



Challenges Encountered by the Interpreters in Simultaneous Interpreting Process

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ABSTRACT

A language is a subject field of linguistics and both translation and interpretation are two linguistic processes that are mainly focused on transferring an idea expressed in one language into another language. While decoding refers to an oral duplicate message, translation describes the outcome of a written operation. A subset of the larger field of translation is interpreting. Simultaneous interpreting (henceforth referred to as SI) is one subcategory of interpretation. This paper primarily focuses on SI and challenges faced by the interpreters in the process of SI. Twelve professional interpreters from courts, foreign embassies and private agencies were selected as the sample unit of the study. In terms of methodology, the survey method of questionnaire aspect has been used to collect data and analyzed with the SWOT analysis. Most challenges in SI can be related to three steps of interpreting: listening, comprehension and speaking. The study concludes the main findings as; terminology, interpreting tools, time, cultural context, language skills, interpreting process, less quickness of the mind, and length of the structure which reflects to pauses, false start are serious challenges faced by interpreters. Further, the study makes a few recommendations as solutions for the research question, which was to find options to overcome the challenges that can enhance the field of interpretation.

KEYWORDS: *Challenges, Interpretation, Simultaneous Interpretation, Translation*

1 INTRODUCTION

Language is the subject field of linguistics. Language plays a vital role in the process of communication. Translation and Interpretation are two fields which come under the same linguistic category. Interpretation is a kind of communicative action transmitting one language to another language accurately and quickly through the oral form to exchange information, which is a communicative tool on which man depends in the course of cross-cultural activities among all kinds of nationals (Mei Deming 2000). The interpreter translates oral conversation into a variety of communicative sceneries in which people exchange messages through the interpreter (Gengshen 2003). The main objective of interpretation is to avoid language barriers and has developed into a specific level of language professions in modern world of communication.

1.1 Interpreting vs. Translating

It is a common misconception that translation and interpretation are the same and that interpreting and translating are interchangeable. People also misuse the terms translation and interpretation and use them incorrectly, and this includes people who work in or are learning about the field. Though both interpreting and translation have certain similarities, there are also some differences between the two processes. The main difference between interpreting and translation is the medium. Translation can be defined as the process of converting a written message from one language (Source Language=SL) to

another language (Target Language=TL) while preserving its meaning, style and making it natural to the target audience. "Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the SL message, first in terms of learning and secondly in terms of style" (Nida 1979). Interpretation, on the other hand, is an oral process that renders live utterances in one language to live utterances in another language. Since both SL and TL are linguistic activities, it is important to have solid knowledge of all language components, including speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Interpreting process can be engaged with different modes of interpreting, and the mode is selected according to the situation. Interpreting service is a critical functional process in modern culture. The process of interpreting helps to avoid the language barriers and to ensure proper understanding and effective communication.

1.2 Modes of Interpreting

Mode of interpreting can be shown as the way a message is transformed and transferred from one language to another. Interpreting can be seen from two perspectives: (1) time-based orientation and (2) conduct-based orientation (Mahmoodzadeh 2000). Modes of interpreting are different from each other, facilitating different features. Mode of interpreting is selected according to the interpreting situation while considering the circumstances, number of participants, time duration, supportive technology, nature of the speaker, the mode of the interpreter, language availability, total capacity to deal, language proficiency, soft skills (Mahmoodzadeh 1992). There are three

kinds of modes of interpreting; consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting (SI), and whispered interpreting). In addition, travel interpreting; relay interpreting, sight translation, scheduled telephone interpreting, on-demand phone interpreting are some of other modes of interpreting.

When considering the main three modes of interpreting, in SI, the interpreter listens and renders the message in the target language at the same time while the speaker is speaking. SI is the most challenging mode of interpreting among others. In consecutive interpreting, the interpreter speaks after the SL speaker stopped speaking. In whispered interpreting, the interpreter stands together with the delegate and interprets what the speaker is saying. Throughout the world, interpreting services have been crucial and may be found in courts, parliament, international meetings of presidents and prime ministers, welcome speeches, press conferences, job interviews, business settings, and trade exhibitions.

