

# *Challenges Facing Conference and Television Interpreters*

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*Shareef Issa*

## Table of Contents

Attestation of authorship .....	6
Acknowledgments .....	7
ABSTRACT .....	8
Chapter One: Introduction .....	10
1.1 Background of the study .....	10
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	13
1.3 Objectives of the study .....	13
1.4 Questions addressed by the study .....	14
1.5 Rationale for the study .....	14
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	16
2.1 Introduction .....	16
2.2 Evolution of interpreting .....	16
2.3 Qualities of conference/television interpreters .....	18
2.4 Translation: how it differs from interpreting .....	21
2.5 Television interpreting .....	24
2.5.1 <i>Television interpreting</i> .....	24
2.5.2 <i>Arabic media</i> .....	27
2.6 Strategies used by conference and television interpreters .....	29
2.7 Challenges facing conference and television interpreters .....	31
2.7.1 <i>Fast delivery</i> .....	32
2.7.2 <i>Idioms</i> .....	35
2.7.3 <i>Accents and dialects</i> .....	42
2.7.4 <i>Interpreting jokes and humour</i> .....	46
2.7.5 <i>Challenges facing television and conference interpreters in live speeches for world leaders</i> .....	54
2.7.6 <i>Some examples of errors in interpreting</i> .....	59
Chapter Three: Methodology and Data Collection .....	62
3.1 Introduction .....	62
3.2 Research approach and methodology .....	62
3.3 Ethical considerations .....	64
3.4 Data collection instruments .....	65

3.4.1	Online survey .....	65
3.4.2	Participant interviews .....	71
Chapter Four:	Questionnaire Data Analysis.....	79
4.1	Introduction .....	79
4.2	Questionnaire participants.....	79
4.3	Questionnaire data analysis .....	80
4.3.1	Challenges encountered with strong accents.....	81
4.3.2	Challenges encountered when there is interference from noise while interpreting live speech on TV.....	83
4.3.3	Challenges encountered when interpreting jokes.....	85
4.3.4	Challenges encountered in interpreting a speech relay from another translation booth (Chinese, Spanish, etc.).....	87
4.3.5	Challenges encountered when managing religious speeches with quotes from the Holy Scripture.....	89
4.3.6	Challenges encountered when interpreting for speakers who speak very quickly and do not pause between thoughts .....	92
4.3.7	Challenges encountered when interpreting fast speakers .....	92
4.3.8	Challenges encountered when interpreting idioms.....	94
4.3.9	Major challenges that have an impact on the interpreters' performance.....	95
4.3.10	Maximum amount of time a solo interpreter can function without compromising quality performance .....	97
4.3.11	Challenges when interpreting subject matter against beliefs.....	98
4.4	Summary of analysis .....	100
Chapter Five:	Interview Data Analysis .....	101
5.1	Introduction.....	101
5.2	Interview participants .....	101
5.3	Interview data analysis .....	101
5.3.1	Dealing with strong accents .....	103
5.3.2	Dealing with noise .....	108
5.3.3	Dealing with the challenge of interpreting jokes.....	111
5.3.4	Dealing with unclear relay interpreting .....	114
5.3.5	Dealing with quotes from the Holy Scriptures .....	117
5.3.6	Dealing with the speed of delivery.....	121

5.3.7 Dealing with idiomatic language .....	124
5.3.8 Dealing with other challenges which have a negative impact on performance.....	126
5.3.9 Dealing with the issue of working as a solo interpreter .....	128
5.3.10 Dealing with a speaker who is making a statement against your beliefs.....	130
5.4 Summary of results .....	131
Chapter Six: Conclusion .....	133
6.1 Introduction .....	133
6.2 Review of the methodological approach.....	133
6.3 Review of the research goals and an overview of the findings .....	134
6.3.1 Challenges encountered by conference and television interpreters .....	135
6.3.2 Coping strategies employed by interpreters .....	140
6.4 Previous studies and relevance to the current study .....	142
6.5 Limitations of the study .....	142
6.6 Recommendations .....	143
6.6.1 When mistakes in interpreting prove costly .....	143
6.6.2 Importance of continuous professional development .....	143
6.6.3 Recommendations for training and future research .....	145
References.....	148
Appendix A: Research announcement.....	163
Appendix B: Consent form .....	165
Appendix C: Ethics application approval .....	167
Appendix D: Interview invitation .....	169
Appendix E: Survey invitation.....	171
Appendix F: Participants Information Sheet .....	174

## List of Figures

Figure 4.0: Respondent average age .....	80
Figure 4.1: Managing accents .....	81
Figure 4.2: Dealing with noise while TV interpreting .....	84
Figure 4.3: Dealing with jokes.....	86
Figure 4.4: Dealing with unclear relays .....	87
Figure 4.5: Dealing with religious quotes .....	89
Figure 4.6: Dealing with fast speech .....	92
Figure 4.7: Dealing with idioms.....	94
Figure 4.8: Main challenges affecting interpreters .....	95
Figure 4.9: Maximum time interpreting before critical fatigue .....	97
Figure 4.10: Interpreting subjects against personal beliefs.....	99

**Attestation of authorship**

I hereby declare that the present thesis submitted for the Master of Philosophy degree is the product of my own study. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this submission contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), and no material of which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Shareef Issa

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my late mother. I wish she was alive this day to see me reaching the finish line.

## **ABSTRACT**

Interpreting is a challenging task, involving difficulties with individual speakers, culture-bound references, environmental factors, to name a few, and even more so in the conference and television interpreting setting.

This study aims to investigate the challenges facing conference and television (TV) interpreters and the strategies they employ when exposed to real-time conference or television settings. Though the focus is on interpreters, whose A language is Arabic, the research also highlights the difficulties encountered by interpreters in other language combinations as the majority of the challenges analysed reveal a common denominator among interpreters regardless of their mother tongue languages.

The questionnaire was distributed and semi-structured interviews conducted both in person and online with experienced conference interpreters, including members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and United Nations (UN) certified interpreters, in an attempt to explore the broader challenges which could have an adverse impact on their performance, and the strategies they pursued to overcome such obstacles. The majority of respondents to the questionnaire and the interviewees shared their views on the best practices which they employ when they are interpreting.

Serious challenges included speaker-related issues, culture-bound references, interpreting jokes, external factors such as background noise and interpreter-related factors.

This study will be of interest to novice interpreters who have completed their professional training and are new to the interpreting booth. However, it may also be useful for more experienced colleagues, as an aide-mémoire covering best practice in the industry.



## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Researchers and linguists have taken a close look at translation and interpreting in the last hundred years or so from differing perspectives. Thanks to the communication explosion in the last two centuries and the more recent impact of globalization, translation as a discipline was the subject of considerable theoretical and empirical studies. However, interpreting which played a key role in bringing nations together in various fields in the last many decades did not get as much attention as translation. There were some isolated individual attempts at research on interpreting but until the mid-1970s very few innovative theories on interpreting based on empirical research emerged, according to Gile (1994).

It was after the Bay of Pigs crisis in 1961 that research in interpreting began in a significant and serious manner. The crisis and the series of subsequent diplomatic activities highlighted the importance of interpreting and created an awareness of shortfalls in the art as a scientific discipline. The rudimentary research initiatives focused on intuitive accounts of the interpreting process, which by the late 1970s shifted to theoretical analysis and empirical research culminating in a multistage effort according to Moser-Mercer (1997, p. 194).

The three predominant modes of interpreting as recognized by the interpreting professionals are: simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting and sight translation. Of these, simultaneous interpreting is without doubt the most demanding of the three modes. Simultaneous interpreting is an inevitable component of the procedures in many circumstances and settings including, among others, courtrooms, conferences, press conferences, legal and quasi-legal settings, arbitration hearings and private meetings. The task of the simultaneous interpreter is rendered more difficult as he or she does not have any control over the flow of the source speakers' diction, and has to adapt to the pace, tone and accent of each speaker without interrupting the proceedings and without misinforming the audience.

In international conference settings, such as in the annual meetings of the United Nations General Assembly or the Security Council, it is the set procedure to provide the interpreters with the 'scripts' of speeches scheduled. As Gile (1995) confirms, scripted simultaneous interpreting often occurs, especially in conference interpreting settings such as the United Nations. "Simultaneous interpretation with text occurs frequently, when speakers read [out] a text which has also been given to interpreters [beforehand]" (Gile, 1995, p. 184).

However, often simultaneous interpreters have to be prepared for eventualities on occasions when delegates make unscheduled interventions or comments. Apart from being prepared to meet such exigencies, the conference interpreters have to attentively follow the thread of the speech and debate, and extrapolate meaning from the context so as to bridge or make sense out of sections that may be unclear.

Gile observes that while this mode of simultaneous interpreting, which combines sight translation of the speech, offers the interpreter "visual presence of information, which reduces memory problems", it presents new problems relating to the density and peculiar linguistic construction of written texts, as opposed to oral discourse, and the risk of linguistic interference (1995, p. 185). However, observation of simultaneous interpreters working from scripted speeches in settings of this kind shows that seasoned interpreters, being aware of the speaker's potential departure from the scripted speech, would anticipatorily use the script as pre-recorded notes, and would highlight beforehand key ideas in the speech to help them cope with any deviation from the written text. To this end, Gile concedes that scripted simultaneous interpreting "does seem to make interpretation possible under acoustic and delivery conditions which would be prohibitory without the text" (1995, p. 185).

Live simultaneous interpreting for television broadcasts requires skills and modes of delivery that are quite different from other forms of simultaneous interpreting, such as conference interpreting. The history of conference interpreting dates back to 1945 when the first United Nations conference on international organization was held, but live television interpreting is somewhat younger. In Europe, for example,

simultaneous interpreting for television had an early beginning at the height of the Cold War in the early 1960s. In recent years, simultaneous interpreting has been playing a much bigger role internationally consequent to the political upheavals which necessitate negotiations and discussions among different countries, cultures and ideologies. Embedded reporting, live broadcasts from war zones, on the go interviews with local figures, analysts, and observers, and on the scene press conferences on CNN (Cable News Network), BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), and other international cable television stations like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya Broadcasting Corporation, have given impetus to simultaneous interpreting into Arabic, English and many other languages.

