Perceptions of educational interpreting at SU: Towards a more informed and supportive interpreting service

Carmen Brewis

Language Centre, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: carmenb@sun.ac.za

Risha Lötter

Language Centre, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: risha@sun.ac.za

Eduard de Kock

Language Centre, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: edecock@sun.ac.za

Sanet de Jager

Language Centre, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: sdejager@sun.ac.za

Rene Wheeler

Language Centre, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: renew@sun.ac.za

Nanette van den Berg

Language Centre, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: nanette@sun.ac.za

Tania Botha

Language Centre, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: taniacb@sun.ac.za

Abstract
This article reports on a study conducted in October 2019 by the interpreters in the research portfolio of Stellenbosch University's interpreting service. The study tested student perceptions of interpreting in authentic interpreted lectures amongst two subsets of users: those listening to interpreting in English, mostly out of necessity, and those who listen to interpreted lectures in

Afrikaans, largely by choice.[1] The research project was undertaken to gain a better understanding of the value that student users take from the service, and how it helps or hinders their learning. Interpreters wanted to gain insight into their users' evolving needs and into the role that they themselves can play in addressing these. The article concludes by recommending practical measures to support students who feel lost and helpless due to a language deficit in the language of instruction. The outcome of the investigation shows the value of interpreting for some, but also the complications and frustration experienced by users in interpreted lectures. It highlights the necessity of thinking differently about our practices and about how these may be adapted in order to meet our users' needs. Significantly, the results suggest the need for an expanded and more active role for interpreters in and outside the classroom. It also calls for closer collaboration between interpreters, their users and lecturers, which is necessary to negotiate and formalise the terms of a shared learning space. If interpreters are to facilitate meaning-making and understanding for their users in an increasingly remote online application, then innovative measures and in-depth planning will be needed to determine how to achieve this. Through these measures, what is currently a mainly theoretical objective can be converted into the reality of multilingual teaching and learning practices at South African universities.

Keywords: educational interpreting; user perceptions; teaching and learning; language identity; language policy

1.   Introduction

Educational interpreting was first introduced at Stellenbosch University in 2012 and was forthwith included in the 2014 Language Policy as an official language specification to facilitate classroom communication in a bilingual (English and Afrikaans) academic environment. This mode of interpreting entails real-time (or simultaneous) spoken language interpreting in university lectures by using technological equipment. This approach requires a Sennheiser cordless, handheld microphone and rechargeable receivers to accommodate the various types of earphones of the student users. From the outset, the conception and implementation of the service as a pedagogical support tool was clouded by the politics and practicalities of the broader contemporary South African higher learning context. After dramatic social upheaval brought about by nationwide student unrest[2] during 2015, the 2016 Language Policy espoused inclusivity and multilingualism, and notably established English as primary language of instruction. However, to ensure that language practices facilitated pedagogically sound teaching and learning[3], the policy provided for broad access to simultaneous interpreting in first-year modules. Because the policy established English as the default language of instruction[4], interpreters since 2016 generally interpreted English-language lectures into Afrikaans. This consequent change in language directionality, from interpreting mainly into English to interpreting mainly into Afrikaans, saw a marked decrease in demand for interpreting, as most Afrikaans students opted to conduct their studies in English.[5]

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[1] This phenomenon is supported by the data and is discussed in par. 4.1.
[2] This refers to the #FeesMustFall movement of 2015 and 2016.
[3] Paragraph 6.2 of the 2016 Language Policy.
[4] Paragraph 7.1.4.1 of the 2016 Language Policy.
[5] Since 2018 interpreting from English into isiXhosa has been provided, albeit on a very small scale.

Though a relatively recent development within the broader field of Interpreting Studies, educational interpreting has generated a growing body of knowledge in local and international studies, including research conducted at Stellenbosch University (SU) (Clausen 2011; Brewis 2013; Booysen 2015; Van Zyl-Bekker 2019 and Brewis 2020). Yet policy makers, lecturers and students remain largely uninformed or indifferent about the optimal use and potential value of educational interpreting (Brewis 2020:359). The lack of a clear, research-based role description for interpreters that is informed by user expectations diminishes their status in the communicative event and undermines their ability to optimally facilitate pedagogically sound teaching and learning. Empirical research and innovative efforts therefore remain a priority to (i) overcome the disconnect between institutional policy and the reality experienced by interpreters and their clients during lectures and (ii) enable interpreters to support their clients as meaningfully and effectively as possible.

