

Malaysian and Non-Malaysian Users' Quality Expectations in Conference Interpreting

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a questionnaire-based survey on 256 users and their quality expectations in a Malaysian conference interpreting (CI) setting, which was investigated by means of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. A four-point ordinal scale adopted from Zwischenberger & Pöchhacker (2010) determined the degree to which Malaysian and non-Malaysian users considered eleven quality criteria important; while the open-ended questions adapted from Moser (1996) were used in the analysis of the qualitative data. Analysis of the data revealed that the non-Malaysian users had slightly higher expectations than the Malaysians; they would still prefer to listen to the interpretation out of curiosity or interest even if they entirely understood the speaker. The Malaysian users found “too slow or fast speech” and “long speech” more annoying while “incompleteness” and “inappropriate style” were as irritating for both groups. The Malaysians suggested that interpreters should avoid long pauses and highlighted the importance of “fluency”. Incorrect terminology was the most outstanding problem for both groups. Time constraints and stress were the most difficult aspects of conference interpreting for both groups; however, only Malaysian users stated “concentration” and “adapting to the speaker” as the most difficult aspect in CI. Interpreters were perceived by both groups of users as highly qualified professionals with substantial knowledge who are expected to be tolerant and perceptive. Findings of this study may provide a better understanding of users’ expectations in Malaysian setting based on the contextual features and users’ background information. This would help to attain more user/customer oriented standards in CI scene.

Key words: Malaysian, non-Malaysian, user, quality expectations, conference interpreting

1. Introduction

While quality is assumed to vary depending on a wide range of contextual features, conference interpreting is a vastly complex art to master that requires excellence of delivery that have captured professional linguists' interest, and skills which have been polished during years of experience and hard work. Such skills involve a wide resource of information, techniques, and knowledge, both linguistic and extra linguistic. Interpreters have had to demonstrate the ability and power to understand quickly and acknowledge the particularity and complexity of every discourse and individual within the varieties of tasks at pre-conference situations, research and during conference sessions. The essential problem of quality can be summarised by Shlesinger et al. (1997: 23) with two questions: 'Quality according to what criteria? Quality for whom?'

2. Literature Review

User, in interpreting studies, is defined as the target audience or the recipient of interpretation and is regarded as one of the important factors for the concept of quality (Kurz, 2001, p.394). Users of interpreting and their perspectives play major roles in defining quality and the ways to achieve good quality and establish effective communication between speaker and audience. Users' expectations in relation to the perspectives and expectations of interpreters and service providers, has been a part of quality research scene in which customers' preferences is deemed among the highly outstanding features (Grbić, 2008: 236).

To clarify the concept of interpreting quality, Pöchhacker (2001: 412) introduced a model of the quality standards for interpreting that underlies a "fundamental duality of interpreting as a service to enable communication and as a text-production activity" by the interpreters.

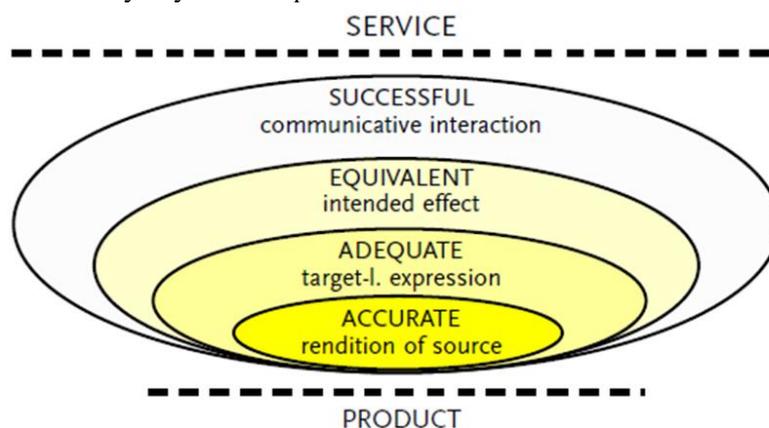


Figure 1. Quality standards for the product and service of interpreting (Pöchhacker, 2001)

Pöchhacker's service-product duality model is in line with Kopczyński's (1994) linguistic-pragmatic dual perspective; interpreting essentially is a linguistic service and its product, i.e. interpretation, needs to be pragmatic. Pöchhacker's model distinguishes between four elements of quality in interpreting. Pöchhacker's model

shows the standards or multi-dimensional criteria for interpreting with precise rendition of source at the core, surrounded by three outer layers of sufficient target language expression, equivalent intended effect, and successful communicative interaction. Performance related quality expectations can be laid out in the different layers of this model. For example, the three highly-correlated criteria in Bühler (1986) and Kurz (2001)– sense consistency, logical cohesion, and correct terminology– fall in the core in the accurate rendition of the source, whereas the other criteria, such as accent, voice, fluency and style, are in the next two layers of adequate expression and equivalent intended effect. And finally, the outermost layer that illustrates a successful communicative interaction consists of all the other situational variables, such as the types and subjects of conferences, as well as the participants' backgrounds.