Pöchhacker (1995) observes that simultaneous interpreting in live broadcasts is one of the more specialized forms of language transfer in the audio-visual media. It has a narrower scope of application than dubbing, subtitling and other translation-mediated techniques since it is confined to live unscripted interviews, discussions, talk shows and the interpreting of breaking news. In recent years, simultaneous interpreting has increasingly covered live ad hoc and scheduled press conferences and speeches by political leaders as well as news broadcasts utilizing sign language. Yet, as Pöchhacker (1995) confirms, as a rule, interpreting into the target language is “broadcast as a voice-over, with the original speaker still audible in the background” (1995, p. 207).

Finally, television interpreting is a live communication process that takes place in real time. It is a time-critical performance that requires a heightened level of awareness and cognitive priming to enable the interpreter to make accurate time-critical decisions (Darwish, 2003). This crucial factor adds to the complexity of the action as it affects the quality of performance, the rate of delivery, recovery strategies and synchronicity of performance. Moser-Mercer (1997) confirms that in time-constrained tasks, such as simultaneous interpreting, how and when to apply a particular strategy is of crucial importance, leading to the conclusion that “the emphasis shifts from knowledge structures to the dynamic nature of their use” (p. 194).

An interpreter working for a television or radio station has to make sure that their style and delivery are particularly smooth and clear, regardless of the original. This is so because television and radio audiences are accustomed to the well-trained voices of newsreaders and commentators and do not understand or appreciate the very different demands made on interpreters. Furthermore, the media interpreter must work with a very short 'ear-voice span' (EVS), beginning an utterance without the usual lag (which is unsettling to listeners), and with as little overhang as possible once the speaker has finished (AIIC, 1999).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

A number of issues confront conference and television interpreters today, though there has been considerable research done by translation and interpreting academics, translation centres and think tanks. Many interpreters continue to employ strategies that are not useful or effective in solving communication problems in conveying ideas from SL (source language) to TL (target language) during interpreting. Conference and television interpreters work in different environments but they face similar challenges that impact and affect their rendition. These challenges ultimately hinder an error-free flow of ideas while interpreting speakers of different languages. This has never been more evident than in the UN conference rooms where errors and misinformation during faulty interpreting result in arguments, discord and fraying of tempers. Interpreters who may omit a word or a sentence while trying to catch up with the speaker add to the problem.

An effort is made here in this study to identify the various challenges and problems that continue to challenge the modern-day interpreter and update the progress made so far in the light of various studies and research on the subject to date.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

This study attempts to:

- 1) Explore and analyse some of the major problems that professional conference and television interpreters face in conference and media settings when they are interpreting in their A or B/C language. Although the major focus of the research will be on interpreters whose A language is Arabic, the questionnaire and interviews covered many other interpreters whose languages are among the six official languages of the United Nations.
- 2) Outline the main strategies that professional conference and television interpreters employ during interpreting.
- 3) Based on the findings, suggest solutions for the problems, and if possible, offer applicable strategies that may help improve the interpreters' competence and enhance their potential in interpreting.
- 4) Give insight to trainee and new interpreters embarking in this industry in terms of highlighting the best practices used by television, UN and AIIC interpreters.

### **1.4 Questions addressed by the study**

To achieve these goals, the study aims to answer the following questions:

What are the major challenges facing professional conference interpreters and television interpreters?

What are the strategies that professional conference interpreters and television interpreters usually employ when interpreting?

What are the suggestions/techniques that experienced interpreters use to solve the many challenges in interpreting?

### **1.5 Rationale for the study**

Interpreting is a young science compared to other disciplines. As a result, there have not been adequate studies to analyse and find solutions to the challenges faced by conference and television interpreters. This research seeks to examine the issue and outline possible solutions suggested by experienced interpreters used to deal with these challenges.

This study will also take note of the contributions made by previous experienced UN interpreters and AIC practitioners through their various studies though the number of such studies is still small. Moreover, many parts of this research will be based on real-time interpreting experiences in an attempt to analyse some of the most pressing challenges facing conference and television interpreters. Again, the research focus here is also different from other studies in terms of the methodology.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter looks at the evolution of interpreting over the years and the factors that have contributed to its development. An attempt is made to describe the differences between interpreting and translation and to define the qualities that conference and television interpreters should possess. This chapter also identifies the challenges interpreters face as described in previous studies.

### **2.2 Evolution of interpreting**

Interpretation or interpreting is oral translation of speech or sign from one language into another. It is a vital function connecting people of diverse cultures speaking different languages. An interpreter strives to communicate, to the extent possible, the thought or expression given in a source language (SL) into another target language (TL). Sometimes it is done simultaneously, i.e. at the same time as the person in the source language speaks; on other occasions, the interpreter waits for the speaker to fully express an idea and then pause for the interpreter to convey the meaning in the target language. The latter is referred to as consecutive interpreting.

Interpreting has existed from time immemorial, because people from different countries speak different languages and various activities bring these people together. Such activities include commerce, cultural exchanges, tourism, academic work, and even wars between nations. According to Pöchhacker and Shlesinger (2002), interpreters were hired even in ancient times for exploration campaigns or when colonizers of new territories employed slave labour.

However, no serious study or research was done into the science of interpreting until its importance as an essential profession was recognized early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Conference Interpreting was recognized as a respectable profession after the First World War, with the establishment of the League of Nations and the International Labor Office (Bowen & Bowen, 1990; Ramler, 1988). According to Gaiba (1998), the

formal practice of simultaneous interpreting started in the 1940s. "The Nuremberg Trial was the first official international gathering in which simultaneous interpreting was used" (Gaiba, 1998, p. 19).

Tracing the history of evolution of interpretation research, Gile (1994) talks of four phases:

- 1) The 1950s witnessed modest individual efforts which did not yield any sweeping changes in introducing innovative interpreting theories, and the attempts were not based on empirical research.
- 2) The experimental psychology period that followed in the sixties and early seventies focused on influences such as source language, noise, and speed of delivery.
- 3) The seventies and into the mid-eighties was the period during which most research was conducted by interpreter practitioners. Research in this period was theoretical and conceptualized. However, this period focused on the concept of the intended message of the source language and ignored literal meanings. This marked a watershed in the history of interpreting as the concept of focusing on the intended message, rather than the literal meaning (which could give rise to awkward moments), began to take hold.
- 4) The renaissance period in the eighties and into the nineties was characterized by calls for more empirical studies, and there has been increasing communication between interpreting researchers.

The profile of interpreters was enhanced as they shared the venue with the conference participants, who were important people from politics. As the job required a certain amount of scholarship on the part of interpreters, they were picked from among academics. Later this trend continued with the United Nations as well (Baigorri-Jalón 2000, 2004). That status continues to this day, as during one-to-one exchanges between world leaders, particularly on occasions such as state visits, sometimes it is only the interpreters being used who are allowed to be present, as distinct from others who might be present on other occasions, such as the chief interpreter.



Interpreters came to be in great demand with the advent of international conferences in various fields. Consequently in the committees and working groups constituted during these conferences, interpreters were an inevitable component. In seminars, court trials, television programs, and board meetings of mega corporations, interpreters had an important role in communication. It was against this backdrop that the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) was formed in 1953, based on the prestigious status the interpreters enjoyed as professionals, and subsequently prominent institutes for the training of interpreters were set up in Geneva, Heidelberg, and Paris (AIIC, 1965).

Conference and television interpreters share some of the same qualities, and these will be discussed next.

### **2.3 Qualities of conference/television interpreters**

As interpreting turned into a regular profession, the need to standardize the qualities of a good interpreter arose. Driven by this need, a considerable amount of research has been carried out in this regard. Many surveys were done among interpreters – by Bühler in 1986 and more importantly by Kurz who conducted a pilot study on the subject (1996) – to prioritize the qualities that their clients sought in a good interpreter. Though these qualities included parameters relating to content, language and delivery, by and large the end users set more value on content compared to form, slight differences in opinion notwithstanding (Gile, 2006).

The researchers thus laid out the key qualities of good interpreters, although this was based on anecdotal evidence rather than empirical research. According to Gerver and colleagues (1989), a good interpreter should have a thorough knowledge of active and passive language and culture, be able to quickly grasp and deliver the meaning of what is being said, have a good voice, be widely read, and be a team player. In addition, interpreters should also be able to improvise in difficult situations so as to overcome unforeseen problems. Commenting on the factors that influence the work of an interpreter, Gile (1990) identified the peculiarities of the source

language, how fast a person speaks, the speaker's accent and style, use of idioms specific to the speaker's language, the subject specialization, pronunciation, and the acoustics of the location where the interpreting is occurring. The interpreting done during a conference can also be affected by the temperature of the location where the interpreter is seated, whether the speaker can be seen by the interpreter and other general conditions of the conference venue.

AIIC has also done a significant amount of work in this regard. AIIC defined a conference interpreter as a:

*qualified specialist in bilingual or multilingual communication. He/she makes this communication possible between delegates of different linguistic communities at conferences, meetings, negotiations or visits where more than one working language is used, by comprehending the concept of the speaker's message and conveying them orally in another language, either consecutive[ly], simultaneous[ly] or [by] whispering. Besides carrying out a thorough preparation of the subject and terminology, a conference interpreter must possess a wide general knowledge in order to deal with all the matters under discussion (AIIC, 1999, n.p.).*

It was Moser-Mercer who enhanced the meaning of professional interpreting. Lambert and Moser-Mercer noted that professional interpreting:

*implies that an interpreter provides a complete and accurate rendition of the original that does not distort the original message and tries to capture any and all extra-linguistic information that the speaker might have provided, subject to the constraints imposed by certain external conditions (1994, p. 44).*

This was not to ignore the extraneous factors mentioned earlier that could impact good interpreting. That list could change with place and people, as circumstances present different challenges that the interpreter has to face. Therefore, such issues could be taken note of based on practical experience from time to time.

For instance, Nolan (2005) discussed many issues that can suddenly pose a challenge to the interpreter and break the flow of interpreting. Interpreters, however experienced and skilful they are, have to guard against these surprise elements. An

interpreter may follow all the fundamental principles of interpreting, but a speaker could suddenly present a new and bizarre idea, unfamiliar phrases, and eccentric gesticulations, all of which the interpreter has to decipher to convey the content of what is being said.

