

**ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)
STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN
INTERPRETING COURSE: A CASE STUDY**

A THESIS

Submitted to fulfill the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan in the English Education



By:

SABILA KHANIFA

SN. 20522011

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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2026**

LEMBAR PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN SKRIPSI

Yang bertanda tangan dibawah ini:

Nama : SABILA KHANIFA

NIM : 20522011

Program Studi : Tadris Bahasa Inggris

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Pekalongan, 13 Juli 2026

Yang membuat pernyataan,



Sabila Khanifa

NIM. 2052201

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Kepada
Yth. Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan
UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan
c/q. Ketua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris
di Pekalongan

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Setelah melakukan penelitian, bimbingan dan koreksi naskah skripsi saudara:

Nama	: Sabila Khanifa
NIM	: 20522011
Program Studi	: Tadris Bahasa Inggris
Judul	: ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN INTERPRETING COURSE: A CASE STUDY

Saya menilai bahwa naskah skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan kepada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan untuk diujikan dalam sidang munaqasyah.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatiannya, disampaikan terimakasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum, Wr. Wb

Pekalongan, 25 Juni 2026

Pembimbing,


Chubbi Millatina Rokhuma, M.Pd.
NIP.19900507 201503 2 005



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K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN ILMU KEGURUAN**

Jalan Pahlawan KM. 5 Rowolaku, Kajen, Kabupaten Pekalongan
Website : ftik.uingusdur.ac.id Email : ftik@uingusdur.ac.id

APPROVAL SHEET

The Dean of Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, approved this undergraduate thesis by:

Name : **SABILA KHANIFA**

SN : **20522011**

Title : **ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)
STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN
INTERPRETING COURSE: A CASE STUDY**

Has been established through an examination held on Wednesday, 8th July 2026 and accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd.) in English Education.

