

EXPLORING ESP STUDENTS' BARRIERS AND STRATEGIC METHOD IN INTERPRETING PRACTICE

Rini Fitria¹, Safra Apriani Zahra², Arita Destianingsih³, Ari Satria⁴

¹English Study Program of STAIN Bengkalis
STAIN Bengkalis

Jl. Lembaga, Bengkalis. Riau 28711 Phone/fax. (+62766) 8001050, Indonesia
^{2,3,4}Language Department of State Polytechnic of Bengkalis
State Polytechnic of Bengkalis

Jl. Bathin Alam-Sungai Alam, Bengkalis-Riau, 28711 Phone: (+6277) 24566,
Fax: (+2766) 800 1000, Bengkalis, Riau, Indonesia.

e-mail: rinifitria16@gmail.com, sapra@polbeng.ac.id, arita@polbeng.ac.id,
arisatria@polbeng.ac.id

Abstract: *This study explored the barriers and strategic methods employed by English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students in interpreting practice. The findings revealed that ESP students face significant challenges, particularly in vocabulary, grammar, stress management, and cultural differences. These barriers often hinder students' ability to perform at their best during interpreting tasks. Additionally, memory-related issues were identified as a key difficulty, highlighting the need for effective memory techniques. Despite these challenges, students utilize strategies such as note-taking, mental rehearsal, and stress management to enhance their performance. The study emphasizes the importance of targeted training in vocabulary building, grammar, cultural awareness, and memory techniques. Moreover, incorporating technological tools and diverse practice materials into interpreting curricula is essential for improving students' skills and preparing them for real-world interpreting scenarios.*

Keywords: *ESP Students, Interpreting Practice, Barriers*

INTRODUCTION

The field of interpreting has seen rapid growth, especially with the increasing demand for specialized language skills in various professional domains. Among these domains, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a crucial role in preparing

students to meet the demands of interpreting in fields such as law, medicine, business, and technology. Interpreting is a challenging skill that demands the ability to process information in real-time while ensuring both accuracy and cultural sensitivity. For ESP students, interpreting poses

distinct challenges due to the specialized vocabulary and concepts inherent in their areas of study, alongside the need to adapt this knowledge to dynamic communication contexts. As the demand for competent interpreters continues to grow in a globalized world, it becomes essential to understand the barriers faced by ESP students during interpreting practice to better prepare them for professional requirements.

Interpreting is a key component in many language education programs; however, students pursuing ESP-related interpreting programs often face significant barriers during their learning process. These barriers can include linguistic challenges, limited vocabulary specific to the field, difficulties in rendering meaning accurately under pressure, cognitive overload, and performance-related anxiety and a lack of practical experience in real-world interpreting settings.

Furthermore, despite the importance of interpreting practice, students often struggle with developing effective strategies to overcome these challenges. The need for specific

techniques tailored to the unique demands of ESP interpreting is critical for improving student performance and enhancing their learning experience. Research is needed to explore the obstacles faced by ESP students and identify strategic methods they can employ to navigate these difficulties effectively. This study aims to address these issues by investigating the barriers in ESP interpreting and the strategies that students use to improve their skills and performance during practice.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Interpreting as a Cognitive and Linguistic Process

Interpreting involves transferring meaning from a source language to a target language in either a simultaneous or consecutive manner, requiring a high level of cognitive, linguistic, and cultural competence (Gile, 2009). Pöchhacker (2016) describes interpreting as a real-time process that demands efficient cognitive load management. For ESP students, this complexity is heightened by the need to master specialized

terminology and contextual knowledge relevant to their specific fields.

Barriers in Interpreting Practice

Studies have identified various challenges faced by students during interpreting training. Gile's Effort Model (1997) highlights cognitive overload as a primary obstacle, arising from the simultaneous tasks of listening, processing, and speaking. Additionally, anxiety and a lack of confidence are frequently cited as significant barriers (Kondo-Brown, 2006). Another major issue is the limited exposure of ESP students to authentic interpreting environments, which restricts their ability to develop practical skills.

