

The challenges faced by students in the interpretation classroom

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The present research is an observational study on the challenges faced by 23 final year undergraduates of the Translation Studies Hons. Degree Program in the Department of Linguistics, University of Kelaniya, studying the course unit 'Introduction to Interpretation'. The undergraduates were taught by a professional interpreter. However, by observing the performance in the end semester examination, it was evident that the students face challenges in the learning process. Accordingly, the research problem of the present study was; 'What are the challenges faced by students studying Interpretation course unit?' The performance in the classroom and at the examination was initially observed and a follow up interview was also conducted in the process of identifying the challenges mainly based on Gile's theory of interpretation, followed by a qualitative analysis of the collected data to recognize where to make interventions in future. The main challenge identified in the research was that weaknesses in relation to bilingual competency such as errors in subject verb agreement, starting the interpretation from the wrong segment of the original utterance and issues in converting reported speech into interpretation mode, wrong use of terminology and forgetting known terminology due to excitement. Other challenges were excitement and fear when they were asked to start interpretation, forgetting the facts in the original speech, insufficient knowledge about current incidents, interpreting years and numerical statistics and translating sentence segments and the limited time for this type of a new course unit, which needs more active participation and constant practice. So, it was identified that interventions can be made with regard to duration allocated to the course unit and language aspects related to interpretation.

Keywords: Challenges in interpretation, Interpretation classroom, Introduction to interpretation, Translation studies, Undergraduates of University of Kelaniya