Among different types of interpreting practiced in Malaysia, such as court interpreting, parliamentary interpreting and conference interpreting, the latter is expanding in Malaysia because of the growth in international communicative events, such as conferences, meetings and seminar and the need for more conference interpreters. While the topics and contexts in conference interpreting could be various, such as meetings, workshops, seminars, and international conferences and congresses on applied sciences, management, technology, social sciences etc. the parliamentary and court interpreting are usually limited to the legal and political topics, the two being stricter in terms of quality where you either communicate the information or you do not. This study aims to investigate certain aspects which leave gaps in our knowledge concerning the conference interpreting profession in Malaysia. These aspects relate to the status of the profession and the users' expectations aiming at both international and local objectives while tailoring multifaceted features of Malaysian and non-Malaysian users' expectations of interpreting quality in a Malaysian context.

The similarities and differences found in users' expectations and perceptions are measured to find out whether they vary in accordance with different nationalities and backgrounds. Attaining optimum quality in CI based on what interpreting users expect, want, or perceive is the purpose of the current study. Optimum quality is defined as a "complete and accurate rendition of the original that does not extort the original message and tries to capture any and all extra-linguistic information that the speaker might provide, subject to the constraints imposed by certain external conditions" (Moser-Mercer, 1996). If working conditions are adequately provided and the requirements are met in accordance with the end-customers'(users) expectations, this will help the interpreters to achieve an optimum quality of work in a conference. In other words, these criteria would enhance the quality of the inner layers and achieve an optimum quality of the communicative interaction.

A thorough contrast of Malaysian and non-Malaysian users' quality expectations draws upon the perspective that "(...) ethnicity influences service expectations" (Snow, Bartel & Cullen, 1996). This contrast in every discipline is based on the quality discussion that the ultimate purpose of providing any service in general, i.e. the degree of excellence of a product that should conform to a certain population's preferences should be aligned with the customers, i.e., the end users's expectations. In other words, in interpreting studies, having a Malaysian and non-Malaysian contrastive analysis would contribute to the formation and improvement of the interpreting users' profile in the still young Malaysian conference interpreting setting according to their preferences and expectations. This is another constructive step towards viewing Interpreting "(...) within a conceptual spectrum from international to intra-social spheres of interaction" (Pöchhacker,

2001) and determining some quality standards to ensure the professional domains in conference interpreting. The Malaysian/non-Malaysian dichotomy highlights the distinctions and differences in users' quality expectations and helps to identify any significant relationship between quality expectations and Malaysian users' nationality. The identification of differences would help the interpreters, users, clients, and conference interpreting service providers to prioritise the more important quality criteria over the less important ones in a Malaysian setting, based on their respective users' preferences and expectations of the interpreting service that users are supposed to receive in international conferences. Consequently, in a Malaysian conference interpreting setting, building a distinct profile of the Malaysian users which differentiates them from the users of other countries is important as the Malaysian users are the users who will probably stay in the country and use the interpreting service there in future despite the users who would leave the country and their use of interpreting service in Malaysia, obviously, may not be as consistent as the Malaysians. A thorough acknowledgement of these differences and distinctions helps improve the quality of interpreting in Malaysian conference interpreting for its regular end-users or "customers".

2.1 Expectations and Assessment

According to Pöchhacker (2001) the empirical studies on quality criteria in conference interpreting commenced since 1980s when a distinction was made between quality assessment from interpreters' point of view and quality 'viewed' by the listeners (users). The methodological considerations in interpreting quality assessment are mainly concerned with research survey conducted on interpreters, e.g. Bühler (1986), questionnaire-based studies conducted on users, e.g. Kopczynski (1994), explorations about clients' expectations, e.g. Joint Interpreting and Conference Service of the European Commission as stated by Kahane (2000), and other case studies in the scope of conference and community interpreting. Experimentations, on the other hand, are the performance measurements on (simultaneous) interpreting since the 1960s, e.g. Mackintosh (1983), which prove an increasing interest in the impact of different input parameters, such as noise (Pöchhacker, 2001). In addition, quality has been sought as input variable, e.g. Collados Ais (1998), Corpus-based observation, e.g. Cokely (1992), case assuming quality as a "multidimensional socio-psychological and textual phenomenon within a specific institutional and situational context of interaction" (Pöchhacker, 2001), e.g. Robson (1993).

Because of the distinct features of assessment and expectations in terms of research methodology, their meanings and differences need to be clarified in this part providing examples of the studies in which they are used. As for the present study, the general points of view, i.e. what is expected from a good quality of interpreting, is taken into consideration. Unlike expectations, which are related to expressing generic views, assessment or judgment entails expressing whether those views are met by the interpreter under evaluation (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 156). Assessment is a planned activity for the quality assurance of interpreting service after listening to the interpretation and mainly depends upon the assessor(s)' intention. The concern with Interpreting Quality Assessment (IQA) is more recent, dating from the 1990s. However, the research in IQ assessment area have most of the characteristics of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) research. The object of interest in IQA is the interpretation itself, and IQA researchers discuss different ways of exploring evidence of discrete defects (Clifford 2005, p. 100). Based on AIIC's report in 1995, assessing quality has been mainly carried out through the perspectives of interpreters and clients. Standards play the key role in assessing quality from interpreters' perspectives, and service providers set their standards