Strategic Methods in Interpreting Training

Several effective strategies have been identified to address these barriers and improve interpreting performance. Note-taking, as highlighted by Rozan (1956), is an essential skill for consecutive interpreting, aiding in memory retention and the organization of information. Memory enhancement techniques, including chunking and visualization, have also proven

effective in boosting accuracy (Baddeley, 2007). Furthermore, integrating real-world interpreting tasks into training programs provides students with practical experience, increasing their confidence and competence (Sawyer, 2004). These strategies underscore the importance of blending theoretical instruction with practical application in interpreting education.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the barriers and strategies in interpreting practice among ESP students. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, questionnaire and classroom observations, focusing on students' experiences and perceptions during interpreting training. Participants of this study consisted of 22 English for Business and Professional Communication students of Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis which is ESP students enrolled in interpreting class. The interviews examined the challenges they face, the coping strategies they employ, and their feedback on existing teaching methods.

The data obtained then had been analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover recurring patterns and themes, providing a comprehensive understanding of the specific barriers faced by ESP students and the effectiveness of various strategies. The results of the study inform the development of targeted strategies to enhance interpreting education for ESP students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaire, interview and observation in the classroom provide valuable insights into the common challenges faced by ESP students during interpreting practice, as well as the stress and memory-related difficulties they encounter.

Common Challenges in Interpreting

The most frequent challenge reported by the participants is vocabulary limitations, with 84.6% (11 respondents) indicating it as an issue. This suggests that students often struggle with finding the right words or phrases in the target language, particularly in specialized fields where precise terminology is critical. Closely following this is grammar issues,

which also affects 84.6% of the respondents. The complexity of grammatical structures, especially in real-time interpreting, can create barriers to clear and accurate communication.

Understanding accents or dialects and lack of confidence were both mentioned by 46.2% of the respondents. This indicates that the diversity of spoken English accents and dialects may cause difficulties in comprehension, which in turn affects the interpreting process. A lack of confidence is another significant barrier, which could lead to hesitation, difficulty in decision-making, and ultimately lower performance during interpreting tasks.

Issues with word memorization, lack of understanding of the source language, and time constraints were also reported by 38.5% of participants. Word memorization and understanding the source material can be particularly challenging when dealing with technical language or unfamiliar topics. Time pressure is another factor that affects performance, as interpreting

tasks often require quick thinking and decision-making.

Other challenges were mentioned by 23.1% of participants, although no specific issues were identified in the open-ended section.

Cultural Differences

When asked about the impact of cultural differences during interpreting tasks, 46.2% of respondents indicated that cultural differences pose challenges often. 30.8% mentioned that they encounter cultural challenges sometimes, and 23.1% rarely face such issues. This highlights the importance of understanding cultural context, as interpreting goes beyond language, requiring sensitivity to cultural nuances and customs that influence communication.

Stress Levels During Interpreting

In terms of stress, the majority of respondents (61.5%) rated their stress level as 4 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating a relatively high level of stress during interpreting tasks. This suggests that interpreting is perceived as a high-pressure activity for most students, where real-time performance and the complexity of the content

contribute to the stress experienced. 30.8% rated their stress level as 3, which still indicates moderate stress. A small percentage (7.7%) rated their stress as 2, suggesting that for a few students, interpreting tasks might not be as stressful, possibly due to more experience or confidence in their skills.

Memory-Related Difficulties

Regarding memory-related difficulties, forgetting key points was the most common issue, reported by all respondents. This is a typical challenge in interpreting, where the need to retain and recall information quickly is critical. Participants also reported losing track of ideas and difficulty recalling technical terms, both of which are common memory-related struggles in high-pressure interpreting situations.

The results highlight the major obstacles ESP students face when learning to interpret, with vocabulary limitations, grammatical challenges, and stress being the most prominent. The findings also emphasize the need for targeted training in vocabulary building, grammar, and stress management to help students improve their interpreting performance. Furthermore, addressing cultural

differences and memory-related difficulties should be key components of ESP interpreting curricula to better prepare students for real-world challenges in professional interpreting settings.