During the first term of 2020, the SU Interpreting Service comprised 15 team members who interpreted 110 lectures per week across eight faculties.[6] All the interpreters have university degrees in education, translation, or linguistics,[7] and each team member has at least six years' interpreting experience in university context. Over time, the team has raised their level of professionalism while negotiating their clients' needs in a collective, situated and dynamic process. They have grappled almost daily with questions of how to better understand and respond to the lived educational reality and evolving needs of student users: What are their linguistic identities[8] and how do they use interpreting to construct meaning? How do they perceive interpreting and the value of the service in their learning process? How do they judge the quality of the interpreted product? How do they perceive their interpreters? Do they want something more, less, or different from the service?

Lecturers and users complete perception questionnaires at the close of each semester for quality control and skills development purposes, but these offer little insight into student users' expectations and how they perceive and experience the service (Van Zyl-Bekker 2019:156). The internal interpreter assessment procedure, comprising a peer assessment of two lectures per quarter (Foster and Cupido 2017:125), includes no input from either users or lecturers. This is a serious shortcoming in terms of optimising service delivery by tailoring it to users' needs and preferences. It also runs contrary to the ongoing search for solutions to realise the institutional objectives of a multilingual university with a collaborative, learning-centred approach to teaching and learning.[9]

This article is the outcome of a study conducted by the interpreters in the research portfolio of the Interpreting Service of Stellenbosch University during October 2019 to test student users' perceptions and lived experience of various aspects of interpreting in authentic interpreted lectures. While other research has investigated user perceptions, this study puts student users at the centre of the enquiry to test what they experienced during lectures while listening to the

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[6] This information has been extracted from the interpreting timetable of 16 March 2020, the last day of contact lectures before the nationwide closure of campuses under COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

[7] Ten interpreters have language-related and five, education-related postgraduate qualifications. Research by members of the team has yielded three MA theses and one PhD dissertation in Translation/ Interpreting.

[8] Students' linguistic identities are largely self-reported in research and in the biannual perception surveys handed out to all users of interpreting services. Further information is gleaned through discussions with users.

[9] These values were extracted from the 2016 language policy as well as from the SU Vision 2040 and the SU Strategic Framework 2019−2024.

interpreted lecture. More particularly, it provides insight on a subset of clients that was largely unknown prior to the implementation of the 2016 Language Policy, but now constitutes the majority of users: students who listen to interpreted lectures by choice rather than necessity.[10]

The objectives of the study were threefold: firstly, to gain a better understanding of the value that student users take from the Interpretation Service and how it helps or hinders their learning; secondly, to gain insight into their evolving needs and the role that interpreters may play in addressing these; and finally, to consider how we may adapt our service and practice, based on the findings of this study.

2.   Background

Educational interpreting at SU was performed within a complex context of tertiary learning and teaching, where multiple social and linguistic factors impact the process. Students come from very diverse backgrounds, bringing many individual contexts and personal resources to the arena. To accommodate both their need to master academic English and to develop academic proficiency in their first languages, they must (where possible) make a variety of language choices. A factor that strongly influences this decision-making is the acquiring of an academic discourse. Lötter (2018:15) points out that the mastery of an academic discourse is important since it is the carrier of the norms generally accepted and understood by the entire discourse community (in this case, the university). Pillay and Yu (2015: 450) maintain that both learning and receiving education in English remain a high priority for most higher education students in South Africa. Students want to master English, as they view it as the "language of economic, social, and political currency".

While academic discourse is new for every student, it poses an even greater challenge to students whose learning occurs largely in their second or third language (Pillay and Yu 2015:450; Lötter 2018:3,15). Since a minimum level of additional language education is currently still compulsory in South African primary and secondary education (Lötter 2018:5), most students entering university are notionally bilingual. However, levels of proficiency differ widely among individual students, significantly impacting their construction and assimilation of knowledge (Javier 2007:37-62; Barac and Bialystok 2012:419).

Oostendorp and Anthonissen (2014:78) assert that students make language choices based on their assessment of their own needs and specific contexts. Although these choices are inconsistent and often even contradictory, students reveal their own agency and voice by negotiating their own perceived needs and language proficiencies. In this process of assuming agency and actively participating in how information is conveyed to them by interacting with the available options, students become co-constructors of meaning (Leibowitz 2009:26; Oostendorp and Anthonissen 2014:80). It is a key part of how students' academic identities are formed and contributes significantly to academic success (Leibowitz 2009; McGhie 2012; Lötter 2018).