based on the previously identified standards. There are several common criteria such as accuracy, clarity, or fidelity, or other product-oriented criteria in assessing quality, despite the various terminologies in different studies (Pöchhacker, 2001: 413). These quality criteria have been regularly and systematically surveyed by translation and interpreting researchers, although some terminologies are used differently in different studies. In some studies ‘quality’ was explored in terms of the cognitive or pragmatic effect of the interpretation on the listeners. These studies mostly addressed the criterion of ‘equivalent effect’ as depicted by Déjean Le Féal (1990, 155). Collados Aís (2002) compared expectations of 42 specialists who used interpretation, and 15 professional interpreters with the same subjects’ assessment of a simulated interpreting performance delivered with either monotonous or lively intonation and came to striking conclusions. She concluded that subjects were not influenced by the monotonous intonation distinctly. Hence, they attributed lower importance to delivery features in the expectation survey and the overall quality criteria. On the other hand, content errors in the lively or melodic interpretation did not produce low scores. This shows that the criterion of fidelity, which was ranked the highest by the users, was not regarded by them as the top criterion, when they assessed the interpretation. In other words, they tend to judge or assess according to such secondary criteria such as fluency and lively delivery. According to De Gregoris (2015: 58), in surveys on quality expectations (ideal evaluation) of simultaneous interpretation research participants tend to attach more importance to the features that have been labelled as content-related aspects, such as transmission of the original sense, logical coherence, terminology; while in surveys on quality assessment (after a real experience of the phenomenon) subjects still give more importance to the so-called content-related aspects, but in this case they give higher ratings to those feature that have been labelled as form-related aspects, like fluency, voice, rhythm, which have an impact on the assessment of the original sense, coherence, accuracy and on the evaluation of the overall quality of an interpretation. Different findings and results might be obtained by exploring interpreting quality expectations, or having the same quality criteria assessed by the same respondents. Because of the context, objectives, research questions, and limitations of the present study, the focus is only on quality expectations; therefore, quality assessment is beyond the scope of this study.

3. Methodology

Survey studies are as the most popular and productive line of empirical studies on quality in Interpreting Studies (Pöchhacker, 2001). The theoretical framework draws on Pöchhacker’s model of perspectives on quality of interpreting (2001) and Reiss’s functional approach (1984). Based on Reiss’s (1984) functional approach (1984), “an interpretation is good if it serves its purpose, if it is adequate”. An on-site questionnaire-based survey was conducted for this study. The relevancy of this strategy to the overall characteristics of the study is the main reason allowed the researcher to observe the research setting, and collect data while monitoring the procedures. Questionnaire was used as the only research instrument. It was produced by borrowing questions from other significant established questionnaires used in similar studies. The questions and quality criteria are mainly adopted from Bühler (1986), Moser (1995), and Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker (2010), the latter forming the major part of the study’s questionnaire, i.e., the scale of the quality criteria. The questionnaire constituted of multiple-choice items, as well as open-ended questions about the respondents’ expectations and perceptions. Two glossaries were attached to the questionnaire (See Appendices I & II). The English glossary provided the explanation of the terms used in the questionnaire and the Malay glossary was a translation of the English version of the glossary.

The glossaries were prepared for a better methodological accuracy in participants' understanding of the terminology before they decided which criterion they considered more important.

4. Results

Analysis of data after 256 users completed the questionnaires in five international conferences where interpreting service was provided. The number of participants from each conference and the conference names are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Conference name and users' number per conference

Conference name	Number of users per conference
14th International Conference of Translation and the FIT 7th Asian Translators 2012 Forum	63
Third World Tourism Conference 2013	54
The 3rd Regional Conference on Educational Leadership and Management 2013	49
The Impact of Science on Society 2013	35
Offshore Technology Conference Asia 2014	55

The number of Malaysian users was 156 (61.4%), and 98 (38.6%) non-Malaysians users participated in the study. The details of each conference are as below:

Translation Conference

This conference is abbreviated as "Translation" conference here to facilitate data analysis and interpretation. The data collection procedure at its main phase started with "14th International Conference of Translation and the FIT 7th Asian Translators' Forum", a biennial conference which was held in Penang, Malaysia 27-29th August 2013. Universiti Sains Malaysia hosted the conference together with the cooperation of other co-organisers including: Malaysian Translators Association (MTA), Malaysian Institute of Translation and Books (ITBM), the Institute of Language and Literature (DBP), under the patronage of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The interpreting service was provided during the three days of conference in plenary sessions and position papers. The languages of conference were English and Bahasa Malaysia (Malay). The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher before the interpreting sessions started near the table placed for earphones and remote receiver. While distributing the questionnaires, the users of interpreting service which means those who received the earphones to listen to the interpreting were elaborated briefly about the objectives of the study while emphasising that the research was not about any assessment of interpreting/interpreters. The receivers of the questionnaires were participants (those who only intended to listen to the interpreters at the presentation sessions), speakers (whose speeches were going to be interpreted), organisers or the clients who provided the interpreting service for the conference, as well as the interpreters. There were two interpreters at this conference. During the three days of the conference 63 questionnaires were collected from users.

Tourism Conference

This conference was abbreviated as “Tourism Conference”. The second conference for data collection purpose was the Third World Tourism Conference held in Melaka 21-23rd October, 2013 with over 3000 participants for three days. Before the opening ceremony and while the participants were arriving and registering, the researcher had two hours to talk to the conference attendants to see whether or not they were going to use the interpreting service at that conference. Finally, 54 users completed questionnaires. The languages of the conference were English, Arabic, and Bahasa Melayu (Malay). Interpreters interpreted from other languages to and from English.