Some speakers' accents will be hard to comprehend and the failure of the sound system can add to the difficulties of the interpreter (Nolan, 2005). The speaker's cultural and educational background can result in unintelligible accents, wrong usage of words, phrases or expressions, and a clipped delivery. Some speakers can be very verbose and have a circuitous way of stating facts, whereas the interpreter has to focus on the content. A good interpreter sometimes has to anticipate what the speaker is going to say to save on time, and intelligently convey the meaning of the speech even if some words could be missing or lost because of technical issues. The speaker may even make erroneous statements, because they are not fluent in the language, but it is necessary for the interpreter to not embarrass the speaker, by conveying the content correctly. At the same time the interpreter should not appear to be making wild guesses and the audience should feel that there is no contradiction with what the speaker said. An interpreter doing simultaneous interpreting does not have the time or opportunity to consult or refer to others or to pause, as they are racing against the clock. An interpreter can use intonation, put stress on words or phrases, and so on to help effectively convey the meaning of a speech (Nolan, 2005). A critical sentence missed can completely change the meaning of a whole speech and can have unprecedented consequences, particularly when the conference is being attended by the media for whom the interpreter is the source for news.

An interpreter should be mentally alert all the time for optimal performance during conference interpreting. They cannot allow the mind to wander and should be able to concentrate on the proceedings all the time. They do not have the privilege of being able to refer back to a sentence and correct it. They should be willing to sit and listen for long periods of time. However, interpreters have the benefit of learning something new in terms of the subject, language, and people every day on the job. It is of great advantage to them to be widely read, so as to have a broad understanding

of all subjects to the widest extent possible as such knowledge can be useful any time in the course of the job, as noted:

*Interpreters must be able to understand and clearly state a wide range of possible ideas and arguments representing different sides of any issue, even arguments which may seem implausible, or with which they may strongly disagree. Careful observation of speakers' gestures and demeanour, as well as the reactions of listeners, will provide additional clues to the intent behind the words. Knowing the specific themes of a conference in advance and obtaining a copy of the agenda, background documents, list of speakers, and any prepared speeches available can also be very helpful (Nolan, 2012, p. 17).*

People sometimes become confused about the difference between translation and interpreting, so this will be explained next.

## **2.4 Translation: how it differs from interpreting**

Both translation and interpreting are processes that enable multilingual communication with the language as the common factor, but beyond that the two techniques are different from one another in many respects; in particular, that translation is written and interpreting is spoken.

Finlay (1971) states that the translator should have entirely different attributes than the interpreter though in principle both are apparently doing the same job, i.e., conveying ideas expressed in one language in another. Therefore, there are very few people working across both disciplines. The translator needs to pass the source text's ideas into a different language with as much precision as possible, without losing the style or "soul" of the original. In this, translators have the liberty of time, reference books, consultation, and rewriting to produce a copy as close to the original as possible.

Interpreters do not have any such liberties. However, it may be said that to compensate for the major constraint of time, an interpreter may be allowed an artistic license where their minor faults will be overlooked. They are at the same

time translating (taking notes while the speaker is talking) in consecutive interpreting or listening and interpreting at the same time as the speaker in simultaneous interpreting. Even in consecutive interpreting, the interpreter gets very little time to reformulate their thoughts, unless as noted previously, they have a prepared source text with them. Thus, the task of the simultaneous interpreter is much more arduous as they engage in real-time processing of what is said in the source language before reformulating the same in the target language without error in content and even style.

Translation, whose beginning is sometimes considered to arise from the legend of the Tower of Babel (Finlay, 1971, p. 17), is defined as "a bilingual mediated process of communication which ordinarily aims at the production of a Target Language (TL) text that is functionally equivalent to a Source Language (SL) text" (Reiss, 1971, p. 161). Furthermore, regarding the definition of translation, Brislin (1976, p. 1) notes:

*The general term referring to the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form; whether the languages have established orthographies or do not have such standardization or whether one or both languages is based on signs, as with sign languages of the deaf.*

In a similar position, Pinhhuck (1977, p. 38) defines translation as "a process of finding a TL equivalent for an SL utterance." Moreover, Wilss (1982, p. 3) points out the following:

*Translation is a transfer process, which aims at the transformation of a written SL text into an optimally equivalent TL text, and which requires the syntactic, the semantic and the pragmatic understanding and analytical processing of the SL.*

Nida (1984, p. 83) argues that "translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." Likewise, translation, as Bell (1991, p. 8) asserts, involves the transfer of meaning from a text in one language into a text in another language.

Hatim and Mason (1997, p. 1) consider translation as "an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication". In most cases, according to Houbert (1998, p. 1), "translation is to be understood as the process whereby a message expressed in a specific source language is linguistically transformed in order to be understood by readers of the target language". Taking a different viewpoint, Nogueira (1998, p. 1) asserts that "translation is a service business". Moreover, Hatim and Mason (1990, p. 1) affirm that "translation is a useful case for examining the whole issue of the role of language in social life."

Translation can also be considered as "the process of establishing equivalence between the source language texts and target language texts" (Sa'edi, 2004, p. 242), which aims at passing on "an understanding to people in their own language and creating the same impact as the original text" (Galibert, 2004, p. 1).

Though translation is considered a science by some scholars, it does not conform to the two key features of science – precision and predictability. By the very nature of the profession, translation, much less interpreting, does not meet these criteria. Miremadi (1991, p. 39) writes that, "whether translation is considered an art or a science, it is, in its modern sense, a by-product of a long history of trials and errors, developments, improvements and innovations." Furthermore, Long (1996, p. 10) believes that the desire for creating a science of translation seems to be wishful thinking.

Conference interpreting is considered "a skill difficult to explain and put into words and whose teaching is even more difficult, if not impossible" (Riccardi, 2005, p. 757). Riccardi (1998) states that simultaneous interpreting can be considered a problem-solving activity. The difficulty arises from the original speech, while the solution occurs in the interpreted speech, and the strategies comprise the mechanisms and decisions that take place between the problem and its solution. Additional difficulties are due to the availability of specific vocabulary in the target language, as well as taboo topics.

Simultaneous interpreting, which is a time-critical performance, presupposes a higher level of awareness of the subject and a number of other factors on the part of the interpreter to be able to deliver a good performance. The SL (source language) factors are critical as they influence the quality of performance, the rate of delivery, the Search, Locate, Retrieve and Match (SLRM) mechanisms, recovery strategies and synchronicity of performance (Darwish, 2003, p. 108). Moser-Mercer (1997, p. 244) confirms that in time-constrained tasks, such as simultaneous interpreting, how and when to apply a particular strategy is of crucial importance leading to the conclusion that “the emphasis shifts from knowledge structures to the dynamic nature of their use”. Therefore, Moser-Mercer (1997) argues that the organization of knowledge is more crucial for the retrieval and response times than possessing the appropriate knowledge structures.

Conference interpreting presents challenges, and so too does television interpreting which presents both similar and different challenges.

## **2.5 Interpreting the media**

In the last few decades, media interpreting, particularly television interpreting, has engaged the attention of researchers in a significant way. Austrian media interpreter Kurz (1985) described in detail the special challenges and limitations faced by interpreters in the media. Work in media settings since then has increased many times and has become more diverse (Kurz, 1997). In countries such as Japan and Taiwan, television interpreting has become established with the emergence of a special form of previewed news interpreting (cf. Mizuno in Snelling, 1997). This is also true of broadcasters such as the Franco-German channel ARTE (*Association Relative à la Télévision Européenne*), but the majority of the SL assignments on television are in connection with special occasions and limited to only a few language combinations (Pöchhacker, 1998).

### **2.5.1 Television interpreting**

Kurz (1997) pointed out some of the difficulties that television interpreters face when compared to simultaneous conference interpreters. She grouped them into three aspects as follows:

a) Physical environment: Interpreters do not sit in a sound-proof booth but in a newsroom subject to visual distractions and disturbances. There is no interaction with the speaker, while in conference interpreting, participants and speakers interact with each other.

b) Work-related factors: Television interpreters, quite often, have to work at short notice with little opportunity for preparation, while the conference interpreter can prepare him/herself and get used to speakers.

c) Psycho-emotional factors: Unlike conference interpreters, whose audience is limited in number, television interpreting is carried out for an audience of millions or more, which increases the fear of failure for interpreters.

Television interpreting is more challenging and more complex, compared to other forms of interpreting, particularly conference interpreting. Generally, television interpreters have to do their job in real time without any prepared scripts. On rare occasions they can get hold of texts of speeches from news agencies, but this is mostly fortuitous. One example involves pre-determined events such as the annual Independence Day speech by a head of state and the State of the Union speech by U.S. presidents. However, in the current news-dominated world, interpreters are required to manage unscheduled events, press conferences, and impromptu public addresses by political leaders. Televised trials, US Congressional Committee hearings, parliamentary debates are all cases in point. Such challenges can lead to errors and a decline in the quality of reporting especially when “in some respects the level of output expected in media interpreting is even considerably higher” (Pöchhacker, 1995, p. 207) than in conference interpreting. The advice frequently given to interpreters to concentrate on ideas rather than words has been so often misused and misunderstood (Darwish, 2003, p. 69). According to Gile (1997, p. 199)



“interpreters do indeed listen and speak simultaneously during most of their interpreting time”, which indicates the real workload involved.

Thus, live interpreting in real time for television broadcasts requires different skills and a different mode of delivery compared to conference interpreting. It was from 1945, when the first UN conference on international organizations was held, that conference reporting took centre stage and started playing a prominent role. Live television interpreting came later. In the early 1960s, simultaneous interpreting on television made a notable beginning at the height of the Cold War. Television interpreting from English to other languages and vice versa became popular globally, with embedded reporting, live broadcasts from war zones, live interviews with political leaders, analysts, and celebrities on major world channels such as the BBC and CNN.

Arguably, the most popular type of media interpreting is television interpreting, also referred to as broadcast interpreting or telecast simultaneous interpreting (Darwish, 2010). Many consider it a ‘tough market’ because it is usually restricted to special events (Pöchhacker, 2011, p. 322), with some exceptions such as the daily newscasts in Japan (Tsuruta, 2011), the recently discontinued newscasts in the French-German channel ARTE (Association Relative à la Télévision Européenne) (Andres & Fünfer, 2011; Tsuruta & Buck, 2012), and the 'infotainment' and 'breaking news' programs in countries such as Italy. There are, however, promising prospects, as the amount of live footage on television in foreign languages is said to be increasing (Braun, 2006).

