how words and phrases from the source language culture translate into the target language. For that reason, one should not underestimate the interpreter's ability to comprehend and get through cultural differences (Ghaza'ee & Ali, 2019). The unfamiliarity with the speech topic before the interpreter starts the simultaneous interpretation is another common difficulty in simultaneous interpretation. In addition, the interpreter may have issues due to the speaker's speed when delivering the speech in the source language. Every issue stated has an impact on the quality of simultaneous interpretation.

## **Methodology**

There are 26 English Language and Culture Department students who had taken an interpreting course and had experience with simultaneous interpreting served as the study's subjects. In the sixth semester, students had the option to continue their translation studies with an interpreting course. In the simultaneous practice, the students were done two kinds of simultaneous interpreting. In the first practice, they had to interpret one of English short video in Indonesian and second, they need to find Indonesian speech video and simultaneously interpreted it in English. These practices were done before the midterm test in the even semester. For the test, they have one on one real time test of simultaneous interpreting in front of the class and interpret the Indonesian speech video into English.

To assess the students' interpretating abilities, to obtain the data of research, the students were grouped into three characteristics. These three groups were created according to test results, specifically the high, average, and low scores in simultaneous interpretation practice. The category was selected in order to obtain significant data from three groups of

participants. As a result, the researcher faces a variety of difficulties from each participant due to their varied score backgrounds. The data collection was gathered through the score of the simultaneous interpreting practices and test, interview and questionnaire.

## Findings and Discussion

The simultaneous interpreting test was used in this study to evaluate the students. Every student was required to do a simultaneous interpreting of a four to five minutes English and Indonesian video. The practice of the English-Indonesian Simultaneous interpreting was done in April 2024 before the Midterm test week. The practice of Indonesian-English translation was done in May 2024. In simultaneous interpreting, the length of the practice was crucial for simultaneous interpretation because the longer the students took, the longer the simultaneous interpreting would take. The students took an average of 4.5 minutes to interpret the video. The fastest time was 3.39 minutes, while the longest was 10.53 minutes. The following is the interpreting score and the practice score they obtained:

**Table 1. Interpreting Scales**

Score	Score Description	Score Level
85-100	Excellent	High
70-84	Very good	
55-69	Good	Average
40-54	Fair	
30-49	Poor	Low
15-29	Very poor	

**Table 2. Interpreting Score**

Score	Score Description	Simultaneous Interpreting Score		Percentage	
		En-Ind	Ind-En	En-Ind	Ind-En
85-100	Excellent	3	2	12%	8%
70-84	Very good	5	4	19%	15%
55-69	Good	4	7	15%	27%
40-54	Fair	7	8	27%	31%
30-49	Poor	6	3	23%	12%
15-29	Very poor	0	2	0%	8%
Total		26	26	100%	100%

From the above table, there was only a small percentage of students were able to perform the simultaneous interpreting task well, with both performances getting into the Excellent score range. In the practice of English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting 12% of the students have excellent score range. In contrast, 8% of students were excellence at Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting. In the Very Good score range, 19% of students performed well in English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting, while only 15% of students performed well in the practice of Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting The excellent and good score range score for simultaneous interpretation was classified as high-level core of simultaneous interpreting.

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When it came to students who performed Good in the practice of simultaneous English-Indonesian interpreting, 27% of them scored fair, while only 15% of them fell into the good score range in the practice of English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting. The Fair range also demonstrated with 27% of students practicing English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting and 31% of students practicing simultaneous interpreting from Indonesian to English. The Good and Fair range of the score scale determined the average level of score for simultaneous interpreting based on the outcome.

The poor score range demonstrated that, in the practice of English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting, only 23% of the students compared to 12% of the students in the score range of Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting. The very poor score range indicated that 8% of students from Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting and 0% of students from English-Indonesian while having the practice in simultaneous interpreting. The Poor and Very Poor range of the scale was designated as the low level of score for simultaneous interpretation based on the outcome.

The results for the simultaneous interpreting practice showed that the Indonesian-English performance score and the English-Indonesian performance score were almost equal. With the exception of the Good, Poor, and Very Poor score range, most of the scales had similar ranges between the simultaneous interpreting performance in English-Indonesian and Indonesian-English. In the good score range, the students' simultaneous interpretation performance of English Indonesian was lower than that of Indonesian-English. As opposed to the Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting, the English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting had a wider score range for poor and very poor work. Put differently, the students encountered considerable challenges when it came to Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting.