Management Conference

This conference was abbreviated as “Management” conference in the data entry, analysis, and interpretation procedures. The 3rd Regional Conference on Educational Leadership and Management (RECLAM) organised by The National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership under the Malaysian ministry of education and was initially known as Malaysian Education Staff Training Institute (MESTI). The conference was held on November 18-21st, 2013 in Genting highland, Malaysia. Participants, were educational scholars, researchers, and leaders, school principals and headmasters, leadership and management trainers, and graduate students from 36 countries different. The languages of the conference were Malay, English, and Arabic. Out of the five interpreters, three were certified interpreters. A total number of 120 papers were presented at the conference among which 96 were in English with no interpreting to any other language. Twenty-four papers were presented in Malay/Arabic languages in three days. Eight of the papers were presented in Arabic and 16 in Malay. Malay/Arabic papers were interpreted consecutively to English by one interpreter. Forty-nine questionnaires were collected from the users.

Science Conference

Abbreviated here as the *Science Conference*, the seminar of *Impact of Science on Society* was held on 27th December, 2013 at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia. The event was organised by the the university’s Postgraduate Students Association (PSA), in a single day seminar with questions and answer sessions. The languages of the seminar were Arabic, Malay, English and an interpreter interpreted consecutively. At the end of the session 35 questionnaires were collected from the users.

Technology Conference

Shown as the *Technology Conference* here is *The Offshore Technology Conference Asia (OTC Asia)*, which was held 25-28 March in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Thirteen energy industry's associations collaboratively organised the inaugural OTC in Asia to highlight Asia's growing importance in the global energy mix. Fifty-five questionnaires were collected from the users This conference was labelled as *Technology* conference in the data analysis and interpretation of the study. The languages of the conference were English and Bahasa Melayu (Malay) and interpreting was provided from Malay language to English and vice versa.

4.1 Users’ Profile

4.1.1 Age

In terms of users' age, it was found that both most Malaysian and non-Malaysian users were between 25-45. While 61 Malaysian and 27 non-Malaysian users formed the age group of 25-35, these numbers were 47 and 38 for the age group of 36-45 for Malaysian and non-Malaysian users, respectively. It can be concluded that generally the Malaysian users of conference interpreting are younger than the non-Malaysian users.

4.1.2 Gender

With a small difference in the number of both Malaysian and non-Malaysian users, female users outnumbered male users. However, the difference in the users' gender to be compared based on their nationalities was not significant.

4.1.3 Highest Qualification

Another question asked users about their highest education level with options of Diploma, Postgraduate-Diploma, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and Doctorate/PhD. Those with other educational achievement were asked to choose *other* and write their qualification. Except for postgraduate level users, i.e. Master's and PhD holders, which were nearly identical for both Malaysian and non-Malaysian users, the Malaysian users had higher education level. This was more significant for Diploma, Postgraduate-Diploma, and Bachelor's degree holders.

4.2 Quality Criteria

The eleven criteria were analysed to identify the importance of the quality criteria from users' perspectives. The scale consisted of very important (1), important (2), less important (3), and unimportant (4) options. Therefore, the closer the mean (M) of a criterion to 1, it is considered more important from users' perspective. In other words, 1 means very important and 4 means unimportant in this four-point scale.

4.2.1 Sense-consistency with Original Message

Sense-consistency with original message was rated very important or important by 98% of the non-Malaysian users and 91.7% of the Malaysian users. While 51.3% of Malaysians rated sense-consistency very important, 40.4% of them rated it important, 7.1% marked it as less important, and 1.3% considered it unimportant. The non-Malaysians' very important ratings were 62.3% while their important ratings were 35.7%, less important ratings were 2%. No non-Malaysian respondents rated sense-consistency as unimportant. The mean and standard deviations for sense-consistency were (M=1.58, SD=0.68) for the Malaysian users and (M=1.39, SD=0.53) for the non-Malaysian users. The mean and standard deviations for sense-consistency were (M=1.58, SD=0.68) for the Malaysian users and (M=1.39, SD=0.53) for the Non-Malaysian users.

4.2.2 Fluency

Fluency was rated very important or important by 92.9% of the non-Malaysian users and 89.7% of the Malaysian users. Very important ratings were given by 51.3% of the Malaysian users and 51% of the non-Malaysian users. Fluency was

believed to be important by 41.8% of the non-Malaysians while 38.5% of the Malaysians rated this criterion important. Also, 9.6% of the Malaysian users marked fluency as less important, this rating was 6.1% for the non-Malaysian users. Unimportant attributions were given by only 1% of the non-Malaysians and 0.6% of the Malaysians. The mean obtained for them were almost similar as (M=1.59, SD=0.68) for the Malaysian users, and (M=1.57, SD=0.65) for the non-Malaysians.

4.2.3 Terminology

The cumulative percentages of very important and important attributions to terminology were 91.8% for the non-Malaysian respondents and 88.5% for the Malaysian respondents. While 46.9% of the non-Malaysian respondents rated terminology very important, 38.5% of the Malaysians considered this criterion very important. Important ratings were given by exactly half of the Malaysian respondents and 44.9% of the non-Malaysian respondents. Also, 11.5% of the Malaysians believed that terminology was less important while this rating was 8.2% for the non-Malaysians. No Malaysian or non-Malaysian respondent rated terminology as unimportant. Means and standard deviations for terminology by Malaysian and non-Malaysian users were (M=1.73, SD=0.65), and (M=1.61, SD=0.63) respectively. Means and standard deviations for terminology by Malaysian and Non-Malaysian users were (M=1.73, SD=0.65), and (M=1.61, SD=0.63) respectively.