The Examiners

Examiner I

Ahmad Burhanuddin, M.A.
NIP. 19851215 201503 1 004

Examiner II

Riskiana, M.Pd.
NIP. 19760612 199903 2 001

Pekalongan, 10th July 2026

Assigned by

The Dean of FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

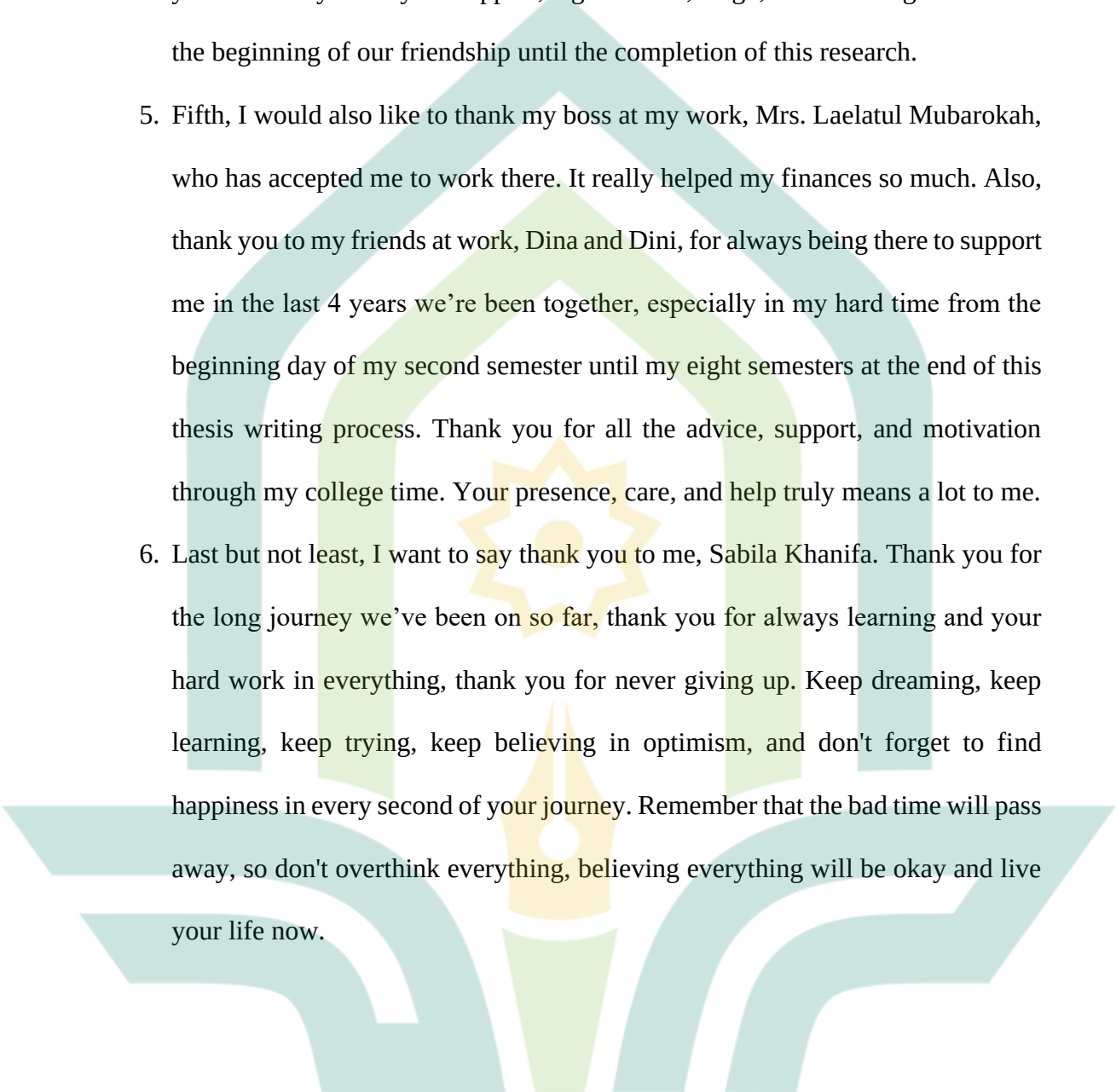


Prof. Dr. H. Muhlisin, M.Ag
NIP. 1970076 199803 1 001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With all my heart, I express my deepest gratitude to Allah SWT, the Almighty and the ultimate source of knowledge, who's divine will has enabled me to complete this undergraduate thesis. May this humble work bring benefits and blessings to the field of English language education. Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad SAW, the truthful and trustworthy, who has guided humanity from ignorance to enlightenment. May Allah's peace and blessings always be upon him. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the completion of this thesis. Without their unwavering support and sincere contributions, this work would have remained a distant dream.

1. First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my beloved parents, Mr. Basuki and Mrs. Mukaromah, for their endless prayers, unconditional love, moral encouragement, and invaluable sacrifices, including their continuous financial support throughout my academic journey. Thank you for always believing in your daughter until the very end. I am also grateful to my dear siblings, Aulia Azzahra and Anita Hayatun Nufus, for bringing joy into my life. I am always thankful to have you as my source of laughter and comfort during difficult times.
2. Second, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Mrs. Chubbi Millatina Rokhuma, M.Pd. for her invaluable guidance, patience, and continuous support throughout the process of writing this thesis.
3. Third, I would like to express my appreciation to all lecturers, previous researchers, participants, and examiners whose contributions have made this thesis possible.

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4. Fourth, I would like to express thanks to my university friends, Adelia, Septy, Ifa, Lala, and many more, who have accompanied me throughout these four years. Thank you for your support, togetherness, laugh, and encouragement from the beginning of our friendship until the completion of this research.
5. Fifth, I would also like to thank my boss at my work, Mrs. Laelatul Mubarakah, who has accepted me to work there. It really helped my finances so much. Also, thank you to my friends at work, Dina and Dini, for always being there to support me in the last 4 years we've been together, especially in my hard time from the beginning day of my second semester until my eight semesters at the end of this thesis writing process. Thank you for all the advice, support, and motivation through my college time. Your presence, care, and help truly means a lot to me.
6. Last but not least, I want to say thank you to me, Sabila Khanifa. Thank you for the long journey we've been on so far, thank you for always learning and your hard work in everything, thank you for never giving up. Keep dreaming, keep learning, keep trying, keep believing in optimism, and don't forget to find happiness in every second of your journey. Remember that the bad time will pass away, so don't overthink everything, believing everything will be okay and live your life now.