Based on the responses to the questionnaire, several challenges faced by ESP students in interpreting classes can be identified, along with the strategies they use to overcome them. The difficulties mentioned reflect a mix of cognitive, linguistic, and emotional barriers, as well as the technical aspects of interpreting.

Challenges in Classroom Activities

Speed and Accuracy: Many students reported difficulties with interpreting fast speech. They struggle with maintaining the pace of the speaker, particularly when the speech is fast or unclear. This leads to stress and frustration, as they are unable to catch the full meaning or keep up with the interpretation in real time.

Memory and Recall: A significant number of respondents highlighted memory issues, particularly when it comes to remembering the text or key points during interpreting. This can

result in the inability to convey the full message accurately.

Cultural Context and Abstract Concepts: Some students find it challenging to understand the cultural context and interpret abstract or theoretical concepts. This difficulty is often heightened by the use of slang or humor that differs across cultures, which can make it difficult to find appropriate equivalents in the target language.

Nervousness and Lack of Confidence: Emotional barriers such as nervousness and a lack of confidence were commonly reported. These factors can significantly hinder performance, especially in a classroom environment where students are required to interpret in front of peers or instructors.

Dialect and Language Proficiency: Some respondents mentioned challenges in understanding different dialects or specific vocabulary related to local languages or specialized fields, which hinder their ability to provide accurate interpretations.

Barriers Encountered During Interpreting

Language Proficiency: Respondents cited limited language proficiency and

fluency as significant barriers, particularly when they encounter unfamiliar terminology or complex expressions.

Environmental Factors: Background noise or poor audio quality during interpreting tasks was another common obstacle. These external factors make it difficult for students to catch every detail of the message.

Time Constraints: Many students reported the lack of preparation time as a barrier, leading to inadequate readiness for interpreting tasks, which can affect their performance.

Cultural and Humorous Content: The challenge of translating culturally loaded content such as humor or local idioms was frequently mentioned, requiring a deeper understanding of both the source and target cultures.

Preparatory Techniques

The majority of respondents employ various preparatory techniques before interpreting sessions. Researching terminology and practicing with sample texts or recordings were the most common methods. Additionally, familiarizing oneself with the cultural context was

also widely practiced to enhance understanding.

Note-taking as a strategy for consecutive interpreting was less frequently used, with only a small proportion of students opting for it. This suggests that students may not be fully aware of the potential benefits of note-taking as a memory aid during interpreting tasks.

Stress Management Techniques

To manage stress, most respondents rely on positive self-talk (84.6%) and breathing exercises (61.5%). Mindfulness and relaxation techniques were also used, though to a lesser extent. These methods help students cope with anxiety during interpreting tasks, allowing them to maintain focus and composure.

Technological Aids

Technological aids such as recording devices or headphones were mentioned by a few students as helpful tools during interpreting tasks, particularly for listening and understanding difficult words. However, many respondents reported not using technology in their interpreting sessions, suggesting that students may still prefer traditional

methods or feel uncertain about the effectiveness of technology in improving their skills.

Memory Improvement Strategies

To enhance memory for consecutive interpreting tasks, students commonly use note-taking and mental rehearsals. Some also rely on active listening and focus on the main ideas to improve recall. Repetition and practicing with different materials, such as videos and readings, were also highlighted as useful techniques to strengthen memory.

Handling Unfamiliar Terminology

When faced with unfamiliar terminology, students often resort to contextual clues to infer meanings. Some also ask for clarification from the speaker or use synonyms to convey the message. This suggests that students are employing adaptive strategies to navigate linguistic challenges during interpreting.

Evaluating and Improving Interpreting Skills.

Students evaluated their interpreting skills through self-reflection, recording their sessions, and seeking feedback from peers or instructors. Practicing with mock

sessions or speaking with mentors was also a common strategy to receive real-time feedback. These activities help students identify areas for improvement and refine their interpreting techniques.