4.2.4 Grammar

Non-Malaysians' cumulative percentage of veryimportant and important attributions to grammar was 4.3% higher than the Malaysian users'. While 85.7% of the non-Malaysian users considered grammar either very important or important, this percentage was 81.4% for the Malaysians. Very important ratings were given by 34% of the Malaysians and 29.6% of the non-Malaysians. Also, 17.3% of the Malaysian users and 13.3% of the non-Malaysians rated grammar as less important. Only 1.3% of the Malaysians, and 1% of the non-Malaysians users rated grammar as unimportant. The means and standard deviations were (M=1.85, SD=0.67) for the non-Malaysian users and (M=1.85, SD=0.74) for the Malaysian users. The means and standard deviations were (M=1.85, SD=0.67) for the non-Malaysian users and (M=1.85, SD=0.74) for the Malaysian users.

4.2.5 Lively intonation

The cumulative percentages of very important and important attributions to lively intonation were 62.2% for the non-Malaysian users and 60% for the Malaysian users. While 15.5% of the Malaysians rated lively intonation very important, 22.4% of the non-Malaysian users marked this criterion as very important. Important ratings were given by 44.5% of the Malaysian users and 39.8% of the non-Malaysians. Also, 36.1% of the Malaysian users and 33.7% of the non-Malaysian users considered lively intonation as less important. Unimportant attributions were given by 4.1% of the non-Malaysians and 3.9% of the Malaysians.

4.2.6 Native accent

Native accent was rated very important or important by 59.5% of the Malaysian users and 55.1% of the non-Malaysian users. Very important ratings were given by

24.5% of the non-Malaysians and 10.5% of the Malaysian users. While 49% of the Malaysians considered native accent important, 30.6% of the non-Malaysians marked this criterion as important. Native accent was marked as less important by 37.8% of the non-Malaysian users and 33.3% of the Malaysian users. Also, 7.2% of the Malaysians and 7.1% of the non-Malaysians believed that native accent was unimportant. The means and standard deviations were ($M=2.27$, $SD=0.91$) for non-Malaysian users and ($M= 2.37$, $SD=0.76$) for the Malaysian users.

4.2.7 Synchronicity

The cumulative percentages of very important and important attributions to synchronicity are 76.3% for Malaysian users and 68.4% for the non-Malaysian users. While 25.6% of the Malaysians rated synchronicity very important, 22.4% of the non-Malaysian users marked this criterion as very important. The important attributions were given by 50.6% of the Malaysian users and 45.9% of the non-Malaysian users. Also, 29.6% of the non-Malaysians and 21.8% of the Malaysians rated synchronicity less important. The unimportant attributions were given by 2% of the non-Malaysian users and 1.9% of the Malaysian users. The means and standard deviations of ($M=2.00$, $SD=0.74$) and ($M=2.11$, $SD=0.77$) were obtained for Malaysian and non-Malaysian users respectively.

4.2.8 Style

Style received 71.9% of the non-Malaysian users' very important and important ratings, and 69.2% of the Malaysian users' very important and important ratings. Very important attributions were given by 31.3% of the non-Malaysian users and 21.8% of the Malaysian users. While 47.4% of the Malaysians rated style important, 40.6% of the non-Malaysians considered style as important. The less important ratings were given similarly by exactly 25% of the non-Malaysian and Malaysian users. Style was rated unimportant by 5.8% of the Malaysian users and 3.1% of the non-Malaysian users. The means and standard deviations obtained for Malaysians were ($M=2.14$, $SD=0.82$), and ($M=2.00$, $SD=0.83$) for non-Malaysians. The means and standard deviations obtained for Malaysians were ($M=2.14$, $SD=0.82$), and ($M=2.00$, $SD=0.83$) for Non-Malaysians.

4.2.9 Completeness

The cumulative percentages of very important and important attributions to completeness were 80.8% for the Malaysian users and 78.9% for the non-Malaysian users. While 39.7% of the Malaysians rated completeness very important, 36.8% of the non-Malaysians considered this criterion very important. Completeness was marked as important by 42.1% of the non-Malaysian users and 41% of the Malaysian users. The less important attributions were given by 20% of the non-Malaysians and 17.3% of the Malaysians. Also, 1.9% of the Malaysian users and 1.1% of the non-Malaysian users rated completeness unimportant. The means and standard deviations for Malaysian and non-Malaysian users were respectively ($M=1.81$, $SD=0.78$) and ($M=1.85$, $SD=0.77$). The means and standard deviations for Malaysian and Non-Malaysian users were respectively ($M=1.81$, $SD=0.78$) and ($M=1.85$, $SD=0.77$).

4.2.10 Pleasant voice

Very important and important attributions to pleasant voice were given by 61.5% of the Malaysian users and 60.2% of the non-Malaysian users. While 20.4%

of the non-Malaysians considered pleasant voice as very important and 39.8% of them rated this criterion as important, 16% of the Malaysian users rated pleasant voice very important and 45.5% of them rated it important. The less important ratings were given by 32.7% of the non-Malaysian users and 31.4% of the Malaysian users. Also, 7.1% of the Malaysians and non-Malaysians rated pleasant voice similarly as unimportant. The means and standard deviations for the Malaysian and non-Malaysian users were (M=2.29, SD=0.82), and (M=2.26, SD=0.86) respectively.