Educational interpreting was offered by the 2016 SU Language Policy to provide academic language support as far as is reasonably practicable. Whilst the policy broadly mandated the

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[10] Students listening to interpreting into Afrikaans generally have some understanding of the source language, English.

provision of all lecture information in at least English (subsection 7.1.4.1), it provided that simultaneous interpreting be made available in all first-year and (if warranted by the students and allowed for by resources) subsequent lectures (subsection 7.1.4.3). The current Language Policy (2021) provides both on-site and online interpreting for all first-year modules and for subsequent years, upon request. With reference to the 2014 SU Language Policy, Oostendorp and Anthonissen (2014:70) maintain that its effect on students' learning and knowledge construction has not been fully researched. This is also true of the present policy. How do students construct their linguistic and academic identities; how do social and linguistic factors impact them in class; and which practical choices do they make in response? While students might appear to face similar challenges, their reaction to these challenges and the choices they make in response thereto are highly individualised (Oostendorp and Anthonissen 2014:76-80; Lötter 2018:16). The decision to make use of interpreting is one such area of individual agency. Two students might choose to use interpreting as part of their personal learning strategies yet use it in different ways or for different reasons. Factors that might play a role here include productive and receptive knowledge (Nizonkiza 2016:170), second language anxiety (Javier 2007:58-61; Teimouri et al. 2019:364-365), task-switching ability (Barac and Bialystok 2012:419-420), and time management (Oostendorp and Anthonissen 2014:74). Students often require more processing time when receiving information in a second language (Barac and Bialystok, 2012:419; Oostendorp and Anthonissen, 2014:75; Teimouri et al. 2019). Using interpreting services may make it possible for these students to absorb information in their own language or in a language in which they are more proficient. In this sense, the use of interpreting becomes a learning strategy.

Social factors also play a significant role. McGhie (2012:196) stresses the importance of an "enabling socially situated learning environment" where students form part of a cohesive learning community and feel supported. The degree to which interpreters succeed at including users fully in the communicative event (or not) will therefore have a marked effect on whether students opt to make use of interpreting and on their perception of the service. Since the earliest investigations of spoken language educational interpreting (Verhoef and Du Plessis 2008), the effective transfer of phatic communication and humour have been found to be very important in this regard. Failure to convey these aspects successfully makes users feel excluded from the communication and the group. A recent ethnographic study by Brewis (2020:310-311) explains how dynamic interactions between multiple speakers, such as question and answer sessions, are particularly problematic for users of the service. Because they listen to the interpreter through their earphones, they hear the lecturer's questions a few seconds after their non-using peers. When questions posed by students are inaudible to the interpreter, and for that reason not interpreted, users of the service miss out on the questions and only hear the lecturer's answers. They then find it difficult to relate the answer to a specific problem and lose out on the various perspectives of their peers. In general, users of interpreting services experience a disconnect from the rest of their communication partners and are hindered in their participation in the event.

The theme of what constitutes quality in interpreting has long been a focal point of research. Grbić (2015:334) sees quality as fitness for purpose, which means that it must meet specific needs or requirements according to a functionalist theoretical approach to interpreting. This echoes Kurz's (2001:394) famous quote of Kotler and Armstrong's (1994) dictum – "quality must begin with consumer needs and end with customer perception" –, arguing that interpreting must be responsive to the needs and expectations of clients. According to Kurz, interpreting that is based on this principle will foster relationships of trust between interpreters and their

clients; in a profession that exists to facilitate communication, research on user expectations, specifically regarding the quality of the interpretation, is therefore vitally important.

Studies in educational interpreting show that users find it important that interpreters use the correct technical terms and that they convey information accurately and completely (Le Roux 2007; Verhoef and Du Plessis 2008; Brewis 2013). In terms of delivery, a short lag time (the period between the utterance of the lecturer and the corresponding utterance of the interpreter) is crucial (Brewis 2013:157). This confirms Yagi's (2000:522) finding that temporal properties of the target text show a relationship between the source and target texts. If the lag time is too long, this relationship is lost, which seriously hinders meaning-making from moment to moment.

Aspects such as the interpreter's voice quality, pitch, and communication and interpreting style all have a strong influence on users' perceptions and experience. Ahrens (2015:214) mentions a study by Zwischenberger (2013) showing the negative effect of flat intonation and that two otherwise identical performances were judged differently depending on the interpreter's intonation. Chevalier (2019) tests the perceptions of non-interpreters, finding that most of their comments on various interpretations relate to form and – specifically – parameters like intonation and fluidity. A study by Palkowska and Wolańska (2008:40) demonstrates that users tend to associate monotonous intonation with poorer consistency with the original message. From these findings, researchers conclude that users not only desire but in fact demand, albeit implicitly, a certain degree of intrusion or active involvement on the part of the interpreter by assuming the conscious role of a professional communicator. In the context of SU, Brewis (2013:161) stresses the importance of a positive perception of quality on the part of student users as her data show that this deepens the trust in the interpreter and interpreter-mediated learning.