Pöchhacker (1995) observes that simultaneous interpreting in live broadcasts is one of the more specialized forms of language transfer in the audio-visual media. It has a narrower scope of application than dubbing, subtitling, and other translation-mediated techniques since it is confined to live unscripted interviews, discussions, and talk shows. In recent years, simultaneous interpreting has increasingly covered live ad hoc and scheduled press conferences and speeches by statesmen and women and politicians, as well as news broadcasts utilizing sign language. Yet as Pöchhacker (1995) confirms, as a rule, interpreting into the target language is “broadcast as a voice-over, with the original speaker still audible in the background” (p. 207).

According to Darwish (2006), telecast simultaneous interpreting occurs in live broadcasts; it is one of the more specialized forms of communication, in which three parties are involved; a presenter, guest(s) who are present in the same studio or in a remote location and the interpreter who is present at the same location as the show or at a remote location. In most cases, the guests are visible and audible but the interpreter is only audible. In this mode of interpreting, the interpreter is under pressure, which creates problems, leads to errors, and reduces the performance quality to sometimes unacceptable levels. Difficulties of telecast simultaneous interpreting reported by Darwish (2006) included problems with idioms, grammatical inflections, enunciation, pronunciation, comprehension and the interpreters' poor competence in their own standard language, Arabic.

To make a few technical points, as per AIIIC, the indispensable requirements for television interpreting include a sound-proof booth, earphones with individual volume control (not the thick cushioned type), one microphone per person, provision to hear all persons participating, full view of the set and contact with technicians to test all equipment under 'live' simulated circumstances. All this will enable the interpreter to listen well and pick up peaks, dips, phase shifts, imbalances, and so on in the speaker's voice.

Interpreters employ strategies to deal with both conference and television interpreting.

### **2.5.2 Arabic media**

It is with the establishment of the first privately owned Arabic television broadcaster, the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) in 1985 during the Lebanese Civil War, that television became popular in the Arab world. LBC in 1992 became the LBCI (I for international), and in 1996 it went global, launching a satellite channel. Simultaneous television reporting in the Arab world can be said to have begun during the 1990s. The Cable News Network (CNN) became immensely popular in the Arabic-speaking world during the first Gulf War and invasion of Kuwait, and:

*triggered [a] series of developments that led to the establishment of private television in Arab countries, inaugurated with the 1991 launching in London of the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) by Saudi business interests with the support of the royal family (Kraidy, 2002, p. 3).*

According to Alterman (2002), the rise of these Arabic satellite-broadcast television stations in the last decade has caused a revolution in the Arab world. These stations have challenged traditional state monopolies over television broadcasting and:

*have played a significant role in breaking down censorship barriers in the region. They have encouraged open debates on previously taboo subjects like secularism and religion, provided fora for opposition political leaders from a number of countries, and given a voice to perspectives that were previously absent from the Arab media (Alterman, 2002, p. 47).*

The advent of Arabic satellite television stations in the Arab world has dramatically changed the way news and current affairs programs are presented in Arabic today. The rise of Al Jazeera:

*in the aftermath of the September 11 events and US-led war on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, has placed a great deal of demand on Arabic satellite television stations to vie for first place as an international Arab media player and as a regional democratization and normalization agent in the Arab world (Darwish, 2006, p. 62).*

The creation of many Arabic channels resulted in greater competition and the resulting increase in news and current affairs programs, presenting contrasting views from the East and the West, led to a great demand for professional and qualified simultaneous television interpreters. The persistently volatile political situation in the Middle East, marked by the 'Arab Spring' and the rise of the Islamic State across the region, fuelled the growth of Arab television channels and also television interpreting (Darwish, 2006). As premier broadcasting corporations in the Middle East such as Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Sky News Arabia competed with the Western media outlets by extensively covering the events and trying to put across an

alternative point of view to reach the 20 million plus viewers in the region (Allied Media, n.d.), television interpreting evolved as an integral part of media coverage.

## **2.6 Strategies used by conference and television interpreters**

Kohn and Kalina (1996, p. 126) point out that interpreting can be explained in terms of its strategic dimension, in the sense that it constitutes a speech that is strategically processed and produced with the objective of facilitating the inter-linguistic transfer of mental models which have been created on the basis of a source and target speech. Kohn and Kalina (1996) use the term “strategy” in the broad sense to refer to the text processing and production operations performed by the interpreter during the reception and/or production of a speech. Similarly, Riccardi (1996) studies the difficulties encountered and the solutions brought to bear by interpreters with differing degrees of experience as they tackle a simultaneous interpreting task. From a more theoretical point of view, Riccardi (1996) has reflected on the creative component in interpreting strategies. In her study published in 1999, Riccardi emphasizes that there are general strategies, which are applicable to all language combinations and specific strategies applicable to the individual language pairs in question. Riccardi (2005) distinguishes between comprehension, production, overall and emergency strategies. Comprehension strategies generally include anticipation, segmentation, selection of information, stalling, or waiting, while production strategies consist of compression, expansion, approximation strategies, generalization, use of linguistic open-end forms, morpho-syntactic transformation, and the use of prosodic elements, such as pauses and intonation. Decalage and monitoring are counted as part of the overall strategies, while emergency strategies include, among other things, the omission of text segments, transcoding and parallel reformulation.

Looking at conference interpreting as a cognitive management problem, Gile (1997) argues for the Effort Model he propounded in 1995. This model is based on the notion that simultaneous interpreting is a process that consists of three major “efforts”. Gile proposed his Effort Models to help interpreters understand the

“difficulties [of interpreting] and select appropriate strategies and tactics” (Gile, 1992, p. 191). The underlying basic ideas are mainly two-fold: “Interpretation requires some sort of mental ‘energy’ that is only available in limited supply”, and it “takes up almost all of this mental energy, and sometimes requires more than is available, at which times performance deteriorates” (Gile, 1995, p. 161).

The key concepts of the Effort Models are Processing Capacity and “the fact that some mental operations in interpreting require” a significant amount of it (Gile, 1992, p. 191). Since each interpreting phase implies an effort, the interpreter should therefore be able to find a balance among them in terms of energy. According to Gile (1992), the efforts an interpreter faces fall into four categories:

1) Listening and Analysis Effort: concerning all “comprehension-oriented operations, from the analysis of the sound waves carrying the source-language speech which reaches the interpreter’s ears through the identification of words to the final decisions about the ‘meaning’ of the utterance” (Gile, 1995, p. 162). These efforts are related to understanding: the mere hearing of the sounds of words is useless if the interpreter’s brain does not convert them into a meaningful message.

2) Memory Effort: seen “more as a storage mechanism where information is temporarily kept before further processing takes place” (Liu, 2008, p. 173).

3) Production Effort: in consecutive interpreting, this is further divided in two production phases, the first being the moment in which the interpreter listens to the SL speech and takes notes and the second being the TL speech delivery (Gile, 1995, p. 165).

4) Coordination Effort: compared to “the air-traffic controller for the interpreting that takes place, allowing the interpreter to manage his/her focus of attention between the listening and analysis task and the ongoing self-monitoring that occurs during performance” (Leeson, 2005, p. 57). Once interpreters achieve this coordination point, they are able to perform the interpreting job in the most optimal manner, since their skills are balanced with the task in question. This is why the Coordination Effort plays such a fundamental role: the “art of smooth interpretation is based on the art of smooth coordination. Even if sometimes these Efforts overlap,

coordination actually finds the balance between all the factors” (Kriston, 2012, p. 81).

Gile’s (1995) effort model still applies today, and conference interpreters working in real time need to balance four key elements, these being listening and analysis, memorizing, production, and coordination, so as to assimilate SL information and convey the same in TL fluently and without stress.

Gile (1997) attributed most of the errors, omissions, and other weaknesses in interpreting output to the failure to meet these conditions due to capacity overload or poor capacity management. This accounted for many problems observed in daily practice and noted in the literature, including difficulties with read speeches, fast speakers, unfamiliar accents, enumerations, numbers and proper names, and explained, through a “carryover effect”, some errors and omissions in source speech segments without identifiable difficulties. Gile’s (1997) “tightrope hypothesis” is based on the assumption that interpreters work close to saturation, and many events occurring during interpreting tip the scales and generate errors and omissions. Saturation phenomena also account for many problems in consecutive interpreting, which consists of two phases. During the listening phase, the interpreter’s attention is shared between listening and analysis, memory, and note production in much the same way as it is shared between listening, memory, and speech production in simultaneous interpreting.

Next we will look in detail at the different challenges facing both conference and television interpreters.

## **2.7 Challenges facing conference and television interpreters**

The challenges faced by conference/television interpreters are many and diverse, the first being the fast delivery by the speaker. Interpreting becomes even more challenging when, for example, the speaker quotes from holy books, where a wrong interpretation can lead to unforeseen consequences; the speaker cracks jokes which may be funny in one culture but not so funny in another; or the speaker cites too many unfamiliar names and numbers, which may lead to

misquoting unless the interpreter is very attentive and has a good memory. Sometimes the interpreter may not be able to understand the speaker because of their unique accent, lack of clarity of expression or technical problems arising from relay or remote interpreting. Although the problems cited above represent the concerns voiced by many conference and television interpreters, the researcher focused on the most pressing challenges which were featured most prominently in the one-to-one interviews with the participants, and the scale of difficulties of the most salient ones is shown below.

Regarding the possible organisation of the analysis categories, one model that suggests itself is to organise them as follows:

- Speaker-related issues: fast delivery, accents and dialects
- External factors: noise, relay interpreting factors, technical aspects
- Culture-bound references: jokes and humour, religious references, use of idioms
- Interpreter-related issues: ethics, material against beliefs, fatigue and maximum hours

While this structure is useful in terms of organising the themes into four main groups, the reason that the following entries are not organised as above is because they are presented in terms of their importance rather than arbitrarily structured. The reader can therefore see the issues that interpreters find most significant and challenging appearing first.