MOTTO

*“You can do everything you want in life.
Keep dreaming, trying, learning, and growing.
And find the happiness in every step in life”*



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi tantangan yang dialami oleh mahasiswa EFL selama praktik interpreting serta strategi yang mereka gunakan untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif. Partisipan penelitian Adalah tujuh mahasiswa EFL semester tujuh yang mengikuti mata kuliah Interpreting di sebuah universitas di Pekalongan, Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi kelas. Data dianalisis menggunakan kerangka tantangan dan strategi interpreting yang dikemukakan oleh Gile (2009). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa mengalami berbagai tantangan selama praktik interpreting. Tantangan utama yang ditemukan meliputi saturation, high density of source speech, problems associated with signal vulnerability, unknown names, possible language-specific differences in speech production, syntactic structures, differences in the perception of words, serta speaker factors. Tantangan-tantangan tersebut sering mempengaruhi kemampuan mahasiswa dalam memahami, mengingat, dan menyampaikan pesan secara akurat. Untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut, mahasiswa menerapkan berbagai strategi. Comprehension tactics meliputi delaying the response dan reconstructing the segment using context, Preventive tactics meliputi taking notes dan segmentation. Sementara itu, reformulation tactics meliputi explaining or paraphrasing, reproducing the sound heard in the source-language speech, delaying the response in reformulation, form-based interpreting, replacing a segment with a more general term, omission, instant naturalization, parallel reformulation. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa interpreting merupakan aktivitas yang kompleks karena mengharuskan mahasiswa mengelola berbagai tuntutan kognitif dan linguistik secara bersamaan. Penggunaan strategi yang tepat membantu mahasiswa mempertahankan komunikasi dan menyelesaikan tugas interpreting dengan lebih efektif.

Kata Kunci: *Tantangan interpreting, strategi interpreting, mahasiswa EFL, praktik interpreting, teori Gile*

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the challenges experienced by EFL students in interpreting practice and the strategies they used to overcome those challenges. This study employed a qualitative case study design. The participants were EFL seven students in seventh semester that enrolled in an Interpreting course at a university in Pekalongan, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The data were analyzed using Gile's (2009) framework of interpreting challenges and strategies. The findings revealed that students experienced various challenges during interpreting practice. The main challenges included saturation, high density of source speech, problems associated with signal vulnerability, unknown names, possible language-specific differences in speech production, syntactic structures, differences in the perception of words, and speaker factors. These challenges often affected students' ability to understand, remember, and deliver messages accurately. To overcome these difficulties, students applied several strategies. The comprehension tactics included delaying the response and reconstructing the segment using context. The preventive tactics consisted of taking notes and segmentation. The reformulation tactics included explaining or paraphrasing, reproducing the sound heard in the source-language speech, delaying the response in reformulation, form-based interpreting, replacing a segment with a more general term, omission, instant naturalization, parallel reformulation. The findings suggest that interpreting is a complex activity that requires students to manage multiple cognitive and linguistic demands simultaneously. The use of appropriate strategies helped students maintain communication and complete interpreting tasks more effectively.

Keywords: *Interpreting challenges, interpreting strategies, EFL students, interpreting practice, Gile's theory*

PREFACE

All praise and gratitude are devoted to Allah SWT, who has bestowed upon me countless blessings, guidance, health, and patience, enabling me to complete this thesis entitled “English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students’ Challenges and Strategies in Interpreting Course; A Case Study.” This thesis is submitted to the English Education Department of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd.) in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. I realize that this thesis is far from perfect. Therefore, any suggestions and constructive criticisms are highly appreciated to improve the quality of this work. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to:

1. Prof. Dr. H. Zaenal Mustakim, M.Ag., as the Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
2. Prof. Dr. H. Muhlisin, M.Ag., as the Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
3. Mr. Ahmad Burhanuddin, M.A., as the Head of the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
4. Mrs. Chubbi Millatina Rokhuma, M.Pd., as my advisor, who has given valuable guidance, support, and time throughout the process of writing this thesis.

5. All lecturers and staff of the English Education Department, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, for their knowledge, support, and assistance.
6. My beloved parents, for their endless love, support, prayers, advice, and motivation during the completion of this thesis.
7. My dear friends, who have accompanied me throughout this journey from the beginning until the end.
8. Myself, for staying strong, continuing to strive, and never giving up in every situation.