Closely linked to issues like value, quality and trust is the role of the educational interpreter and how student users perceive interpreters in various contexts. A few studies have been done on 'role' in educational interpreting. According to Kotzé (2016), interpreters enact varying roles depending on their interaction with their communication partners. Van Zyl-Bekker (2019:154) reports that educational interpreters often feel a greater responsibility towards their clients than interpreters in other contexts. During the interpreting task, they often struggle with role conflict when faced with ethical decisions. To counter this, Van Zyl-Bekker (2019) encourages open communication lines between interpreters and lecturers, including pre-task consultation and planning, and post-task reflective practices to give interpreters more self-confidence and certainty when faced with the demands of the interpreting event. In her (2020) study, Brewis shows that, as things stand, interpreters have a low status and low agency in the educational event. The evidence suggests that lecturers generally prefer to maintain a separation between themselves as educators and interpreters as mere "translators" (Brewis 2020).

3.   Method

In October 2019, members of the research team of the interpreting service of Stellenbosch University conducted interview research with 23 students (the research sample) in an exploratory study to gauge student perceptions and experiences of various aspects of interpreting in authentic interpreted lectures. The study was done under an interpretive research paradigm. Interpretive research allows researchers who are directly involved in the study

context to enter the social world of their research subjects and to describe how they (the subjects) understand and interpret their world (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2007:107). While care was taken to preserve neutrality and confidentiality by not pairing participants with their regular interpreters, the possibility of the team's bias must be acknowledged. However, their knowledge of the context ensured a more reliable and accurate understanding and interpretation of the data. A mixed method approach combining quantitative and qualitative components was employed. The research comprised three stages, namely data sampling, collection and analysis.

3.1　Data sampling

Emails were sent out to the target population inviting them to take part in the research. This group included active and former users of interpreting services in both language directionalities (interpreting from English to Afrikaans and interpreting from Afrikaans to English) from all three year-groups (first, second and third year). The 23 respondents that comprised the research sample were those students who responded positively to the call and were willing to be subjected to interviews with members of the research team. The method of selection was what Babbie and Mouton (2015:192) refer to as an "equal probability of selection method", where every student had an equal chance of selection, independent of any other event in the selection process. This was done to ensure that researchers' own preferences did not play a role in the selection process and that their personal leanings (if any) could not have affected the sample. For the purposes of this study, the research team identified two subsets of students to include in the sample: those who listened to interpreting from English into Afrikaans (E>A) and those who used the interpreting service from Afrikaans into English (A>E). The final sample of 23 participants comprised five A>E and 18 E>A users. The final sample also included eight students who had stopped making use of interpreting (non-users). These non-users were specifically included in the sample to gain more balanced responses and to increase the reliability of the results.

3.2　Data collection

Data were collected by means of qualitative, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews guided by a set of 14 open-ended questions. Participants were also given the opportunity to raise matters related to the topic of the questions. The questionnaire was collectively developed through an iterative process of refinement and modification by the research team to ensure that the questions were relevant and to avoid leading questions or wording bias. Two questions related to language in general and the remaining 12 were designed to test the participants' perceptions of various aspects of interpreting. The questionnaire is annexed hereto as Appendix A.

Prior to the interviews, the team had a training session and agreed on a suitable protocol to be followed to ensure consistency across interviews conducted by different interviewers. Before each interview, the interviewer explained the context and objectives of a study and the participant was given an indemnity form which they had to first read and then sign. To avoid bias on either side of the conversation, the interview schedule (which ran over a two-week period) was designed in such a way that participants would not be interviewed by an interpreter

that interpreted in their classes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by members of the team.[11]

3.3   Data analysis

Although the study was primarily qualitative in nature, quantitative elements were used in the earlier phases to order the data and identify the prevalence of certain themes. The combination of qualitative and quantitative elements enhances the reliability and validity of data analysis (Mouton, 2001:153). The analysis was done in three phases.

3.3.1   Phase 1: Coding

Each of the 12 perception questions represented a topic (or main code) in the data, e.g., motivation, equipment, value, etc. During this first phase, the research team engaged in an iterative process of listening to the recordings, reading the transcripts, and discussing the perspectives of individual team members. As interviews varied in length and quality, and participants sometimes contradicted themselves, a rigorous qualitative approach was needed for interpreting the various aspects of the research and obtaining a true reflection of the participants' perceptions. It was important to be sure *what* participants said and *how* they said it to make sure that the data was interpreted consistently and that the results would be reliable. When all members agreed that a saturation point had been reached and that all subcodes had been identified, a final list of subcodes was compiled under each main code.