### ***2.7.1 Fast delivery***

It is widely accepted that fast speech is the nemesis of interpreters (Liu, 2008). Speech rate/speed is measured by the number of words spoken in a minute. This speed is influenced by many demographic, cultural, linguistic, individual, and psychological factors. The number of words per minute (WPM) spoken by people can vary according to the previously mentioned factors. Roach (1998) argues that one judges the speed of delivery of a speech by just listening to it, but it is difficult to decide on what basis that judgement is made. Some speakers seem to talk fast, some slow, and yet others seem to speak at a moderate speed. Two different

measurements can be applied to measure the speech speed: one including pauses and hesitations, the other excluding both. Li (2010) states that it is widely recognized that a rate between 100 and 120 words per minute is optimal for English speeches, although the figure may differ for different speech types. Galli (1990) studied the effects of speech rate with three professional interpreters working between English and Italian, at speeds ranging from 106 to 156 words per minute.

According to Li (2010, p. 19), “fast speech is the arch enemy of simultaneous interpreters”. If the interpreter is well prepared, they can make up for their deficiencies in knowledge and terminology, and that can make interpreting fast speech somewhat easier. However, if the speech speed exceeds a certain optimal limit, interpreting can suffer, no matter how knowledgeable the interpreter is on the subject. The reason is that all interpreters have limited mental capacity but they have to pay attention to several factors in simultaneous interpreting, such as listening, production, memory and coordination (Gile, 1995, p. 161). When a speaker speaks very fast, the interpreter takes most of the time just to listen to and analyse the information in the SL, leaving them little time for reproduction of that information in the TL.

The brain is a processing machine. If the brain is loaded with too much information, as during fast speeches, processing will suffer and that will adversely affect the output. The problems posed by fast speeches are more real at international conferences. The first is mistranslation and loss of information (Li, 2010). There is a maximum output that an interpreter can produce within a given time interval; as noted by Li (2010), the greater the input, the greater the chance of error and omission. Secondly, fast delivery makes comprehension difficult even when the audience is listening to their native language. Thirdly, while English has become a global language, it is a non-native language to many, if not most, international conference participants. The latter may lose information when either the speaker or the interpreter speaks too fast.

To ensure the proper functioning of the interpreter’s brain, the speaker must speak at an appropriate speed. Studies show that speech rate has a direct correlation with



interpretation quality (Grever 1969). Accuracy is reduced as the speed of the speech increases. Interpreters generally believe that to ensure the quality of interpretation, as indicated earlier, a rate between 100 and 120 (English) words per minute (WPM) is optimal for speeches that are not read from a written text, although the figure may differ for different types of speech. Lederer (1981) suggested that for recited texts which are devoid of the hesitation and redundancy that characterize official speeches, the maximum rate should be 100 WPM (Gerver, 1969; Seleskovitch, 1978; Lederer, 1981).

Many professional interpreters tend to agree that a speed of 120 WPM is acceptable. To quote a comment from the message board of AIIC:

*We all know that a speaker speaking at about 100 to 120 words per minute is perfectly acceptable. However, there are exceptions to this: dense originals without much redundancy. Such speeches may seem excessively fast even if presented at 120 words per minute. Normally, however, any original exceeding 140 words per minute is fast. I have clocked speakers at 180 words per minute (Communicate, 1999).*

Pöschhacker (2004) referred to the advantage of pauses as a way of avoiding simultaneity of speaking and listening. However, Chernov (2004), who studied the speed of delivery of interpreters, argued that the speed of delivery [of the act of simultaneous interpreting] is relatively dependent on the speed of the incoming discourse. He stated that lag and simultaneity are independent of the source language (SL) combination, and only relatively dependent on the SL speech, and consequently on the rate of the SI (simultaneous interpreting) activity, but depend considerably on the level of professionalism of the interpreter (2004, p. 15).

Chernov (2004) claimed that the interpreter's speed is also dependent on other factors such as text type, whether scientific, neutral, or legal, and so forth, the strategies the interpreter employs, and the level of proficiency the interpreter enjoys as well as their familiarity with such text types and their ability to anticipate what is coming.

Lambert (2004) argued that, despite the fact that practice and experience may lend weight to performing two tasks simultaneously, the phenomenon of simultaneous interpreting (SI) is still considered unnatural. To avoid the strain of continuous processing in this fashion, it has been suggested that simultaneous interpreters, even with years of experience, make good use of the brief silences in the source-language input to overcome speed and time lag.

Therefore one can conclude that speaking fast beyond the optimal speed of 100 to 120 WPM (Li, 2010) can reduce the quality of interpreting whether in conferences or on television. Poor quality interpreting can often be attributed to inordinately fast delivery by the speaker. Chernov (2004, p. 17) notes:

*that the interpreter's speed does not increase proportionally with the speaker's. In fact, as if 'fighting' the speaker's accelerating pace, the interpreter brings his/her own rate of speaking down to 71%, 73%, and 74% of the rate of the SL while his/her speech approaches the speaker's own most closely (87%) at the normal or optimal input of 120 wpm.*

Excessively fast delivery of a speech makes the interpreter lag behind and researchers have suggested various techniques to overcome this problem. Unacceptably fast speech can put the interpreter in a difficult position and often it is not easy to catch up with the speaker as the interpreter has to listen to the SL, and then organize their thoughts properly before conveying the meaning in the TL, while also monitoring their output and listening to the next stretch in the SL. Some practitioners in the profession advise interpreters to make use of the occasional pauses to make up for the time lag but many feel this is not a useful solution. Gerver (1971), for example, argued that such pauses are not of significant value. In simultaneous interpreting, the interpreter must follow the speaker closely, cleverly constructing meaningful output particularly while interpreting from and into languages with varying syntax and sentence structure. Interpreters have to improvise shorter sentences if the speaker is verbose and indulges in flowery language. They may also use padding (filling in time or gaps without adding anything) intelligently and without misinforming if the speaker says something that does not

make much sense in the course of the speech. In other words, interpreters have to resort to fill the gap by using a few words that can be derived from the context of the speech. These words may fall into the category of figures of speech, proverbs, idioms (Crezee & Grant, 2013; Crezee & Grant, 2016) or certain equivalents that compensate for the loss of certain words in the SL.

### **2.7.2 Idioms**

Another problematic issue for the interpreter occurs when the speaker is fond of idiomatic expressions, particular those which are culture-related or based on realia; i.e. lexical items designating elements specific to a particular culture. Bulgarian scholars Vlachov and Florin (1970, p. 432) defined “realia” as follows:

*[R]ealia are words (and composed expressions)... representing denominations of objects, concepts, typical phenomena of a given geographic place, of material life or of social-historical peculiarities of some people, nation, country, tribe [sic], that for this reason carry a national, local or historical colour; these words do not have exact matches in other languages.*

Idioms are lexical expressions that have evolved over a period of time and are directly linked to a place, people, religion, or culture. Idioms are an essential part of any language and reflect a tradition or culture peculiar to the region where they are used. According to Larson, an idiom is “a string of words whose meaning is different from the meaning conveyed by the individual words” (1984, p. 20). In another place he states that an idiom “carries certain emotive connotations not expressed in the other lexical items” (Larson, 1984, p. 142).

Therefore, it is clear that an interpreter cannot give a word-for-word translation of the meaning of an idiom, and worse still, an idiom may be specific to the geographical area a speaker originates from. This poses a definite challenge to the interpreter which would magnify with the differences between the SL and TL.

In her book, Baker (1992, p. 63) states that “idioms are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be

deduced from their individual components”. Translating idioms is arguably the most complex and problematic task for translators. Gottlieb suggests that “an idiom is difficult to decode correctly for someone who only knows the normal meanings of its constituent elements” (1997, p. 260). In another definition proposed by Beekman and Callow, idioms are described as “the combination of at least two words which cannot be understood literally and which function as a unit semantically” (1997, p. 49).

The cultural attributes of an idiom necessitates for the interpreter a thorough knowledge of both the SL and TL to give an approximate if not accurate meaning of an idiom used by a speaker. Thus, a good interpreter needs to have cross-cultural awareness, and sufficient alertness to choose the correct idiom if available from the TL. A word or an expression may not have the same meaning in different languages depending on a number of factors. When there is a wide socio-cultural divide between two communities, it is reflected in the respective languages. Therefore the interpreter has to be very careful while conveying the meanings of idioms in such contexts, though because of decades of commerce and association in the recent past, some idioms in the SL may indeed have an equivalent expression in the TL, which are discussed below. Table 1 has a few examples of idiomatic expressions that pose serious challenges to Arabic-speaking interpreters working into English:

*Table 1: A list of Arabic idioms with literal translations and meanings in English*

Arabic Idiom	Literal Translation	English Meaning
آخر العنقود	“The latest bunch” (of grapes).	An expression of endearment for the younger child in the Arab family who receives more attention and care than his/her older brothers and sisters.
استوطى حيطه	“His wall/fence is considered low.”	A person is an easy mark or victim. (Historically, thieves preferred houses with weak fences and low walls).
أكل خازوق	“He ate the shaft.”	The khazouk was an Ottoman way of

		executing a man by making him sit on a sharp stake (the shaft). Said when you are stuck in a bad situation, get cheated, or suffer a big loss.
ليش محروقة بصلتك؟	"Why is your onion burnt?"	A rhetorical question to an impatient person. Similar to "Hold your horses!" or "Keep your shirt on!"

Religious idioms pose an additional challenge as they may reflect a moral tradition in one culture that may be alien to other cultures and as a result they are more difficult to translate. Larson (1984, p. 180) states that:

*terms which deal with the religious aspects of a culture are usually the most difficult, both in analysis of the source vocabulary and in finding the best receptor language equivalence. The reason is that these words are intangible and many of the practices are so automatic that the speakers of the language are not as conscious of the various aspects of the meaning involved.*

In Islam, the name of God or Allah dominates the life of the faithful. It is often a part of day-to-day conversation as expressed in sayings like "بسم الله عليك أو اسم الله عليك" (may God protect you) which may not be the case in Western culture. Hamady (1960, p. 157) points out that "The name of God dominates the Arab's social relations, even the most common ones. Not only in public but also in his privacy the Arab unceasingly invokes the name of God to reign over his actions". Such expressions may not lend themselves easily to interpreters. Likewise, Biblical idiomatic expressions such as "you will go to your fathers" (you will die); "they knew no quiet in their bellies" (they were greedy) and "lift horn" (defy God) which cannot be understood from their own constituent words, can also pose problems to interpreters.