The means and standard deviations for the Malaysian and Non-Malaysian users were (M=2.29, SD=0.82), and (M=2.26, SD=0.86) respectively.

4.2.11 Logical Cohesion

The cumulative percentages of very important and important attributions to logical cohesion were 94.8% for the non-Malaysian users and 89.1% for the Malaysian users. While 54.6% of the non-Malaysians and 47.4% of the Malaysians marked logical cohesion as very important, 41.7% of the Malaysian users and 40.2% of the non-Malaysian users marked this criterion as important. The less important attributions were given by 10.9% of the Malaysian users and 10.9% of the non-Malaysian users. The means and standard deviation were (M=1.63, SD=0.67) for logical cohesion, and (M=1.51, SD=0.63) for the non-Malaysians. The means and standard deviation were (M=1.63, SD=0.67) for logical cohesion, and (M=1.51, SD=0.63) for the Non-Malaysians.

4.3 Summary of Findings from Open-ended Questions

4.3.1 Listening to the Interpretation out of Interest or Curiosity

Users were asked if they “would listen to the interpretation because they were interested or curious, even if they fully understood the speaker”. Most users answered “sometimes” and “almost always”. There were only 33 out of 156 Malaysian users and 17 out of 97 non-Malaysian users who answered would not listen to the interpretation if they understood the speaker. In other words, most Malaysian users prefer to listen to interpretation even if they fully understand the speaker.

4.3.2 Previous Experience with CI

Both Malaysian and non-Malaysian users stated they were attending the conferences either “for the first time”, or they had “rarely” attended a conference in which interpreting service was provided. The number of Malaysian users was almost twice as big as their non-Malaysian counterparts’ in their “seldom” use of interpreting in Malaysian conferences. However, no significant difference was found between the frequency of using interpreting service by Malaysian and non-Malaysian users.

4.3.3 Interesting Aspects of CI

Sixty-two Malaysian and 40 non-Malaysians were asked what they “consider particularly interesting about interpreting profession”. Even though no significant difference was found between their preferences, “diversity/ variety/ wide range of topics” and “broadening one's knowledge/ improving understanding” each consisted about one fourth of the answers. Improving confidence, improving language skills, challenges, satisfaction, payment, bridging gaps, and interacting

with different cultures were mentioned as the most interesting aspects of interpreting profession.

4.3.4 Irritating Factors in CI

Users mentioned “interpreter speaking very quietly, inappropriate environment/ too hot or cold temperature, foreign accent, wrong terminology, unpleasant voice, communication breakdown, long speeches, long pauses, incompleteness, unnatural intonation, incorrect grammar, lacking sense-consistency, change of volume, inappropriate, style, distributing materials during interpreting, mistranslation, frequent change of interpreters, technical breakdown, noise, poor quality of microphone/earphone, and too slow or fast speech” as irritating aspects in conference interpreting. Interestingly, for Malaysian users “too slow or fast speech” was found more annoying as nine of them compared to only one non-Malaysian user considered it irritating. Also, six Malaysian users found “long speech” annoying while this figure was one for non-Malaysian users. Incompleteness and inappropriate style were each considered irritating by four Malaysian and one non-Malaysian users.

4.3.5 Suggestions for Improvement

The long list of suggestions made by the users were “use professional interpreters, update interpreters' knowledge, more investment/payment, use male and female interpreters, interpreters should correct their own mistakes while interpreting, advanced equipment, interpreters' cooperation with the speaker, correct terminology, avoid monotony, avoid long pauses, maintain synchronicity, interpret abbreviations/ slangs/ jokes/ titles/ subtitles/ graphs, accurate interpretation, access to the documents and materials before the session, patient audience, interpreters' more concentration, cooperation of organisers with interpreter, interpreters' summary after equipment failure, more breaks for interpreters, neutrality towards the speaker, emotional congruence, interpreters' review of the materials before the session, confidence, correct grammar, appropriate style, faithful rendition of original message, and fluency.” The most important difference in users' suggestions to improve quality of interpreting was in Malaysian users' suggestion for interpreters to avoid long pauses as this was stated by five of them, while no non-Malaysian user suggested avoiding hesitant delivery. Such difference could also be seen in the importance of fluency as seven Malaysian compared to two non-Malaysian found it important.

4.3.6 Principal Shortcomings of CI

For both non-Malaysian users, incorrect terminology was the principal shortcoming in conference interpreting; wrong terminology was mentioned by ten non-Malaysians and seven Malaysian users. While seven Malaysian considered both lacking sense-consistency and incomplete delivery as two principal shortcomings, three non-Malaysian users believed those criteria were shortcomings in conference interpreting. Difference were found in the number of Malaysian and non-Malaysian users, who considered incorrect grammar (five and zero people respectively), lacking fluency (three and zero), inappropriate environmental condition and unprofessional interpreters (three and one), and hesitant delivery (five and two) as principal shortcoming in conference interpreting.

4.3.7 Problematic Areas

Time constraints and stress were mentioned as the most difficult aspects of conference interpreting. While nine Malaysian users and six non-Malaysians considered the speakers' speed challenging, six Malaysian and eight non-Malaysian users mentioned stress as the most difficult aspect of conference interpreting. Two main differences were found in users' attributions to the criterion of "concentration" and "adapting to the speaker"; while seven and four Malaysian users highlighted the importance of concentration and adapting to the speaker, respectively, no non-Malaysian users considered them important.