The responses to the 12 perception questions were then analysed according to the various subcodes. This analysis entailed both a quantitative and a qualitative element. The number of participants who marked each subcode was counted to indicate the overall prevalence of each subcode and to give structure to the data. Salient remarks that related to the various subcodes were noted in a separate table for use in the reporting and discussion of the data.

3.3.2   Phase 2: Identification of themes

Graphs were generated from the quantitative data collected in phase one of the analysis and used to compile a preliminary quantitative analysis. Based on this analysis, the research team identified the prevalence of certain themes in the data, namely: i) the effect of interpreting on users' learning process during lectures; ii) aspects of interpreting that enhance or detract from their experience of the interpreted lecture (quality/value markers); and iii) the role of the interpreter according to user perceptions.

3.3.3   Phase 3: Thematic analysis

The team immersed themselves in the data and coded each "chunk" of data for a particular theme. By combining etic and emic elements, we could obtain a three-dimensional view that revealed the surface features of the data as well as their conceptual underpinnings. Thematic analysis proved a flexible and useful tool for obtaining a rich account of the data. Braun and Clarke (2016:5) point out that the process of identifying and developing themes in itself entails

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[11] The transcripts were done by members who did not conduct the interviews.

interpretation, producing an analysis "that is not just description but is already theorised". As a final step, the whole team reconsidered the reported data and results once more to account for possible theoretical and other bias, and to ensure that the results were balanced and represented a faithful reflection of the data. The next section is the reporting of the results. Section 4 is structured around the effect of interpreting on the learning experience in general, followed by specific factors that impacted participants' value perceptions. First, brief reference is made to quantitative findings in the two subsets on the relationship between language proficiency and motivation for using the service.

4.   Results

4.1   Academic language proficiency and motivation for using interpreting

There was a marked difference between the two user subsets regarding (*i*) reported academic proficiency in the source language and (*ii*) the chief motivation for using educational interpreting. Participants who reported moderate to poor proficiency in the source language used the service as an essential condition to gain access to learning in the classroom (four out of the five A>E participants). In the other subset (E>A), 16 out of the 18 respondents reported moderate or good academic proficiency in English. The majority of these respondents indicated that they used interpreting because it enhanced their classroom learning, rather than out of necessity.

4.2   The effect of interpreting on the learning experience

Participants mentioned various benefits of interpreting for their classroom learning. In particular, the majority of E>A users indicated that it helped them to better understand difficult concepts and to follow lecture content. A small number of participants also reported that hearing the lecturer and the interpreter relay the same information in both languages reassured them that there were no gaps in their understanding and consolidated the content for them.

On the other hand, using the service was often associated with being disadvantaged and experiencing social sanction or exclusion, which detracted from users' classroom experience. Having to fetch and return the interpreting equipment before and after each interpreted lecture was a nuisance.

> It's awkward to have to get up in the middle of everyone. Then everyone must wait for you to get back to your seat. I think it's one of the reasons why people decide to stop using [the service].

Participants in the E>A subset in particular reported feeling socially isolated by the (perceived) disapprobation of their fellow students:

> I also think that there's some peer pressure from the other students […] because if there are […] two or three students that use the service, then the other students look at them disapprovingly, like oh, now you're wasting the interpreter's time just so that you can get the Afrikaans, or whatever.

4.3 Factors impacting users' perceptions

Aspects of interpreting that most impacted participants' overall value perception of an interpreted lecture included the experience of hearing two voices at the same time, the delivery lag time, the speech characteristics of the interpreter, the perceived credibility of the interpreter, and proactive engagement in the learning environment on the part of the interpreter.

4.3.1 The experience of hearing two voices

Having to listen to the lecture via earphones and hearing two voices throughout the lecture placed a significant additional cognitive burden on participants: "You have to focus extra, extra, extra hard." They described it as disorienting and even unnerving: "It was awkward. You don't know where to concentrate. I didn't know what to do about that." To overcome the difficulty, participants used a variety of strategies: for example, 'drowning out' the lecturer's voice by turning the volume on the receiver right up, taking the earphones out from time to time and alternating between listening to the lecturer and the interpreter, or moving to the back of the classroom to limit interference from the lecturer's voice.

4.3.2 Lag time

As an intrinsic feature of human interpreting, a certain degree of lag between the source and target utterances is unavoidable. Participants reported positively on interpreters with a short lag time that closely followed the lecturer's delivery; conversely, a longer lag time scored highest for hindrance to learning.