While translating an idiom, the interpreter should keep in mind the context in which it is used and its overall sense before trying to find an appropriate equivalent or explanation for the same. Fernando and Flavell express that there is a "strong

unconscious urge in most translators to search hard for an idiom in the receptor language, however inappropriate it may be" (1981, p. 82).

In order to understand and translate idioms, conference interpreters in particular need to have an awareness of the cultural differences between the SL and TL. Sometimes distinguishing idiomatic expressions from non-idiomatic ones can be a difficult task. As a tool to help interpreters, idiomatic expressions could be classified into five groups: colloquialisms, proverbs, slang, allusions, and phrasal verbs. This may help interpreters find the best equivalent to any idiom they may come across in the course of their work. Some of the strategies are outlined in the following sections.

#### 1) Total Equivalence (form and meaning)

According to Baker (1992, p. 72), "this strategy of finding an idiom of similar meaning and similar form in the target language may seem to offer the ideal solution, but that is not necessarily always the case".

A large number of idioms in all languages have cultural association, as mentioned earlier. Inani (1998, p. 32) argues that most English and Arabic idioms have appeared as metaphors which started to be used unchanged, little by little, until they have become recognized as established forms of a given language. This point is further emphasized by Al Haddad (1994, p. 217), when he argued that "the meaning of many idioms results from the figurative extension of the original situation which is often unknown to the majority of speakers. This source may have been obscured by time". Again, this aspect has been pointed out by Larson (1984, p. 21), when he mentions that idioms are figures of speech and as such, "are often based on stories or historical incidents. Many times, the origin of the figure is no longer apparent".

Therefore, only when the SL and TL belong to the same language family, and thus enjoy cultural similarities, can quite similar equivalent idioms normally be found in the TL. In contrast, in the case of English and Arabic, which are culturally separate, it would be unwise to look for an exact match for idioms in the TL. At the same time, because of the communication explosion and extensive news coverage of events in both languages, many English idioms have become familiar and even become

transplanted into the Arabic language to the extent that on occasions one might think the idioms used are originally Arabic. This is because Arabic has a strong ability to digest foreign terms and make them look like its own (Hijazi, 1978, p. 318). Some examples listed in Table 2 below illustrate the usage of many foreign idiomatic expressions in present-day Arabic:

*Table 2: Some idioms with the same meaning and form*

To shed crocodile tears	يبكي بدموع التماسيح
To fish in troubled waters	يصطاد في الماء العكر
The lion's share	حصة الأسد

## II) Partial Equivalence (similarity in meaning but not in form)

Here, a SL idiomatic expression is translated into an equivalent TL idiom conveying the same meaning though in a different form (see also Baker, 1992). It is quite possible to find an idiom in the TL with the same meaning as the SL idiom but the lexical terms may be different. However, this requires the interpreter to be very familiar with the cultural backdrop of both the languages as well as the idioms. Thus a good interpreter is not only a linguist but also a scholar, who can grasp the complete meaning of an idiom, and one who can thus “find equivalent idioms having the same or similar functions in the TL” (Sadiq, 2008, p. 50). Sadiq also argues the following:

*Furthermore, cultural background has been looked upon as a must in translating idioms if the translator seeks to produce a truly effective target language text. The cultural background is the only way out to translating idioms in an equivalent way (Sadiq, 2008, p. 51).*

Table 3 cites a few examples of SL idioms which have been translated into their TL counterparts and carry the same meaning, but differ in their forms.

*Table 3: Some idioms with the same meaning but different form*

On pins and needles/on tenterhooks	على أحر من الجمر
To jump on the bandwagon	يركب الموجة/يساير التيار
To carry coals to Newcastle	يبيع الماء في حارة السقاين

## III) Paraphrasing

According to the Merriam-Webster (n.d.) dictionary paraphrasing is “a restatement of a text, passage, or work giving the meaning in another form”. Sometimes, an interpreter cannot find an idiom in the TL that matches the idiom in the SL, or a similar idiom in form in the TL conveys a different meaning and hence cannot be used. In such a situation, an interpreter can resort to paraphrasing the idiom in the



SL, giving a brief explanation in the TL to convey the meaning of the idiom used. But idioms often add a cultural flavour to a statement and that flavour would be lost if that idiom is paraphrased. So to the extent possible, an interpreter may look for a matching idiom or phrase in the TL and may take to paraphrasing only as a last resort. Paraphrasing is more acceptable for idioms that are less culture-specific.

Table 4 following has some examples of paraphrasing.

*Table 4: Some paraphrased idioms*

A hard nut to crack	مسألة مستعصية/قضية شائكة
To walk on air	تغمره السعادة/يشعر بسعادة غامرة
To live from hand to mouth	يحيا حياة الكفاف

Often a speaker may use an idiom for impact, i.e. to highlight a particular angle or approach. Use of idioms is a favourite tool of popular public speakers whether in politics, religion, or the legal profession, to mention a few examples. Paraphrasing dilutes the impact and will not have the effect intended by the SL speaker. Baker defines paraphrasing as "translating a source language idiom by giving its meaning in the target language. By using this strategy, the impact of the idiom, and its cultural significance will be lost" (1992, p. 74).

#### IV) Literal Translation

Baker (1992) proposed another strategy in addressing the difficulties of translating idioms by giving a literal translation of the target idiom. This is easier said than done. When an interpreter is not able to find an equivalent idiom in the TL, giving a literal translation may not have the appropriate result as it may distort the meaning of the idiom. According to Newmark, "literal translation is translating an idiom by giving a word-for-word translation of the source language idiom, which most of the time results in unnatural or wrong rendering of idioms" (1988, p. 69).

Expanding on the strategy employed for translating idioms, Larson (1984, p. 116) noted that:

*the translator also needs to develop sensitivity to the use of idioms in the receptor language and uses them naturally to make the translation lively and keep the style of the source language. There will often be words in the source language which are not idioms but are best translated with an idiom.*

Interpreters may also find dealing with different accents and dialects challenging.

### **2.7.3 Accents and dialects**

Merriam-Webster defines accent as “a way of pronouncing words that occurs among people in a particular region or country, and dialect is a form of a language that is spoken in a particular area and that uses some of its own words, grammar, and pronunciations”. Speaking with an accent or switching to a dialect while speaking both pose major hurdles for an interpreter. The English language is today the leading conference language globally and the world’s lingua franca. English is widely spoken in many countries in the world, and at international conferences, the participants from countries whose mother tongue is not English sometimes speak highly-accented English. Moreover, within English-speaking countries also there are various accents and dialects. The speakers’ unfamiliar accents are problematic for the interpreter who is sometimes at a loss to understand what is being spoken. Thus the interpreters, according to Gile’s (1997) Effort Models, are forced to devote much processing capacity to the Listening and Analysis Effort, which therefore slows down production or leads to substantial loss of information. The interpreter has to spend more time listening carefully to the speaker to take in and recognize the words being spoken and then production lags as they cannot keep up with the speaker. This process adversely impacts the output quality of the interpreter. Their Listening and Analysis Effort also suffers as they try to deal with the highly-accented speech. Accent can sometimes help comprehension of the interpreter if they are familiar with that accent. However, heavily accented English is one of the major challenges facing the interpreter and may affect their overall performance.

According to a 2002 AIIIC report (MackIntosh, 2002), 86% of respondents feel that unfamiliar accents hinder their comprehension while 62% of the respondents feel accents are a source of pressure. Listening comprehension is a very elaborate interactive activity that leads to the understanding of the source text delivered by a speaker. There are many factors that may facilitate or hinder an interpreter's listening comprehension, such as the delivery speed and the terminology, as well as accepted pronunciation. Accent is defined as a deviation from the general norm of pronunciation of a language that is reminiscent of another language, i.e. the speaker's mother tongue.

According to Kurz (1996, p. 128):

*The more the speaker's pronunciation deviates from what the interpreter is used to, the more difficult the task of comprehension for the interpreter in the processing phase. In the worst scenario, communication may be constrained or impeded from the start.*

Consequently, the familiarity with different accents, especially non-native accents and unfamiliar accents, is crucial for interpreters.

Kurz (1996), however, only concentrated on the study of how severely the strong accent of a non-native speaker can affect students' interpreting performance. She used materials consisting of audio recordings of two versions of an English source text, one of which was read by a native speaker while the other was read by a speaker with a strong non-native accent. The subjects she chose were students from the Institute of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Vienna, who all had at least two semesters of professional interpreting training. According to her pilot study and the follow-up students' subjective assessments and questionnaire, the students found that the source text by the native speaker was relatively easy in terms of terminology, whereas the source text read by the non-native speaker was referred to as manageable in terms of terminology. Regarding the delivery speed, the native speaker was again considered fairly easy to handle while the non-native speaker with a strong accent was only manageable. Significantly, the students found that the pronunciation of the source text read by the non-native speaker was far

more difficult to comprehend than that of the native speaker. All of this is likely to affect the student interpreters' performance, as well as be a continual challenge to professional interpreters.

Many physiological, geographical and social aspects contribute to the development of an accent in a particular area or among a community. Though accent is therefore complex, the tendency is generally to look at it from a phonetic angle. Phonetically, accent is a special pronunciation, which is determined by the phonetic habits of its native language speakers with no mention of any further grammatical and lexical usage. However, to study accent from only the phonetic angle would be a narrow approach. Sociolinguist Becker (1995, p. 37) points out: "An accent is the part of a person's language that serves to identify the speaker's regional origin or national identity no matter what language the person is speaking". The social influences on accent are so important that a socio-linguistic perspective alone of the phenomenon would be more comprehensive. Accent is so ingrained in the way people speak as part of their identity that it can help distinguish different nationalities and ethnic groups.

Interpreting strategies are termed differently as "coping tactics" (Gile, 2009, p. 191) or "techniques" (Jones, 1998, p. 101). According to the relevant literature (Kalina, 1992, p. 253; Gile, 2009, p. 191; Bartłomiejczyk, 2006, p. 152), strategies are intentional and goal-oriented procedurals to solve problems resulting from the interpreters' processing capacity limitations or knowledge gaps, or to facilitate the interpreter's task and prevent potential problems. The repeated and successful use of strategies leads to automatic activation. It is then that the interpreter is able to overcome capacity limitations and make good use of available processing capacity (Kohn & Kalina, 1996, p. 132; Riccardi, 2005, p. 758).