4.4 Summary

When compared to the Malaysian users, non-Malaysian users attached higher importance to the quality criteria of logical cohesion, fluency, sense-consistency with original message, terminology, grammar, style, lively intonation, and pleasant voice. On the other hand, completeness, synchronicity, and native accent received higher ratings by Malaysian users. Both Malaysian and non-Malaysian users indicated native accent as the least important quality criterion. Malaysian users considered sense-consistency and non-Malaysian users chose logical cohesion as the most important quality criteria.

5. Conclusion

The direct access of the researcher to the real-life interpreting situations resulted in more detailed, authentic, and worthwhile data, as there was no broker obstacle between the respondents and the researcher. Although an ideal interpreting is not an absolute value but depends on the communicative context, the findings from this study showed that users' expectations and perceptions vary to some degree in CI setting depending on users' nationalities and this could help the researchers, interpreters, clients, and speakers and listeners to in their estimation and understanding of the concept of quality in CI as well as the optimum interpreting quality service in conferences. Furthermore, based on the users' education level in this study, most of the non-Malaysian users held a postgraduate degree. Even though this can be partially justified considering their background and bearing in mind that they might be academicians and professors, top authorities, managers and such who use interpreting service in conferences and meetings during their visit to Malaysia, further investigation is required in this regard. Moreover, the working conditions that the AIIC recommends, such as supportive conference organisers, the quality and arrangement of the interpreting facilities, the distribution of conference documents, and the team formation of conference interpreters, as such evaluations could contribute to the identification of the effective factors in approaching the "good" or optimum quality and help to promote the quality of interpreting in international conferences in Malaysia. Most of the international CIs in Malaysia take place in the simultaneous mode. Hence, new forms of interpretation could be used to broaden the field of research. The development of a wider body of research, or the mere opening of a debate on quality would shed light on this key issue, which until now has been obscured by a consensus that recognises its importance but lacks substance. Pursuing the issue would provide us with new criteria for both the exercise and teaching of the profession, and for enhancing the way our work is perceived by users and society at large. In this regard, the role of context and the situational characteristics such as those related to the pragmatic issues in communication situations can be effective in determining the expected perceptions about interpreting. Other researchers are encouraged to step forward and conduct such studies in Malaysian setting to build

a more comprehensive profile of different parties involved, and add to the current knowledge that would certainly benefit the theory, as well as the practice of CI.

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APPENDICES

I. English Glossary

A language: *The interpreter's main active language.*

Native accent: *Refers to interpreter's native-like/near-native accent.*

Completeness: *It is related to interpreter's responsibility to fully render (deliver the meaning of) the all original message in his/ her interpretation.*

First language: *The first language that a person acquires during childhood in a family or environment in which that language is spoken.*

Fluency: *The interpreter's ability to deliver/ express the speakers' message easily and articulately.*

Correct grammar: *Refers to the appropriate/correct use of standard grammar for different words, phrases, sentences, etc.*

Interpreting: *Refers to the oral or verbal translation.*

Interpreting quality: *The degree of excellence or conformance to interpreting standards. Good interpreting quality means a satisfactory level of the total features and characteristics for the interpreting service.*

Lively intonation: *The appropriate, animated, and not monotonous delivery of speech by the interpreter. For instance in case of questions the interpreter has to deliver the message with an appropriate intonation for the question form.*

Logical cohesion: *The grammatical and lexical relationship within a text or sentence. In other words, logical cohesion means the link that holds a text together and gives it meaning.*

Pleasant voice: *Refers to the interpreter's nonirritating quality of voice. A pleasant voice does not bother/ annoy the listener.*

Sense-consistency with original message: *Sense consistency is the faithful rendition of the original message; faithfulness/fidelity to the speakers' ideas in the source text and is not limited to the linguistic meaning. To maintain sense consistency with the original message, target text must be comprehensible (sufficiently coherent) for the intended listeners. For instance, if the interpretation is incomprehensible for the listeners of the interpreting because of the lack of coherence between the original text and the interpretation that means the interpretation is not sense consistent with the original message.*

Appropriate Style: *Refers to the way an interpreter delivers a message to the listener, i.e. the original message and the interpreted speech should be delivered in the same style, e.g. formal or informal language.*

Synchronicity: *The time lag (long pauses) between the original speech and the interpretation. An interpreter is synchronised with the speaker when the interpretation does not lag too far behind the original message.*

Correct Terminology: *The interpreter's appropriate use of the technical or specialised terms and jargons. In other words, it is the extent to which interpreter has a command of the required specialised terms.*

II. Malay Glossary

Bahasa A: bahasa ibunda atau bahasa yang setaraf dengan bahasa ibunda jurubahasa.

Aksen: merujuk kepada loghat, telor, pelat jurubahasa yang asli atau hampir asli berdasarkan sesebuah daerah, negeri atau sebagainya.

Bahasa pertama: bahasa pertama ialah bahasa aktif sama ada bahasa ibunda atau bahasa yang setaraf dengan bahasa ibunda seseorang yang digunakan sejak zaman kanak-kanak dalam keluarga atau dalam persekitaran bahasa itu dituturkan.

Kelancaran: Keupayaan jurubahasa untuk menyampaikan mesej sumber penutur dengan mudah dan tidak tersekat-sekat.