1.3 Simultaneous interpreting (SI)

SI mode is the most common form of interpreting, which was originated with the improvement of consecutive interpreting and whispered interpreting. The mode of SI is the opposite of consecutive interpreting in which the interpreter waits for the time and does not speak until the speaker gives the permission to the interpreter. The Nuremberg Trial, which took place following the conclusion of World War II and required the use of four working languages—German, English, French, and Russian—was the first instance of SI being

employed. In SI, the interpreter must interpret what the speaker says at the same time as the speaker is giving the speech. There is no time gap between the interpretation and the receipt. Daniel Gile (1995) states SI can be shown as an equation of four efforts:

$$SI = L + M + P + C$$

L=Listening

M=Short terms memory

P=Production

C=Coordination

SI is defined by the International Association of Conference Interpreter (AIIC) in the following manner: “in simultaneous mode, the interpreter sits in a booth with a clear view of the meeting room and the speaker and listens and simultaneously interprets the speech into a TL” (AIIC 1953). SI is accomplished with the use of equipment, the interpreter typically listens to the original content that the speaker is speaking using the earphones and talks using a microphone and there are three components in SI: understanding, deverbalisation, and expression (Herbert, 1958). Sight translation is another name for SI with text, and it is a situation in which interpreters are given a manuscript of a speech to be delivered, allowing them to read along in the text while listening to the content (Lambert, 2004). Finally, there is remote interpreting, in which some or all conference participants are located at a remote location, and the interpreters get the aural and visual signal via a video-conferencing system through earphones and on one or more displays. The interpreter who engages in the SI process keeps the audience focused and

attentive and should keep the balance between the various challenges like linguistic and non-linguistic challenges which occur during the event. SI mode is more challenging than others and there may be at least two interpreters in the event according to work in shift method to cover the fatigue and stresses that occur from an intensive level of concentration and to decrease the issues based on the accuracy and quality of the interpretation.

1.4 Challenges

Challenges mean strategies or difficulties related to the interpretation. According to the study, challenges mean difficulties as subjective obstacles that interpreter or trainee encounters in the translation process (Nord, 1991). According to the study, obstacles are impediments or tasks related to many things; they may be related to the source text or primarily dependent on linguistic or non-linguistic aspects that interpreters subjectively see as challenges (Nord, 1991).

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This descriptive research is based on surveys and both primary and secondary data have been used. For the purpose of investigating and analyzing research problems, according to the sampling method as the convenient method, a total number twelve professional interpreters were selected for the study. The participants' mother tongue was Sinhala or Tamil, and they had varying experience levels (classifiable as 01 year, 1-3 years, 3-5 years and more than 5 years) and represented various working environment like courts (district courts

including Kandy, Mawanella, Hatton and Kegalle), foreign embassies (embassy of Maldives, Embassy of Japan) and private agencies (Greenway and Akari) in Sri Lanka.

2.1 Data Collection

In this study, quantitative data were collected via the survey method. A total number of twelve questionnaires have been used to get information from twelve professional interpreters. The first part included closed-ended questions mainly focusing on the background of the interpreter, such as the number of years in the field, work place, whether the interpreter is bilingual or trilingual, and other modes of interpreting; the second part of the questionnaire ask their opinions about the challenges of SI mainly based on two categories, namely, linguistic, and non-linguistic. Finally, open-ended questions ask the opinions of the interpreter regarding a current situation and a case observed in the field of interpreting. Based on the qualitative method, the secondary data has been collected through observing the research articles and papers done by researchers previously. In addition, this study highlights a gap in terms of the data collection methods which means that previous researchers have not used the survey methodology using a questionnaire to gather data from among professional interpreters.

2.2 Data Analysis

The researcher evaluated the opinion level from the selected professional interpreters regarding the challenges while taking a percentage of the weighted average value. Challenges can be shown in accordance with the primary data

collection method using a questionnaire and secondary data from previous research papers and articles. The SWOT analysis method is used to analyze the collected data, making recommendations to find out the solutions for the challenges.

