

Quality criteria for interpreting into English in China

Xiyun Yang, Century College of Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications



Abstract

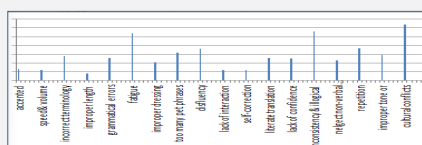
English has become the lingua franca for numerous international settings, highlighting the necessity to study the assessment made by the interpretation users with English as the lingua franca. This study intends to analyze non-English native audience assessments of the consecutive conference interpreting performance. The conferences under study are held in international aid training programs through interpreting in consecutive mode between English and Chinese. By analyzing data by conducting structured questionnaires and on-site interviews from conference participants who use English as a lingua franca from actual interpreting performance, it aims to find out non-English native user expectations towards Interpreters and the strategies or tactics that interpreters could adopt in relation to relevant context(s).

Introduction

The product-oriented analysis upon the quality of conference interpreting has attracted wide interests in the interpreting studies dating back to the 1980s. (Pöchhacker 2010:153)

Despite some authors have pointed out the possible biased user expectations by arguing that users as judges of quality may be too subjective, unreliable and even unreasonable (Shlesinger 1997, Gile 1991), it is undeniable that interpreters as the service-providers could not prevent audience from having expectations whether reasonable or not (Kurz 2001:404) and it is of crucial importance to research into audience expectations and preferences for a profession whose raison d'être is to establish effective communication between speaker and audience (Marrone, S. 1993:35). Moreover, an ability to predict expectations could then form the basis of managing and satisfying them. (Jonathan Downie 2015:34)

Indeed, scholars have sought to understand what the **target audience** expect in authentic interpreting contexts by conducting research (Jonathan Downie 2015:21). While a considerable amount of work has been done on the users' quality expectation in simultaneous conference interpreting (Kurz 1989, 1993, 2001; Meak 1990, Kocpczyński 1994, Moser, Peter 1995, Mack, Gabrielle and Cattaruzza, Lorella 1995, Vuorikoski 1993, 1998; Chiaro, Delia and Nocella, Giuseppe 2004, Diriker, Ebru 2004) even on the feedbacks drawn from non-English native audiences (e.g. Gile 1990, Garber & Mauffette-Leenders, 1997), only sporadic scholarly attentions have been devoted to the non-English native users' quality expectation and corresponding coping strategies in consecutive conference interpreting. My small-scale initiating study in a research area aims to gain some ground and shed some light in this aspect.



Methods and Materials

2. Subjects and method

Quantitative methods were used to organize and describe the response contained in the 154 questionnaires. A short web-based Chinese structured questionnaire was devised consisting of the following seven questions falling into the two blocks: general socio-demographic background information and perception of linguistic and extra-linguistic criteria affecting the quality of the interpretation (Delia Chiaro & Giuseppe Nocella 2004:283) **Block 1** including the first four questions which were used to elicit the general information concerning responders' gender, age range (taking into the consideration of the sensitivity of the age for female responders), field of expertise, the experience of using interpreting service before.

Block 2 encompassing the 5th to 7th questions which were used to investigate the responders' perception of linguistic and extra-linguistic criteria affecting the quality of information, the criteria used in this investigation are generally similar as those used by Bühler (Bühler, 1986) with exceptions to a few modifications but with the following major differences:

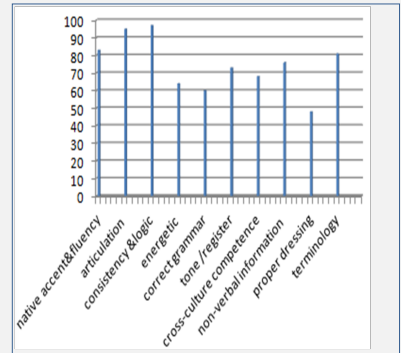
To make the questionnaire more reliable, followed by the advice offered by Pöchhacker (Pöchhacker, F 2015:160), the questionnaire also includes a five-point ratings scales (not important at all-score 0, of little importance-score 1, of average importance-score 2, very important-score 3 and absolutely essential-score 4) concerning the relative importance of output-related quality criteria by a requirement to rank three most important criteria in the list. (Question 5 and 6)

A 7th question was devoted to the topic of the level of tolerance of the irritant on the part of the audiences.

Results

Of the 154 responders who filled in and submitted the web-questionnaire, 54.55% were female, and 45.45% were male. 32.47% responders is in the age category from 46-60 years, whereas the largest group of responders (55.1%) can be found in the category from 33-35 years old. In terms of technical occupational background, 57.14% responders engaged in the technical-related work. Around 59.74% responders have prior experiences in using interpreters in some seminars or conferences, whereas 40.26% responders do not have such experiences.

In the part of the web-questionnaire, responders were requested to rate the relative importance of ten output-related criteria for a consecutive interpretation on a five-point ordinal scale ranging from "unimportant" to "highly important" and rate the 18 items of the irritants from five levels of tolerance. For all the responders, the three criteria were attributed the highest degree of importance are sense consistency & logic with the average score of 3.36, articulation (moderate speed and volume) with the average score of 3.32 as well as native accent & fluency with the average score of 3.25. When the responders are requested to list only three most important criteria, articulation (moderate speed and volume) was attributed the most important one. When it comes to the three most irritants, causing cultural conflicts are the most intolerant one, followed by the low-spirited & listless interpreters and inconsistency & illogical in message delivery.



Discussion

In order to test whether there are gender differences in the preferences of the criterion and in the tolerance of the irritants, chi-squared tests were performed. It showed that the difference in the ratings of criterion of information consistency & logic to be statistically significant (Chi=13.34, P=0.01<0.05). 35.71% male responders chose item 4 (important) higher than the female counterparts with 10.71%. For the non-verbal information delivery (Chi=13.02, P=0.01<0.05), 57.14% female responders chose item 5 (highly important) more than the male counterpart (41.43%).

When it comes to the irritants, lack of interaction with the audience was considered to be statistically significant (Chi=13.37, P=0.01<0.05), 27.14% males chose the second level of tolerance than the female counterparts (10.71%), which shows that females are more tolerant to the lack of interaction than the male counterpart.

The gender difference in the tolerance of improper register did reach statistical significance (Chi=10.35, P=0.03<0.05) with 25% females chose zero tolerance (item 1), higher than the male responders (11.43%).

Conclusions

Click here to insert your Conclusions text. Type it in or copy and paste from your Word document or other source.

This text box will automatically re-size to your text. To turn off that feature, right click inside this box and go to **Format Shape, Text Box, Autofit**, and select the "Do Not Autofit" radio button.

To change the font style of this text box: Click on the border once to highlight the entire text box, then select a different font or font size that suits you. This text is Calibri 30pt and is easily read up to 4 feet away on an A0 poster.

Zoom out to 100% to preview what this will look like on your printed poster.