After doing the simultaneous interpreting practices, the students responded to questions about their experiences with simultaneous interpreting after completing the practice in order to discuss their thoughts and determine which type of simultaneous interpreting was more challenging English-Indonesian or Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting. According to the students' responses, it seemed that simultaneous interpreting in English Indonesian was less difficult than simultaneous interpretation in English and Indonesian. There are 73% of the students (19 students) said they would prefer to interpret English-Indonesian simultaneous interpreting. However, 7 (26,7%) of the students preferred simultaneous interpretation from Indonesian to English. This indicates that a majority of the students preferred to have simultaneous interpreting in English Indonesian as opposed to Indonesian-English.

This data demonstrates the students' interest in simultaneous interpreting from English as the source language to Indonesian as the target language. Given that more students have mastered Indonesian as their native language than English, it may be implied that they felt more comfortable in doing the interpreting from English to Indonesian. A higher level of interest or proficiency in this language pair is indicated by the greater number of students score in the English to Indonesian simultaneous interpreting practice. It might be explained by the fact that English is frequently taught as a foreign language in Indonesian schools. There may be fewer students who are proficient in both Indonesian and English as the source and target languages, as evidenced by the smaller number of students who achieved good scores in Indonesian to English simultaneous interpreting practice. This leads us to the conclusion that it was more difficult to perform simultaneous interpreting from Indonesian to English than it was to perform simultaneous interpretation from English to Indonesian.

The students' feedback provided insightful information about the particular difficulties they encounter when practicing simultaneous interpreting. The majority of students, or about 73% of the total (19 students), determined that the main issue with simultaneous interpreting was the speakers' speed. Every student reported that they had

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trouble keeping up with the speaker's speed in delivering the speech. This occurred as they were practicing simultaneous interpreting in English and Indonesian video. They discovered that the speaker spoke quickly, making it challenging for them to understand some of the information for their interpreting. Furthermore, they frequently skip over or omit certain details from the speaker's speech in order to concentrate on the words or sentences that follow in the spoken speech.

One more difficulty the students encountered was a lack of vocabulary. Furthermore, in the simultaneous interpreting, 26,9% of the students (7 students) mentioned that they were having some trouble finding words and expressions which suitable for the target language in real time. The result that can be drawn from this issue is that the students had trouble understanding the source language because they either missed some words or were unfamiliar with some certain words, phrases or sentences in the target language while performing the simultaneous interpreting. Some of the words were easily forgotten by the interpreter while they were being interpreted. This demonstrated how the students' limited vocabulary in the source language made it difficult for them to comprehend the speech's context or topic and resulted in misunderstandings when interpreting.

Additional challenges raised by 38.4% of the students (10 students) had to do with how they felt during the simultaneous interpretation practice. Here, the students found it difficult to handle their stress during the practice of simultaneous interpreting. It was discovered from this issue that the students struggled to manage their stress when they were interpreting the speech. While they were practicing concurrently, very few students were in a panic or nervous and frequently asked to redo the video. They had trouble keeping themselves in check and frequently showed signs of insecurity when delivering the interpretation. According to the data collection results, the students' lack of understanding of the source language or topic of the video made them feel unprepared for the practice, such that they were afraid of making mistakes when practicing the simultaneous interpreting.

Furthermore, 23% of the total (6 students) stated that they are still not getting used to doing simultaneous interpreting. From that case, it made them hard to do the simultaneous interpreting in the real time. They found it difficult to perform simultaneous interpretation in real time as a result of it. They are also having trouble interpreting the lengthy speech because it can leave them blank or cause them to become stuck while doing the interpreting. Additionally, the students found it challenging to follow along with the fast-paced speaker of the source language. Even though it is normal to have that speaking speed in the source language, as the learner of interpreting, students found it difficult to follow the speed and interpret the spoken speech in the target language. They struggle to understand concepts or information in a short period of time. In this case, the interpreter's role as a simultaneous interpreter requires them to interpret the information directly and accurately in order for listeners or audiences to receive it. In addition, they must improve their listening skill to increase their awareness of certain words.

19.2% of total (5 students) mentioned having trouble focusing during the simultaneous interpreting process. As interpreters, students were expected to present the speaker's speech ideas during simultaneous interpreting. Nevertheless, it was discovered that the students did not pay attention well to the video during the simultaneous interpreting practice caused the interpreting process to turn out poorly. This may be the case because the speaker in the video spoke too quickly, causing the students to miss some of the speech's content. Besides that, some of the students can get easily distracted with things around them while doing the simultaneous interpreting. If this occurs during a real simultaneous interpretation process, such as during a significant event, it may be crucial. Without knowing exactly what information is being discussed, the listeners might be misinformed by the interpreters.