Pekalongan, June 25, 2026

The Writer,

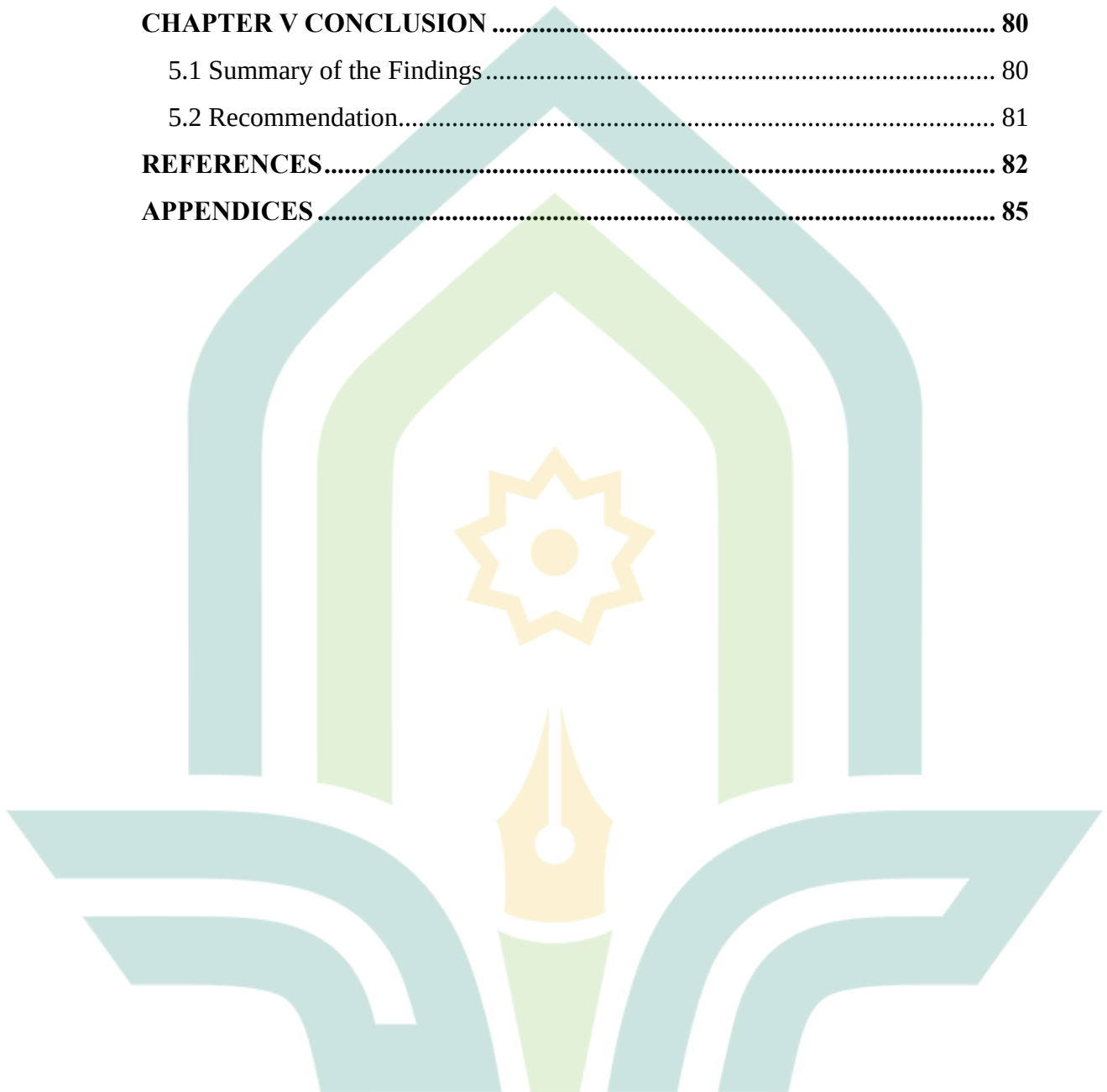
Sabila Khanifa

SN. 20522011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

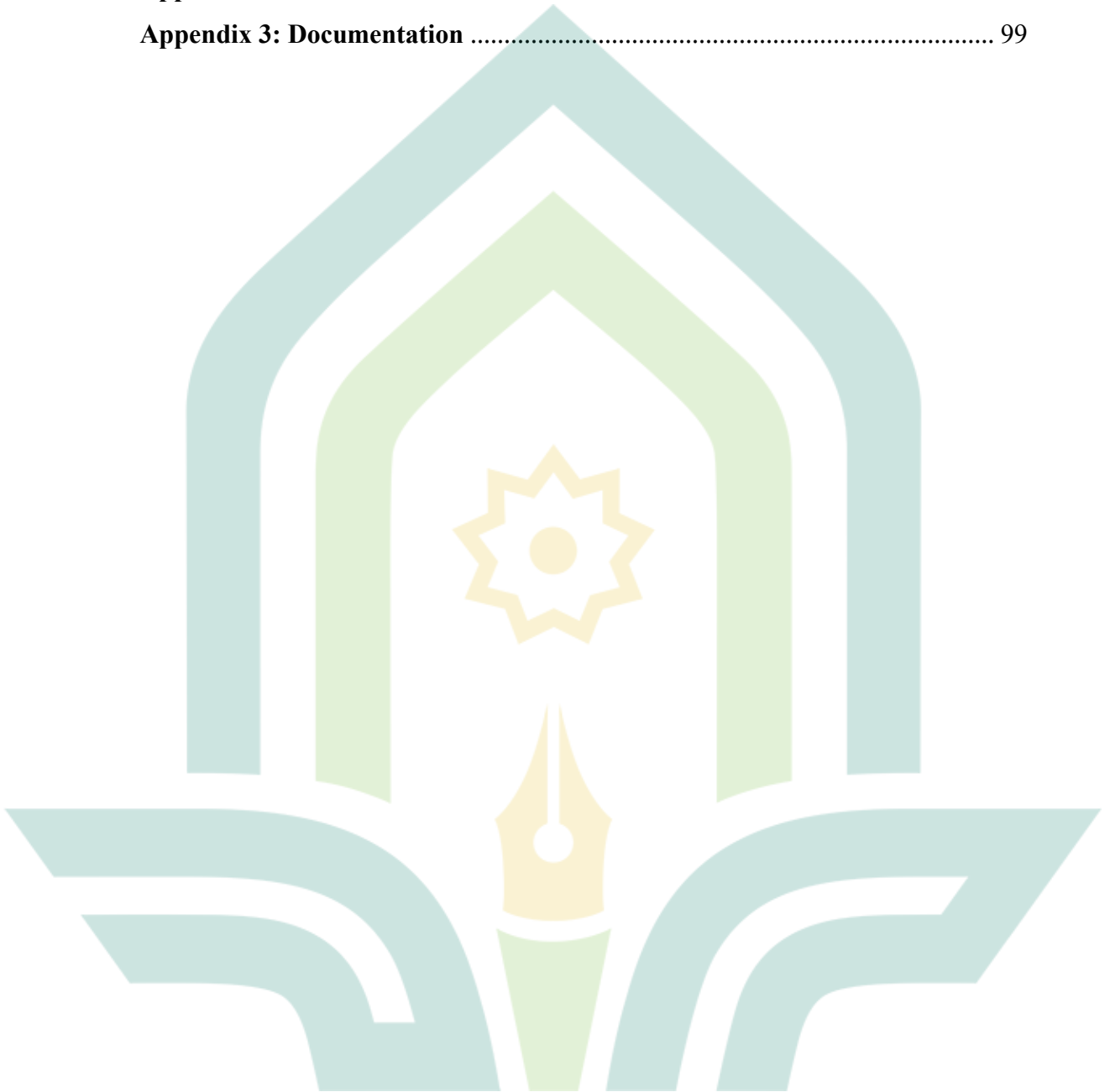
COVER.....	i
LEMBAR PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN SKRIPSI	ii
NOTA PEMBIMBING.....	iii
APPROVAL SHEET	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
MOTTO	vii
ABSTRAK	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
PREFACE	x
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xii
LIST OF APPENDICES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Formulation of the Problems.....	5
1.3 Aims of the Study	5
1.4 Operational Definitions	6
1.5 Significances of the Study.....	7
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Theoretical Framework	8
2.2 Previous Studies	28
2.3 Conceptual Framework	33
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	34
3.1 Research Design.....	34
3.2 Setting and Participants.....	34
3.3 Data Collection.....	35
3.4 Data Trustworthiness	36
3.5 Data Analysis	37