The findings suggest that ESP students face various cognitive, emotional, and technical challenges in interpreting classes. However, they also employ a range of strategies, such as note-taking, mental rehearsals, and stress management techniques, to improve their skills. Addressing the barriers mentioned, such as speed, memory, cultural context, and language proficiency, can significantly enhance the learning experience and help students become more effective interpreters. Furthermore, encouraging the use of technological aids and more consistent practice with diverse materials could further support their development in this field.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to improve the learning experience for ESP students in interpreting:

- a. Targeted Training in Vocabulary and Grammar: ESP students would benefit from specific training

- programs that focus on building vocabulary related to their specialized fields, as well as strengthening their grasp of grammar to facilitate more accurate translations. Incorporating exercises that allow students to expand their lexicon and practice complex sentence structures will help them feel more confident during interpreting tasks.
- b. **Stress Management Techniques:** Given the significant role of stress in interpreting performance, it is crucial to integrate stress management techniques, such as mindfulness practices, relaxation exercises, and positive self-talk, into the curriculum. These practices can help students remain calm and focused during high-pressure interpreting situations.
 - c. **Cultural Awareness:** As cultural differences impact interpreting, the curriculum should include more content on understanding cultural contexts, slang, humor, and regional variations in language use. This will prepare students for the cultural nuances they will encounter in real-world interpreting scenarios.
 - d. **Memory Techniques:** Incorporating more focused exercises on memory techniques, such as note-taking, mental rehearsals, and mnemonic devices, will help students retain information more effectively and perform better during consecutive interpreting tasks.
 - e. **Incorporation of Technological Aids:** Encouraging the use of technological tools, such as recording devices and specialized interpreting software, could enhance students' learning process and provide them with additional support in practicing and improving their skills.
 - f. **Diverse Practice Materials:** Regular practice with a variety of materials, including recordings, videos, and live interpretations, will help students build confidence and adaptability. This exposure will prepare them for a range of real-world interpreting challenges, from formal speeches to fast-paced conversations.

By addressing these areas in the curriculum and offering targeted support, ESP programs can better equip students to meet the challenges they face in interpreting, ultimately improving their performance in both academic and professional settings.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The study revealed that ESP students encounter several significant challenges in their interpreting classes, with vocabulary limitations, grammatical difficulties, and stress being the most frequently mentioned barriers. These obstacles hinder students' ability to perform at their best during interpreting tasks, highlighting the need for specialized training and strategies to overcome them. Additionally, students' struggles with cultural differences and memory-related issues were also identified as key challenges, underscoring the necessity of incorporating these elements into ESP interpreting curricula. Despite these challenges, students actively engage in various strategies, including note-taking,

mental rehearsal, and stress management, which help them cope with the difficulties they face.

Suggestions

To improve the learning experience for ESP students in interpreting, several key areas need to be addressed. Focused training in vocabulary and grammar will enhance students' ability to accurately translate specialized terminology. Integrating stress management techniques into the curriculum will help students stay calm under pressure, while fostering cultural awareness will prepare them for the nuanced language and contexts they will encounter. Additionally, incorporating memory techniques such as note-taking and mental rehearsals will help students retain information more effectively. The use of technological aids can further support students in refining their skills, and providing diverse practice materials will allow students to become more adaptable to real-world interpreting scenarios. By focusing on these areas, ESP programs can better prepare students to overcome the challenges they face in interpreting, leading to improved performance both in

academic settings and in their professional careers.

REFERENCES

Baddeley, A. D. (2007). Working memory, thought, and action. Oxford University Press.

Gile, D. (1997). Improving the efficiency of simultaneous interpretation: The Effort model revisited. In G. Garber (Ed.), *Training interpreters: A practice-based approach* (pp. 37-55). John Benjamins.

Gile, D. (2009). *Basic concepts and models for interpreter and translator training*. John Benjamins.

Kondo-Brown, K. (2006). A study of anxiety in interpreting students: Sources, impacts, and coping mechanisms. *Interpreting*, 8(2), 191-216.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/intp.8.2.04kon>

Pöchhacker, F. (2016). *Introducing interpreting studies* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Rozan, J. (1956). *La prise de notes en interprétation consécutive*. Service de la recherche de l'Université de Paris.

Sawyer, D. (2004). Improving interpreting performance through real-world exposure. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 1(1), 87-98.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2004.10798589>