3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In the present study, the researchers' attempt was to study the challenges of SI, and the study was based on the sample of twelve professional interpreters. It was identified that the majority of interpreters (75%) have engaged with and were limited to only two or three modes of interpreting in addition to the SI process. Only 25% of the interpreters have engaged with all other modes of interpreting such as consecutive, relay, whispered interpreting and sight translation. Since the main objective of the researcher is to study the challenges of SI, some challenges of SI that were found through the literature review have also been studied in this research.

Results

3.1 Challenges

Table 1. Linguistic Challenges of Simultaneous Interpreting

Linguistic Challenges	Average Value
Sentence Structure	73.33%
Terminology	82.85%
Language ambiguities	81.90%
Interpreting process	82.85
Language skills	80%
Speed and Density	79.04%
Length of the sentence	77.14%

Table 2. Non-linguistic Challenges

Non-linguistic Challenges	Average Value
Time	79.04%
Interpreting Tools	80.95%
Experience in the field	80.95%
Working environment	79.04%
Salary scale	75.23%
Cultural Context	82.85%

Table 3. Challenges as a Profile of the Interpreter

Challenges	Average Value
Readiness for speech	80%
Power of concentration	87.61%
Quickness of mind	89.52%
Good memory	88.57%
Self-control	87.61%
Sense of responsibility	83.80%
Motivation	81.90%
Communication skills	84.76%
Comprehension skills	83.80%
Fluency in delivery	88.57%

Table 4. SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weakness
✓ Language skills	✓ Unknown culture contexts
✓ Terminology knowledge	✓ Time pressure
✓ Tool accessing skill	✓ Lack of interpreting tools
✓ Quickness of mind	✓ Delay understanding
✓ Good memory	✓ Less level of memory capacity
✓ Self-control	✓ Weak use of technology
✓ Communication skills	✓ Connection issues using tools
✓ Fluency in delivery	
✓ Power of concentration	
✓ Number of years in the field	

Opportunities	Treats
✓ Able to engage with different fields in interpretation with terminology knowledge.	✓ Uncertainty about how the language service market will look like in the future.
✓ Able to conduct international relationships.	✓ An effect can occur in the service of interpretation when person who are interpreting without the interpreting license in the field and without knowing the interpreting ethics and procedure properly.
✓ Able to go forward with the new technology using interpreting tools.	✓ Pressure on rates
✓ To tap into global market	
✓ Able to build trilingual and bilingual interpreters like translators as well.	

Linguistics: Terminology

Terminology plays a vital role in the interpreting process and the diversity of the meaning from the other setting; the interpreter must be aware of the terms. The interpreter should have a vast knowledge about the terms relevant to the interpreting context, and terminology is very specific in SI process Terms should be known properly to interpret from source language to target language according to interpreting setting and the cultural context. Terms get different meanings in accordance with the different context.

Interpreting process

Simultaneous interpreters must listen and translate at the same time, unlike the consecutive interpreting counterparts who translate during speech pauses. This requires not only fluency in multiple languages but also

a remarkable ability to process and express information instantly. Understanding the subtleties of the source language, effectively communicating the content in the target language, and adjusting to the speaker's accent, tempo, and any specialized terminology are all part of the complex issues here. Interpreting simultaneously is a cognitively demanding task.

Language skills

The study on impact of language and cognitive skills in SI (Riccardi et al. 1996) clearly emphasizes that language skills are effective and challenging in SI process. The interpreter should have excellent skills. Excellent skills are majorly with listening and speaking components in the process of interpretation since the interpreter needs to listen to the source language carefully and then needs to interpret it into the target language. It is challenging since if the interpreter is not able to grab the source clearly while listening with the limited time, the output will be a negative aspect with the omission of the words, unawareness of the terminology etc. Further distraction should be managed by the interpreter in the relevant context.