Participants reported feeling "lost and confused" when the interpreter lagged too far behind the lecturer and their utterances did not correspond to what the lecturer was saying or gesturing or illustrating on slides. It made matters worse when the interpreter rushed to keep up with the lecturer at the expense of clarity or "dropped" (omitted) chunks of information to catch up:

> Sometimes they would forget a word in English, and they would just try to remember it. And the moment they remember, the lecturer is already ahead, so they would have to catch up. Even me, I'm like, okay, I'm just a bit lost here.

One respondent reported experiencing a feeling of being excluded during discussions, due to the delay and remarked: "It literally blocks you away from participating in that class."

4.3.3 Speech characteristics of the interpreter

A prevalent marker of quality relates to prosodic elements such as pronunciation, intonation, emphasis, and rhythm. Participants reported positively on interpreters with a pleasant speaking voice: "Especially the tone of voice […] helps me a lot to interpret [my work]." Conversely, several participants noted the negative impact of a monotonous or rushed delivery on their learning. When interpreters spoke too fast, their "words blend[ed] together," which made it more difficult to understand what was being said.

4.3.4   Perceived credibility of the interpreter

Interpreters who demonstrated subject or contextual knowledge in the classroom were perceived as credible and trustworthy: "Some of the interpreters are so accurate and so good … I think it relates to whether they studied those modules at university." Participants associated this with increased accuracy and completeness and expressed more trust in the process and the interpreted product: "They know what they're talking about, so they clearly know the work. So, I can see that they know what to say … And sometimes they correct the professor, give a word when they [the lecturer] don't know the translation, so that's quite good." However, when interpreters lacked background knowledge and used wrong scientific terms or mispronounced terms, the meaning of content became less clear. One participant remarked: "The interpreter will say it in merely English, but not in science-based English." Another respondent expressed his approval and appreciation for interpreters who stop the lecturer when they are unsure about a term and first make sure that the utterance is appropriate to the subject field.

4.3.5   Proactive engagement on the part of the interpreter

Participants attached significant value to interpreters who actively engaged with them and the learning context. They appreciated interpreters who made an effort to establish a rapport with them via personal contact before or after class and who took their preferences into account regarding terminology (e.g., keeping certain terms in the source language, decisions about whether acronyms should be translated or kept in the source format or even explaining the acronym when it comes up for the first time in a lecture). Interpreters who engaged participants during the lecture through eye contact or other nonverbal cues helped them (users) to also engage more with the lecture content: "If the interpreters looked at me it made me listen more." It also made the listening easier:

> It would be much more convenient for me if I could see the person I'm listening to; if they didn't sit in a corner off to the side and I don't know where they are. When I was listening to the interpreter, I looked once or twice where they were, because it's easier to listen to them if I can also see them.

Participants also expressed increased trust in interpreters who anticipated their needs and interceded on their behalf in class, e.g. by stepping into the communication and asking the lecturer to clarify a concept or repeat something important:

> Because there was this lady, I forgot her name, she was always asking every time when she don't [sic] understand what the lecturer was saying. That was a good thing for us, because we could see the engagement. If she doesn't understand, she also enquires. So yes, that was the best thing.

More than half of the participants noted that they would welcome an opportunity to expand this contact beyond the lecture for added support, to clarify terminology or address any issues related to the interpreted lecture: "Yes, if we can get to sit down with them after the class, even if it's for five minutes, and then get to discuss all the terminologies and things. Yes, that will be helpful."

The section that follows discusses the implications of these results and makes recommendations for how the current interpreting model can be adjusted to meet users' needs and preferences and to provide more effective learning support.

5.   Discussion

The present study sought to provide insights into the value perceptions of users of educational interpreting at SU in order to render a more informed, responsive, and effective service. The results show that while educational interpreting posed significant challenges to participants, it did enhance their learning process in various ways, but only if it met a range of quality parameters associated with both the interpreted text and the delivery by the particular interpreter. The opposite is also true; deficits in any of these quality parameters served as a hindrance to learning and at times even excluded users from the learning process. Significantly, the results suggest an expanded and more active role for interpreters in and outside the classroom.

5.1   The effect of interpreting on users' learning process during lectures

Although participants list enhanced understanding, the value and enjoyment of proper language use, and first-language education as the advantages of the interpreting service, inconsistent quality and unfamiliarity with the context and the subject matter on the part of interpreters caused significant frustration and decreased their trust in interpreters' competence to mediate their learning process.