Tatabahasa: Aturan yang menunjukkan cara pelbagai unsur bahasa seperti perkataan frasa, klausa, dan ayat digunakan atau diataskan untuk membentuk sesuatu yang membawa makna.

Interpretasi : Pemindahan mesej dalam bahasa sumber sama ada dalam bentuk tulisan, lisan, atau isyarat kepada bahasa sasaran dalam bentuk lisan atau isyarat.

Kualiti Interpretasi: Tahap kecemerlangan sesebuah interpretasi; interpretasi yang berkualiti tinggi menepati ciri-ciri atau piawaian khidmat interpretasi yang digariskan.

Intonasi langsung: Nada yang sesuai dan tidak ekanada (hambar). Sebagai contoh, jurubahasa menggunakan nada yang bersesuaian dengan bentuk pertanyaan apabila menyampaikan mesej yang berbentuk soalan.

Kohesi logik: Hubungan tatabahasa dengan leksikal dalam teks atau ayat. Dalam erti kata lain, kohesi logik bermaksud pautan atau perkaitan yang menghubungkan teks bersama-sama dan memberikannya makna.

Suara yang menyenangkan: Kualiti suara jurubahasa yang baik dan sesuai, serta menyenangkan halwa telinga pendengar.

Konsistensi makna: Bagi memastikan mesej sasaran konsisten dengan mesej sumber, interpretasi yang dihasilkan mestilah memuatkan semua idea penutur sumber dan hal ini tidak terhad kepada makna linguistik sahaja. Bagi mencapai maksud ini, teks sasaran mesti difahami sejelasnya oleh pendengar. Sebagai contoh, jika interpretasi tidak difahami sepenuhnya oleh pendengar kerana kekurangan kepaduan makna antara teks sumber dengan teks sasaran, hal ini bermakna makna mesej sasaran tidak konsisten dengan mesej sumber.

Gaya: Cara jurubahasa menyampaikan mesej kepada pendengar; cara penyampaian mesej sasaran mestilah sama dengan cara penyampaian mesej sumber, iaitu sama ada menggunakan laras bahasa formal atau laras bahasa tidak formal.

Penyelarasan: jarak masa (jeda) antara ucapan sumber dengan interpretasi. Jurubahasa selari atau seiring jalan dengan penutur apabila interpretasi dihasilkan dalam jeda masa yang tidak terlalu besar dengan ucapan sumber oleh penutur.

Istilah: Penggunaan jargon, atau isitilah /perkataan yang khusus atau teknikal yang merujuk kepada bidang tertentu oleh jurubahasa.

III. Users' questionnaire

PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PLEASE TICK IN THE APPROPRIATE BOXES

Gender: Male Female

39

Age:

First language:

Nationality:

Highest qualification:

Diploma Postgraduate -diploma B.A. / B.Sc.

M.A./M.Sc.

PhD/Doctorate Others (please state)

You are attending this conference as:

Participant Speaker Organiser

Have you attended any conference whereby you require an interpreting service?

This is the first time Rarely Sometimes

Frequently

If you fully understood the speaker, would you nonetheless listen to the interpretation because you are interested or curious?

No Sometimes Almost always I

have no idea

Part B: Output-related quality criteria

Please indicate the relative importance of the criteria for assessing an interpreter's performance by checking the relevant boxes.(Glossary is attached)

Quality Criterion	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Unimportant
Sense consistency with original message	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fluency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Terminology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lively intonation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Native accent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Synchronicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completeness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pleasant voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logical cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART C: Perceptions on Interpreting Profession and Quality

What do you consider particularly interesting about interpreting profession?

In your opinion, what difficulties an interpreter faces? What is the most problematic area in conference interpreting?

Based on your past experience with conference interpretation and your expectations, what are the principal shortcomings of conference interpreting in general?

What usually irritates you most in a conference?

What are your suggestions for improving the quality of interpreting service?

Your email address (optional):

IV. Feedback form

I would be interested to know what your opinion is about this questionnaire.

Listed below are some questions that in my opinion might be important in a questionnaire. Please add your comments where necessary.

i) Are there questions that are ambiguous?

NO YES

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY

Are the font type and size suitable?

NO YES

IF NO, PLEASE SPECIFY

Is the space provided sufficient?

NO YES

IF NO, PLEASE SPECIFY

Is the position between questions and answer appropriate?

NO YES

IF NO, PLEASE SPECIFY

Are the sections in the questionnaire in an appropriate order?

NO YES

IF NO, PLEASE SPECIFY

ii) Are there questions that are not suitably phrased?

NO YES

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY

vi) Are there any sections in the questionnaire that are not relevant to elicit correct information?

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY

NO YES

vii) Are there any questions that are not relevant to a particular section in the questionnaire?

NO YES

IF YES PLEASE SPECIFY

viii) Are there questions that are not relevant to the research?

NO YES

IF YES, PLEASE

ix) Are the questions too long?

NO YES

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY

x) Are the questions too short?

NO YES

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY

xi) Is the total length of the questionnaire appropriate?

NO YES

IF NO, PLEASE SPECIFY

xii) Is the language of the questionnaire appropriate?

NO YES

IF NO PLEASE SPECIFY

xiii) Is the language confusing or ambiguous?

NO YES

IF YES PLEASE SPECIFY

xiv) Are the questions well written?

NO YES

IF NO PLEASE SPECIFY

- Are there any other aspects that are not mentioned?

- What could be done to improve this questionnaire in general?