In a world without borders, conference and television interpreters have to work with non-native English speakers, with highly varied accents. One can therefore argue that it would be very helpful if the interpreter tried to get prior information about the speakers and whenever possible interact with them prior to the actual interpreting event. Even if they get only a very narrow window of opportunity to do

this, such interaction, however brief, may help to remove the surprise accent element and instil more confidence in the interpreter, keeping in mind the fact that conference and television interpreters have to work with a wide variety of English accents.

Researchers, as discussed here, have identified unfamiliar accents as a recurring major problem. In an AIIC study in 2002, 62% of participating interpreters regarded 'difficult accent' as a major source of stress (MackIntosh, 2002). Compilers of interpreting textbooks (Zhong, 2006; Lin, Lei, & Chen, 2006) have also included different accents in the materials for training. The challenges accent poses to interpreters' listening comprehension in their workplace settings is yet to be studied in detail. However there is a broad realization among researchers that what interpreters loosely refer to as a 'foreign accent' goes far beyond phonetic deviations and extends to 'prosodic, lexical and syntactic deviations' (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 129), among which the first two are directly related to what the working simultaneous interpreter receives via headphones.

Conference interpreters working in both consecutive and simultaneous modes embrace some forms of multi-tasking. In her empirical study on listening comprehension in such contexts as listening, consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, and shadowing, Lambert (1988) concluded that pure listening ensures better comprehension than any of the other three modes. Therefore one can conclude that multi-tasking hinders comprehension to some degree. In such circumstances the interpreter, commonly described as an "active listener", filters the core message from a given acoustic atmosphere and is forced to make logical predictions on what will be spoken next. Since ordinary listeners and interpreters employ different coping strategies when listening to a non-native accent, it would not be surprising if their comprehension difficulties also differ from one another.

Every language has different accents and dialects. Just as there are many accents and dialects in the English language, modern Arabic also has the same, in spite of some standardization brought about by television and other mass media. For example, in real conference settings, if a speaker from North Africa discusses or

responds to the questions of the participants in their own dialect flavoured with a French accent and words, the interpreter, especially from the Arab Orient (eastern Arabic-speaking regions), will barely understand anything. The same applies to American English speakers who tend to use their own local dialects and idiolects in international conferences, which makes the interpreter's task more formidable.

Conference interpreters are also sometimes at a loss in the face of accented speech by Africans or participants from the Indian subcontinent as they are accents that interpreters may be less familiar with. The best approach in this case is to focus on the way of articulation of certain vowels and consonants that will be repeated in the speech. Concentrating on the structure of the sentences along with the repetition of some focal points and words will certainly aid conference interpreters in solving the problem to a large extent. When dealing with speakers with heavy accents from India or Pakistan, interpreters have to decode the discourse and familiarize themselves with the non-standard diphthongs uttered by such speakers.

Interpreting humour and jokes accurately can also be difficult.

#### ***2.7.4 Jokes and humour***

Many speakers are witty. They often use humour as a technique to engage the attention of the listener. A joke may have a cultural content and without that sometimes the joke may not be understood or appreciated by the audience. The interpreter is at times put to the test when they are required to convey the sense of humour as well the cultural context of the joke in its entirety, so that the listener is able to understand, enjoy, and appreciate the joke. It is not always easy to reproduce a joke in the SL to a matching version in the TL, as what someone may find funny in one culture may not be funny and may even be offensive in another. Here the broader concept of jokes and humour in different cultural settings are outlined, and the difficulties an interpreter may face in translating different types of jokes are highlighted. In addition, suggestions on how best to cope with the interpretation of humour will be provided. The interpreter cannot simply state that

the speaker has just uttered a joke; if they do so, they are not fulfilling their duty to interpret.

Humour is innate to all cultures, and occurs regardless of the age, gender, and belief of the speakers. Humour sometimes makes light of a serious situation and can defuse tension in a gathering by persuading people to look at things in a more rational and humorous manner. It is a task for the interpreter to take listeners to the core of the humour by finding appropriate metaphors and expressions. For that they will try to understand the mindset of the speaker, and see what exactly they are intending to say to their audience. The interpreter may have to filter out any content that may appear offensive in the TL as it may not be intended to be offensive by the speaker. Jokes are a particular challenge for the interpreter, but if they can make the audience laugh at the joke, it is more than worth the effort.

In situations when the speaker is very witty, it may put pressure on the interpreter. Some speakers are inclined to use jokes, word-play, and funny turns of phrase to strengthen their points. As it takes time for the interpreter to find appropriate witty expressions in the target language, they may have to decide which one of the humorous utterances they have to translate. The interpreter has to look for such jokes that are central to the idea the speaker is trying to convey and sometimes drop the insignificant puns and word-play the speaker may indulge in. However, given the time and the ability to interpret, an interpreter should follow the speech to the fullest extent possible. By doing this, they should make sure that they are able to choose the best cultural equivalents in the TL which they can later measure from the audience's reaction.

Research done on the subject mainly addresses two factors: the cross-cultural angle and translation tactics. Researchers have found that many interpreters, because of the difficulties involved in interpreting speeches real time, tend to omit the humorous content *in toto*, instead of attempting to interpret jokes that are difficult to convey linguistically or by finding cultural substitutes.

Some types of humour are common in virtually every country, whether they share a language or not, and simply need to be adapted to local stereotypes and sensibilities

to fulfill the author's intended role (Davies, 2005). These include universal stereotypes or "transposable" jokes, which can be interpreted directly with the subject intact, retaining the humour, provided there is no difficult play on words involved; for instance jokes about particular professions or nationalities. The author also identifies what she calls "switchable" jokes, where the subject can be substituted for the same meaning to fit the same societal stereotype, such as British jokes about the Irish becoming French jokes about Belgians. However, Davies (2005) identifies a third type of joke, "problematic" jokes, that arise when a joke is made about a type of people for which a stereotype does not exist in most other cultures, such as French jokes about the "slow" Swiss, and European jokes about the "dirty" Turks. Interestingly, Davies compares jokes about other countries to jokes about the past, as both take place in a setting that is alien to the listener.

Some studies focus on the cross-cultural understanding of humour from the comprehension rather than production side to observe the perceptions and pitfalls involved in humour across various cultures. The findings in Bell's article show that full comprehension of the linguistic and cultural background of the speaker is not necessarily required for full understanding of cross-cultural humour, but that the most important factor to keep in mind in humorous translation is the function of the humour, and thus how it may be perceived (Bell, 2007).

Interpreters do not tend to admit that sometimes it is almost impossible to make a joke work correctly, as it might sound as if they have failed in their job. Hoffman, in his review for the New York Times focusing on the humorous side of translation, discusses the difficulties of translating humour from one language to another and some methods that can be used to overcome this problem (Hoffman, 2012). According to the author, cracking a joke is an art form that relies on both creativity and luck. As a result, one needs to know when to "let a joke go" (p. 31) if there is simply no way to convey it. The author argues that, in most cases, it is better to try and find a cultural equivalent or create new puns in the target language, because nothing kills a joke more than having to over-explain it. While the article is anecdotal rather than drawn from a study, it provides some interesting ideas for how a translator or interpreter can approach humour in the source text. Hirsch takes a



closer look at translation-specific techniques for dealing with humour (Hirsch, 2011). Redundancy and repetition can be at the core of a humorous text, or they can be a major problem for the author's humorous intent in translation if used incorrectly, which can lead to problems if broadcast through a television feed.

Norrick (2007) made quite a few suggestions for handling instances of cross-cultural humour with a focus on cultural rather than linguistic barriers, making use of Accommodation Theory that has been built upon work by a number of researchers in Translation Studies (Norrick, 2007). This theory explores the phenomena of negative-accommodating, over-, and under-accommodating when rendering a joke as a method for trying to overcome a lack of background knowledge that is required for the humour to be transmitted. A joke has been negatively accommodated when the overall effect is negative and not humorous. Over-accommodating is defined as explaining things that do not need to be said and removing the reader or listener from the joke in the process (for example, explaining in detail what a stovepipe hat is, because it is an article of clothing that is no longer worn, in spite of the fact that everyone in the United States knows what it is because of the historical portrait of Abraham Lincoln). Under-accommodating, on the other hand, is the term used when the translator or interpreter makes an effort to render the humour in the target language, but he or she is not familiar enough with the source or target culture to find an equivalent translation (or, sometimes, to even understand why it is funny themselves). This is in line with Popa's work on humour translation (2005) and that of Lu (2010). Popa (2005) suggests that the key to translating jokes lies in cultural concerns, not linguistic ones. While many jokes rely on a play on words, it is important to find cultural equivalents rather than simply translate the words directly. She suggests that transferring the idea of the joke into terms that make more sense in the target language's culture (for example, turning a joke about families being like fudge with nuts in it into a joke about a flock of sheep with a few black ones) will help avoid the culture shock that can arise when a direct translation makes no sense in the target culture and risks killing the joke. This brings us back to the fact that it is impossible to effectively interpret some jokes, not necessarily for linguistic reasons, but because jokes often reflect on experiences, such as political

and family-oriented ones. These types of experiences are what Popa calls “secret agreements” (p. 48) between the speaker and audience.

These “secret agreements” can be the greatest challenge for an interpreter, who has to be the go-between for speakers from many different countries and does not have time to do research on culture-specific references and expressions on the spot. Some researchers focus on the difficulties of tone as much as words, as interpreters rely on their voices and can convey such humour without linguistic barriers (González & Mejias, 2013). Irony and sarcasm, for example, depend heavily on tone and delivery, and are the easiest types for interpreters to miss if they are not listening for them. Indeed, some researchers find that parody, irony and sarcasm can be the most difficult forms of humour for an interpreter to render because they may rely heavily on both tone of voice and facial expression, thus offering ample opportunity for the interpreter to misinterpret the intent or for the audience to be unable to grasp it (Pavlicek & Pöchhacker, 2002). According to González and Mejias (2013), interpreters should not even attempt to interpret wordy jokes such as puns, as they not have enough time on the spur of the moment to do such jokes justice and find an intelligible equivalent in the target language. This assertion is also supported by Popa’s (2005) research, as interpreters, who do not have much time to think of a good equivalent, run the risk of falling back on tired clichés for each roughly equivalent joke rather than trying to stay true to the originality of the speaker (Popa, 2005). Attempting to do this can reduce the audience’s trust and perception of the speaker as an orator.