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	39
4.1 Findings.....	39
4.2 Discussion	63
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION	80
5.1 Summary of the Findings.....	80
5.2 Recommendation.....	81
REFERENCES.....	82
APPENDICES	85



LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Transcription of the Interview	92
Appendix 2: Observation Notes	95
Appendix 3: Documentation	99



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2. 1 Challenges and Strategies in Interpreting.....	33
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Learning a foreign language is not only about understanding grammar and vocabulary but also being able to use the language in real communication (Milieva, 2025). This shows that language learning must involve activities that require learners to use English actively and meaningfully. In the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, interpreting practice is one of these activities because it integrates listening, analysis, memory, and speaking skills simultaneously (Gile, 2009). Interpreting is defined as a re-expression in one language of what has been expressed in another language for communication or other purposes (Gile, 2009). Han et al. (2023) also explain that interpreting is a highly complex and dynamic cognitive activity in which an interpreter, as a bilingual or multilingual individual, processes and delivers meaning from a source language into a target language in real time. This shows that interpreting needs strong comprehension skills and the ability to express ideas accurately.

Interpreting becomes even more complex because it involves several processes. This complex process involves the interpreter listening to the source language, processing the information, and simultaneously delivering it in the target language (Wang, 2024). Gile's Effort Model (2009) explains that interpreting involves several steps, such as listening and analyzing, short-term memory, reformulating the message, and delivering it almost simultaneously. Konurbaeva & Ganeeva (2023) similarly note that an interpreter needs to use

cognitive abilities to perform several tasks at the same time, such as understanding the message, interpreting meaning, choosing appropriate expressions, and paying attention to time constraints. During this process, interpreters must pay attention to meaning and language form to keep the message clear and natural. Therefore, interpreting is often seen as a challenging language learning activity because it needs learners to use multiple skills at once, including listening, understanding, memory, and speaking, while also improving their awareness of meaning, context, and accuracy. Due to these demands, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students often struggle when performing interpreting practice.

Recent studies have investigated the challenges that interpreters faced during interpreting. Cheung (2024) stated the errors faced by interpreters. The study identified such mispronunciations, the use of source language names, omissions, and substitutions. It indicates that interpreters often face various problems in maintaining accuracy during the interpreting process. These errors not only reflect limited mastery of specific terms but also reveal cognitive pressure that makes it difficult for interpreters to process, remember, and reformulate information optimally. In addition, Aldayel & Alotaibi (2024) stated that trainee interpreters identified several key problems during the interpreting process. The most frequent issue was omission, which occurred when trainees struggled with fast speech, specialized terminology, structural differences between languages, and numerical information. The study also

found significant hesitation, indicating challenges related to smooth delivery and interpreting direction.

In addition to the challenges discussed above, previous research has also investigated the strategies interpreters use to cope with such difficulties. Previous research has also explored strategies used in interpreting. The study conducted by Fang and Wang (2022) found that student interpreters used two main strategies when dealing with unfamiliar words: omission and inference. In using the omission strategy, advanced student interpreters were more likely to leave out unfamiliar words in a more planned and purposeful way, while beginner student interpreters were more likely to leave them out unintentionally because they had difficulty understanding the unfamiliar terms. By using the inference strategy, student interpreters from both groups tried to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words by relying on context, prior experience, and their knowledge of common word combinations.

Although previous research has highlighted various challenges in interpreting, there is still a need to explore how these challenges appear in actual classroom settings where students practice interpreting as part of their learning. In real classroom contexts, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students are required to listen, comprehend, and reproduce messages in the target language in real time. While this process may seem simple, it is cognitively demanding and requires students to manage multiple tasks simultaneously under time pressure (Liu, 2024). Based on preliminary classroom observations and interview results, several challenges were

frequently experienced by students during interpreting practice. One of the most common problems was difficulty in understanding source speech delivered at a fast pace and containing dense information. Students often struggled to process long sentences, remember important details, and keep up with the speaker's delivery. Exploring these experiences helps understand how students learn and the ways they cope with difficulties in classroom interpreting.