Speed and Density

This effect results from faster speech, which impairs the interpreter's focus and productivity and leads to more omissions, additions, and other linguistic and paralinguistic mistakes.

Length of the sentence:

A study on impact of the length of the sentence (Seyda, 2018) indicated that the length of

sentence has an impact on fluency defined as pauses, false starts, and repetitions.

Non-linguistic; cultural context

Interpreters should be aware of the cultural background since each culture is different from other cultures and has diversity in SL culture and TL culture. Interpreters should understand cultural backgrounds and should interpret in accordance with the relevant context without arising cultural issues.

Interpreting tools

In a study on the interpreting tools in SI, Costa et al. (2014) showed that SI (69.17%) requires the use of specific equipment that is portable or non-portable in the booth. Further, this study has recognized that interpreting tools are challengeable in SI since the process requires a special tool kit including interpreter headset, microphones, and wireless receivers for delegates, soundproof booth, and SI console. The interpreter is located within the soundproof booth, while the participants in the meeting and interpreters use headsets. The interpreter needs to have a proper knowledge of accessing to tools in the booth since it is challenging to operate them with a limited time. In addition, there could be numerous issues, such as connectivity issues, poor lighting inside the booth, lack of ventilation in the booth, and poor or no view of the conference room. The interpreter should pay attention to all these things without being pressured and should be ready to deal with them properly. In addition, experience in the field is also beneficial to perform properly, as with experience one would be familiar with the process.

The profile is an overview of a person or something that shows the strengths and skills, including many qualities. The profile should be maintained properly to avoid from the obstacles, and the study proves the challenges of profile of an interpreter like; readiness for speech (80%), motivation (81.90%), and comprehending skills (83.80%).

In addition, the study shows the major linguistic challenge as language ambiguities (81.90%). To avoid from ambiguities, the interpreter should have a wide knowledge of terminology. The definitions of each term may differ from different contexts. One term may have different meanings; therefore, the interpreter should be aware of the relevant context to give a better output.

As the non-linguistic challenges, working environment (79.04%) which means the interpreter dealing with the background of the event, if it is loudness environment it may reflect to the process to do properly. Therefore, the working environment should be clear. In addition, the salary scale (75.23%) is a challenge since some interpreters' opinion is that they do not get the enough salary range with the duty, and it reflects to the service to continue with the interpreters' dedication

4 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study presents a quantitative analysis of challenges of SI process that interpreters happen to face. The data collected from the professional interpreters and the responses were examined, based on a sample of twenty-one

professional interpreters. The conclusions of the whole study can be presented as follows.

The challenges can be mainly divided into two parts as linguistic and non-linguistic challenges. Lack of knowledge of terminology), less awareness of different cultural contexts, sentence structures, time related problems that arise with the quick response, issues with interpreting tools, less experience in the field of interpretation, quickness of mind, power of concentration, less capacity of the memory can be concluded as the majority percentages of the challenges of SI.

Being a well-experienced person with the service, improving language skills, especially listening skills, studying terms in the relevant context, getting a practical training, studying language patterns and practicing communication skills, having a good mental capacity and a good experience with the interpreting tools with the technology, would be beneficial to face the challenges as well.

There are some suggestions that would be beneficial for the process of SI,

- The field of interpretation should be developed as an academic discipline in Sri Lankan context.
- The academic background of interpretation should be developed by doing more research, conducting suitable interpreting courses or diplomas, establishing interpreting schools, conducting practical professional training, and enhancing theoretical knowledge in the field of interpretation.

- The problems/strategies or difficulties of SI should be examined moreover, and solutions should be found to continue the process without any disturbances.
- Government should pay attention to giving essential interpreting resources and to make requirements to train professional interpreters in every language for all institutions where interpreting is trained or taught.
- Interpretation skills can be developed during school education for those who are willing to study different languages and willing to communicate with various languages. It would greatly enhance the development of the field of interpretation in Sri Lankan context.
- Making suitable syllabus content and university degree in Interpretation Studies can be introduced among the university system.

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