The other issue that 11,5% of the total (3 students) faced was a lack of practice with interpretation. They said that students could improve their ability to interpret well by practicing simultaneous interpreting on a regular basis. Listening is one of the skills they need to practice. Having lack of practice, especially in listening, could reduce the accuracy of information delivered in simultaneous interpreting process. The speaker's ideas are becoming more difficult for them to understand as they are delivered. Interpreters must simultaneously interpret the content in the target language and pay attention to the information in the source language. Problems with focus and listening skill can lead to misinterpreted information and missed details. Students can improve their performance and focus in this area with the help of active listening training, focus exercises, and strategies. Lack of practice, particularly with listening, may cause the accuracy of the information provided during the simultaneous interpretation process to be compromised.

One more difficulty that students encounter is a lack of cultural knowledge regarding both the source and target languages. Based on their experiences with simultaneous interpreting, a total of 46% in total (12 students) reported that it was difficult for them to interpret certain cultural greetings or references from Indonesian into English. This was the first time the students in the English Language and Culture department had ever done any interpreting. When they did the translation in their previous semester, they can have their time to find some information related to the culture of the source and target language. Most of the students have a tendency to borrow some unknown words from English or Indonesian into the target language while interpreting.

Finally, the last difficulty the students encountered was not having the necessary tools ready for simultaneous interpretation practice. In this practice, 4 students, 15.3% of the total had trouble using the tools to perform the simultaneous interpretation. The students experienced some headphones-related issues during the second practice. Practice suggests that this could complicate the interpreting process and cause other issues, particularly when accepting information from the source language. This problem leads us to the conclusion that good preparation prior to interpretation can influence the interpretation's outcome.

## **Conclusion**

This study indicates that simultaneous interpretation of Indonesian English is more difficult and demands more effort to communicate the message. The findings also demonstrated how difficult simultaneous interpreting in Indonesian English interpretation was for the students. Their scores, which show that only 8% of them performed the practice exceptionally well in doing Indonesian-English simultaneous interpreting. Still, 12% of the students demonstrated exceptional proficiency in simultaneous English-Indonesian interpretation. With these significant differences this suggested that the students were finding simultaneous interpreting in Indonesian-English too difficult for them.

There are a few reasons why translating between English and Indonesian and Indonesian and English can be challenging. This study identified eight difficulties that students faced when practicing simultaneous interpreting in Indonesian English, or English Indonesian. First, it is difficult for students to keep up with the speaker's speed in the or source language. Even though the speaker was speaking at a normal pace in his or her native language, the students believed that the speed was still fast for them. Second, the students have a lack of vocabulary in source and target language. This occurred as a result of their inability to find an appropriate word to convey the message in the target language. In addition to that, the students had a limited time to locate the words shortly afterward.

Their emotions during the simultaneous interpreting represented the third difficulty. Their feedback indicated that they had trouble controlling their nervousness when performing the simultaneous interpretation. Fourth, the students' difficulty arose from their

perception that they did not become used to do simultaneous interpretation. They were encountering difficulties when attempting to perform simultaneous interpretation in real time. Fifth, the simultaneous interpreting process was causing the students to lose focus. Some students are easily distracted by objects in their current surroundings. Additionally, their inability to focus completely caused them to become stuck or blank while interpreting.

Sixth, the students lack practice in simultaneous interpretation, particularly regarding listening. Seventh, both in the source and target languages, the students' cultural knowledge is lacking. Having good knowledge about cultural habits in source and target language could help us in the process of simultaneous interpreting. The eighth problem is having unprepared tools to support simultaneous interpretation. This occurred when certain students performed poorly on the interpreting task due to malfunctioning headsets.

Overall, effective strategies are essential to reducing the number of challenges associated with simultaneous interpreting. We could begin by paying close attention to improving our listening skills, training our focus, expanding our vocabulary, and maintaining our composure to lessen our stress while interpreting. To better understand some of the terms, other cultural customs, and references used in both the source and target languages, we do also need to expand our cultural knowledge. In addition to all of those strategies, the most crucial thing was to practice simultaneous interpreting for a long period so that we could assess our progress and get better.

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