Many previous studies have discussed interpreting difficulties and strategies. However, most of them have been conducted with trainee interpreters enrolled in interpreter-training programs or with professional interpreters working in real interpreting situations. These studies tend to focus on performance problems, technical demands, and professional pressures and strategies in interpreting experiences by individuals who already possess strong language competence and specialized training. This research will explore EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' challenges and strategies in interpreting practice. Furthermore, this study employs a qualitative case study design. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of the challenges experienced by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students during interpreting practice and the strategies they use to cope with these challenges in a specific classroom setting.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students experience and respond to the challenges they face and strategies they employ during interpreting practice.

By focusing on learners who are still developing both their language proficiency and interpreting abilities, this research explores not only the challenges faced by students but also the strategies they employ to cope with and manage these challenges. In doing so, the study offers a perspective that differs from previous research and contributes to a deeper understanding of interpreting practice in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom context.

1.2 Formulation of the Problems

This study provides two research questions. The researcher will explore:

1. What challenges do EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students experience during an interpreting practice?
2. What strategies do EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students employ to cope with these challenges during interpreting practice?

By this question, the researcher expects to know more about students' challenges and strategies in interpreting course.

1.3 Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are formulated to address the research questions as follows:

1. To explore the challenges experienced by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students during interpreting practice.

2. To explore the strategies employed by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to cope with and manage these challenges during interpreting practice

1.4 Operational Definitions

1. Interpreting : In this study, interpreting is a highly complex and dynamic cognitive activity in which an interpreter, as a bilingual or multilingual individual, processes and delivers meaning from a source language into a target language in real time (Han et al., 2023).
2. Interpreting Challenges : Interpreting challenges are problems that occur when interpreters struggle to understand, process, or reproduce the source message (Gile, 2009).
3. Interpreting Strategies : In this study, interpreting strategies refer to deliberate actions taken by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students while interpreting to deal with difficulties that occur during the task. These actions are used to prevent or solve problems such as difficulty in understanding the source speech, time pressure, or information overload (Gile, 2009).

1.5 Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical : This study enriched the existing literature and theoretical discussions developed by Gile (2009) on interpreting, particularly his explanations of the basic concepts of interpreting for training. This research added further insight by exploring interpreting problems experienced by students and also the strategies they employed to cope with those problems.
2. Practical : The results of this study can help teachers gain a clearer understanding of the challenges students face in interpreting practice as well as the strategies they use to manage those challenges. By understanding both aspects, teachers can design classroom activities and training methods that better address students' actual needs and support their skill development. For students, this research can raise awareness of the specific difficulties they encounter and the strategies they apply during interpreting. This awareness may encourage them to reflect more critically on their performance and to develop more appropriate strategies in interpreting.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Findings

This study explored the challenges experienced by EFL students during interpreting practice and the strategies they used to overcome those challenges. The findings showed that students faced several challenges related to cognitive processing, language differences, and speaker delivery. The most common challenges were saturation, problems associated with signal vulnerability, high density of source speech, unknown names and unfamiliar terms, language-specific differences in speech production, syntactic structures, differences in the perception of words, and speaker factors. These challenges often made it difficult for students to understand, remember, and deliver the message accurately during interpreting activities.

To deal with these challenges, students used various strategies. In the comprehension stage, they used delaying the response and reconstructing the segment using context. In the preventive stage, they used taking notes and segmentation to reduce memory load. In the reformulation stage, students used explaining or paraphrasing, reproducing the sound heard in the source-language speech, delaying the response in reformulation, form-based interpreting, replacing a segment with a more general term, omission, instant naturalization, and parallel reformulation.

Overall, the findings show that interpreting is a demanding activity for EFL students because it requires them to listen, understand, remember, and

produce messages at the same time. To manage these difficulties, students applied different strategies that helped them maintain communication and complete interpreting tasks more effectively.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, future researchers are encouraged to focus on a specific interpreting challenge or strategy to gain deeper understanding. For example, future studies may explore note-taking or paraphrasing strategy in more detail. Focusing on one area may provide richer findings and a clearer picture of how students deal with interpreting difficulties.

In addition, future researchers may conduct similar studies with different participants or in different interpreting contexts. Comparing results from different settings may provide broader insights into interpreting challenges and strategies and contribute to the development of interpreting studies, especially in EFL learning contexts.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104358>