Exclusion from the learning opportunity and social isolation emerged as a prevalent theme. Students who use interpreting services must learn in a communicative space dominated by the lecturer and miss out on conversations taking place in the class in the source language. Since learning is necessarily socially situated (Daniels 2007; Oostendorp and Anthonissen 2014), these feelings of isolation may significantly impact students' learning process and the formation of their academic identity.

However, in some instances users get "more" than their non-user classmates. When interpreters anticipate and complete the lecturer's utterances in advance, summarise or clarify content, or query or otherwise interact with the lecturer during the lecture, user experience is enhanced. Instances like these not only bridge the linguistic divide but create a positive emotive experience for users. Such active collaboration between users and interpreters may also serve to allay users' second-language anxiety (Teimouri et al. 2019) and foster a sense of agency by drawing them into the learning community.

5.2   Quality markers according to the users of the service

The data suggest that users want their interpreter-mediated lecture experience to be equal to or "more" than that of their co-students, but never less. They want the interpreter to interpret the same concepts and use the same examples as the lecturer, at the same moment as the lecturer does, and to do this in a pleasant and authoritative voice. One participant in the study succinctly revealed how the interrelationship between these markers ultimately lead to a positive value assessment. He remarked:

> Most of [the interpreters] were very clear and they spoke in time with the lecturer, and they spoke like an actual lecturer, like if they had to teach the class. So that works well. And they were clear and concise.

For this student, the combination of a short lag time, a tone of authority and control, technically correct and appropriate language use, and clear and coherent information transfer gave rise to greater affect during the learning experience. This confirms the findings of previous studies regarding markers for quality in educational interpreting (e.g., Le Roux 2007; Verhoef and Du Plessis 2008; Brewis 2013, 2020).

This level of quality requires a combination of strong technical and language skills from the interpreter. Not only must they keep up with the speed of the source delivery, but must also maintain an even pace, use clear pronunciation and employ an appropriate tone of voice throughout. Technical language must be appropriate in the context. Moreover, the interpreted utterance must not only provide a translation of a specific source text utterance; it must facilitate conceptual meaning-making through the use of accessible vocabulary and conformity to the structure, style and idiom of the target language.

While the data yielded many favourable quality judgements, they also show that there remains much room for improvement. Lag time remains a key concern. Long delays are disconcerting to listeners; moreover, they tend to correlate strongly with other shortfalls such as errors or omissions in the target utterance, and/or incoherence and poor voice quality. When the interpreter rushes to keep or catch up with the lecturer, it is frequently at the cost of clarity and vocal quality; and if the interpreter's natural speech characteristics are a poor match to those of the lecturer or the requirements of the source content, this frequently results in unacceptably long delays in delivery. Similarly, if the interpreter lacks sufficient context knowledge, they tend to slow down, which then triggers a negative domino effect in other areas.

From users' value judgements, it is evident how they view interpreters and the interpreted product and what their expectations of interpreting are. Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2014:15) see the role construct as the relationship between these expectations and what the interpreter does in the reality of an interpreted event.

5.3   The implications of users' perceptions for status and role

The data regarding participants' perceptions of the status and role of interpreters were ambiguous. Several participants saw interpreters as language experts that have gained credibility by providing context-specific interpreting of consistent quality, while others complained that their interpreters sometimes came across as insecure, tentative and even as outsiders to the communicative event. While many expressed a desire to get "more" from their interpreters and appeared to trust the interpreters' ability to provide "more" in terms of both language and disciplinary knowledge, others displayed no such expectations of, or indeed any interest in, the interpreters beyond "translating" the lecture.

What is clear is that users want more eye contact with their interpreters during a lecture; they want the option to look at them directly. For users, not being able to see the interpreter during a lecture heightens their feelings of isolation. Some were wary of how changed seating arrangements, with the interpreters facing them, might impact the classroom dynamics. Users

want more real interaction with their interpreters, and would even like to see more interaction between lecturers and interpreters. Since status is expressed through interaction, these remarks are significant. They imply an expanded or more "visible" role than was previously demarcated in research as well as a more pragmatic approach to interpreting, where the interpreter does whatever is necessary to ensure that student users have an optimal learning experience. This confirms the findings of previous research (See Brewis 2012, 2020; Van Zyl-Bekker 2019). The emerging emphasis on interpreter engagement as a key marker for quality requires certain changes to the current interpreting model to accommodate a new role for educational interpreters.

5.4   Recommendations

The clear preference for increased interpreter involvement in the learning experience and increased interaction between interpreters, their users and the lecturers necessitates closer collaboration between the three parties to negotiate and formalise the terms of a shared learning space. If the interpreter is afforded the agency to "step into" the learning event, he/she can facilitate meaning-making and understanding for the users more effectively. Such an approach entails the interpreter being seen as an integral part of the event, of having the agency to determine his/her performance both pre, during and post task delivery, and – if necessitated by the needs of the service users – to be afforded the liberty to adapt to conditions in the moment when hindrances to communication are observed. Instead of isolating users and interpreters in a closed, mostly one-way communication flow, such a model will draw more students (users and non-users) into the interaction and promote their learning.

The exact terms of the interaction must be based on mutual agreement between lecturers and interpreters after careful discussion and consultation between them. These conversations should focus on (*i*) lecture content and context; (*ii*) learning resources (PowerPoint slides, printed notes, etc.) to assist interpreters in their preparation and during the interpreting task; (*iii*) clear delineation of the responsibilities of interpreters; (*iv*) strategies to avoid typical hindrances to students' classroom learning (e.g. when lecturers engage in side-conversations with students, it tends to exclude everyone else from the communication and potential learning event); and (*v*) practical issues, such as the physical position of the interpreters in the classroom in relation to their listeners, other students, and the lecturer.

More open communication channels and collaboration between lecturers and interpreters will also help to reduce the occurrence and impact of negative quality dimensions. Through early intervention, potential gaps in quality can be remedied before they become a hindrance to learning. If interpreters have sufficient preparation material at their disposal and are adequately prepared for a specific lecture, they are less likely to make errors or drop information or fall behind the lecturer. And if they do, they will be more likely to stop the lecturer quickly and request clarification of a term or ask them to slow down slightly, and thereby ensure that their listeners are not further disadvantaged.

Regarding the management of the service itself, it is strongly recommended that rigorous quality assurance should inform targeted training interventions. This is critical for identifying and addressing shortfalls in interpreters' technical skills before they become fixed and internalised as part of their interpreting style. As a final recommendation, interpreters should be matched more carefully to modules or lecturers based on their proven context knowledge,

experience and technical skills. This would require more advanced planning and a concerted effort to implement this as a condition for rendering the service.

6. Conclusion

Although this investigation has largely confirmed the findings of previous studies done at Stellenbosch University, the fact remains that many recommendations from these studies have not been implemented.[12] The reasons are multiple and varied and range from the level of the interpreters themselves all the way to the institutional level and language politics. What is clear from the voices of the 23 users interviewed in this project is that their proficiency deficit in the language of instruction contributes to feelings of being unsupported and lost in university lectures. Although educational interpreting can provide support for these students, and in many cases does, there are also moments in lectures when it causes them frustration and a feeling of being isolated in the event. The current project has shown the necessity of thinking differently about our practices and correcting what needs to be corrected. We should learn from the past and learn from those students who really need our support and design our service according to their needs.

Postscript

Since March 2020, the context of the study has changed to an online model of teaching and learning. With the current augmented remote model,[13] combining face-to-face lectures with various remote online modes, educational interpreting has reached a transition of sorts, and the advent of remote online interpreting and a novel technological application. It is the urgent appeal of the interpreters who participated in this project that we heed the voices of our student users when working out best practices for this new interpreting mode.

Acknowledgement

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[12] These include focused training of lecturers, functional co-operation between lecturers and interpreters, and a policy of specialisation, allocating interpreters to departments and modules where they are familiar with the environments and can, foster the mechanisms to meet the demands of their work.

[13] At SU this is referred to as ARTLA (augmented remote teaching, learning and assessment).

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Appendix A - Questionnaire

1. What was your language of education at school?

2. What do you think of your own academic language proficiency? Is your proficiency in the following languages good, moderate or poor?

	Poor	Moderate	Good
Afrikaans			
English			
Other			

3. Why do you use the interpreting service?

4. Which aspect(s) of the interpreting service helps you in your learning process?

5. Which aspect(s) of interpreting do you find frustrating?

6. What is your opinion of the interpreting equipment?
   a. Which type of earphones do you prefer?

7. Are you satisfied with where the interpreter(s) sits in class?
   a. Would you prefer your interpreter(s) to be closer to the door or on the stage?

8. What is your experience of hearing two voices – the fact that you can still hear the lecturer?

9. Which aspect(s) of your interpreter(s) do you find particularly valuable?

10. Which aspect(s) of your interpreter(s) do you find particularly frustrating?

11. Would you prefer an opportunity to discuss the terminology/interpreting with your interpreter after the class?

12. What would make you stop using the interpreting service? / What made you decide to stop using the interpreting service?
    a. If an option, would you like to make use of interpreting for your subsequent academic year?

13. What do you think would be the ideal way to handle language in classes?

14. Do you have any other comments you would like to add?