The interpreter has the responsibility to reproduce the speaker’s tone and style, apart from their witty sayings, to convey to the audience that the speaker is indeed humorous. If humour is the primary focus of a speech, as for instance, in the case of comedy television shows, the interpreter has to skilfully take the target audience along and make them feel like an integral part of the event.

A lot of humour is based on creating an in group and an out-group, what Liendo (2013, n.p.) calls “comprehenders” and “non-comprehenders,” where the humour comes from the audience being in on the “secret” with the speaker, similar to the

“secret agreements” identified by Popa (2005). For that purpose, Liendo advocates for the interpreter to explain the cultural information that is implicit in the humour when translating for their target audience; even if the listeners do not find the humour funny and the joke is over-explained, they will most likely appreciate being included and knowing the intent. This is one way in which interpreting humour can be different to translating it, as translators have the opportunity to find methods of conveying humour without overly explaining it or using Hirsch’s similar “explicitation” technique (Hirsch, 2011).

In order to convey humour, it is crucial to understand the intended audience, the setting and register (i.e. can we use slang, abbreviations, etc.), the field, mode, and tenor that frame the humour, and the purpose of the humour (Popa, 2005). Some of the most famous researchers in interpreting studies, Pavlicek and Pöchhacker (2002) find that most humour in these settings takes the form of humorous anecdotes, irony (often self-deprecating), and jokes. All of these can be challenging for the interpreter.

Often a speaker uses humour to introduce an idea in a light-hearted atmosphere, without tension, or to make a difficult subject easily comprehensible to the audience. Both the message and intent are important and the interpreter has to convey the two without losing the humour element. If the humour is beyond explanation, the key function of the interpreter is to convey the core message. One has to convey humour naturally rather than making often poor and verbose efforts to explain it. Humorous moments serve an important function for the speaker to get across a poignant point easily by spicing up a boring situation in a meeting (González & Mejias, 2013).

Interpreters should not miss the context of a joke. They should make sure that it was not a slip of the tongue by the speaker or unintentional. The translation may never be exact and rendering a replica need not necessarily point to success in translating humour. The interpreter should, most importantly, understand the speaker’s aim and priority in using humour and prioritize their significance for audience understanding (Zabalbeascoa, 2005). An interpreter will always be more effective in

interpreting humour if they understand the purpose the humour serves in the source text and why the speaker felt it was necessary (Bell, 2007). The primary function of the interpreter may be to ensure that the source-language text has the desired effect on the target language audience, but such shortcuts are certainly not the ideal solution. With some luck, it comes down to the interpreter's skill ultimately, to determine whether they can convey the speaker's humorous intentions or must instead fall back on a less palatable stopgap measure.

As humour itself is very subjective, it can be very challenging for authors to remain objective while conducting research about the subject. Television interpreters must be prepared to deal with humour, as it can arise at any time during interviews and speeches.

In addition, as humour is universal, many researchers recommend that interpreters develop this particular skill to translate jokes which can always improve with practice as in any other profession (González & Mejias, 2013). As one technique, González and Mejias recommend interpreters study Isaac Asimov's anthology of jokes for analyses of joke types, making it easier for interpreters to predict jokes and anticipate patterns. Some authors suggest interpreters practice telling jokes in their free time in order to become more flexible and build on their imagination and creativity, talents that are required for success as a professional comedian as well (Hoffman, 2012; Popa, 2005). It seems that an interpreter without a good sense of humour and a comedian's sensibilities cannot effectively interpret a joke. Viaggio (1996) discusses the use of non-narrative forms of humour in simultaneous interpreting situations and identifies six challenges that affect the interpreter's rendition: the interpreter's language skills, the spontaneity of the source text humour, language-specific disconnects, cultural differences, the interpreter's knowledge of these cultural differences, and the format of the humour. Davies suggests adding indirect information to make a joke understood by outside cultures, such as "as you know," or even adding an extra character who is telling the joke as a foreigner. The speaker shares hidden assumptions with the listeners without over-explaining and thus ruining the joke, allowing the interpreter to subtly enhance the telling to a foreign audience (Davies, 2005). Surprisingly, some authors even claim

that an interpreter is permitted to ask the audience to laugh in order to build rapport with the speaker, even if the joke cannot be translated, though this is obviously to be used as a last resort (González & Mejias, 2013; Pavlicek & Pöchhacker, 2002).

That is what exactly happened to US President Jimmy Carter who was on a visit to Japan. According to an oft-repeated story, Carter was puzzled to see the audience breaking into unusually uproarious laughter as he narrated a funny opening anecdote in a speech to a college in Japan. Curious, he asked why the joke had gotten such an extraordinary response. The Japanese interpreter replied to his amusement: “I told the audience, ‘President Carter told a funny story; everyone must laugh’” (Hoffman, 2012).

Undoubtedly, it is a crucial skill for the interpreters to be able to interpret a joke well, though some would opine that conveying the thrust of the message is more important than interpreting humour. To have the skill, an interpreter should cultivate a sense of humour, creativity, and even work on tone and body language. The voice and tone that the interpreter uses are just as important as conveying the individual jokes and one-liners, because that is the lasting impression that an audience will retain of the speaker. Speakers have no other alternative but to trust the ability of the interpreter whose words they cannot understand. But speakers can watch the effect of the words on the audience and get a measure of whether the interpreter is doing a good job. It is frustrating for a speaker to watch their joke fall flat, and so it is the duty of the interpreter to convey in words, essence and tone, the full import of a joke.

Humour, as is well known, is critical to building relationships and breaking the ice as well as lightening a slow and dense speech. An interpreter should understand not only the humour in a speech but also the speaker’s intention. While interpreting a joke, the social and cultural composition of the audience should be considered when adopting a linguistic equivalent. Sometimes for the very same reasons, a joke is best left alone and not translated if it may produce a contrary effect. Sometimes the interpreter may even make an unrelated innocuous joke that fits in the context of the speech so that the speaker still gets a reaction to their joke and the audience

does not feel left out. A translated joke can sometimes produce no reaction from the listeners and that can be quite disconcerting and embarrassing for the interpreter as well as the speaker and is an occupational hazard that the interpreter has to face. It is a most rewarding experience for the interpreter if they can create an ambience where the speech and interpreting are smooth, and the audience enjoys and reacts to the speech as if they are listening to a speech in their own language. In creating that ambience and that ultimate goal, humour, a common trait that binds all of humanity, can play an important role.

#### ***2.7.5 Live speeches for world leaders***

“Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Working as a television interpreter for world leaders can be a prestigious assignment but at the same time, it is also a challenge due to the risks involved. An error by the interpreter resulting in misinterpretation of the dignitary can be a major embarrassment not only to the interpreter but also to the governments the leaders represent. This problem is exaggerated while interpreting some particular speeches such as those of dictators such as Colonel Gaddafi or, in a more modern context, leaders such as the current US President Donald Trump. The pressure on such situations can be challenging for interpreters as they may not always understand the gist of what is being spoken by the leaders but yet have to carry on with their interpreting job, in a professional manner.

This problem may be slightly less daunting for a television interpreter if he or she is not doing live interpreting of the leader in question. However, the interpreter can be in the studio watching the footage of the leader speaking and is attempting to meet the demands placed on them by the speaker’s material. In that event the interpreter can sometimes encounter problems. However, conference interpreters usually encounter a less risky work environment as meetings and conferences are not major news events commanding live coverage. In addition, the interpreter may also get an opportunity to correct any errors he or she may have made.

“Interpreting the remarks of political leaders is a risky task for the interpreter because these remarks are political statements that sometimes contain sensitive issues. These may bring a negative consequence in a bilateral relationship if they are misinterpreted or rendered incoherently,” according to Isak Morin (2011). He cited the cases of how interpreters for the Indonesian and Mexican Presidents on two occasions caused major loss of face for their governments, which had to be corrected by diplomatic intervention. There was another instance when Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi spoke at length at the United Nations to the point that the interpreter was unsure how to interpret his stream of comments. It is said that Colonel Gaddafi's unending harangue was too much for his interpreter who reportedly collapsed with exhaustion during the 96-minute long speech. The UN suggested a voluntarily duration of 15-20 minutes for world leaders and other dignitaries to make their addresses at the annual meetings of the UN General Assembly. However, this rule was ignored by some heads of states who broke the suggested rule of speech length. According to Guinness World Records, the longest statement made at the UN was given by Fidel Castro of Cuba at the 872nd plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 26 September 1960 (269 minutes); Mr. Sékou Touré, President of Guinea at the 896th Plenary (144 minutes) and Colonel Muammar Al-Gaddafi (96 minutes) (<http://ask.un.org/faq/37127>).

In an article titled “How Gaddafi's words get lost in translation” (Miles, 2011) former British ambassador to Libya, Oliver Miles, stated that when Colonel Gaddafi made his debut address at the UN General Assembly, he spoke in his “Libyan dialect, and Arabic dialects are not fully understood by Arabs from other regions. Mr. Gaddafi is also hard to understand, unless you are Libyan born and bred”. His Bedouin background influences his style of speech, and it is no secret that “Bedouins have plenty of time and talk a lot when there is anyone to talk to”. When the uprisings erupted in Libya, Mr. Gaddafi chose to employ a new style in his speeches which was a mixture of both standard and spoken (Libyan) Arabic and spoke in his heavy Bedouin accent, which for many people was difficult to follow.

Television interpreters interpreting live speeches of Colonel Gaddafi were challenged by his unpredictable long drawn-out speeches that could go for a stretch of two

hours or more, his heavy Bedouin accent, and his statements often made spontaneously and without any notes. On so many occasions, interpreters were baffled by his own coinage of unusual terms as when he suggested a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict in composing a state called “Isratine” which was surprising to the Israelis and Palestinians alike. Again, English native speakers were confused when Gaddafi’s speech was carried live on Al Jazeera English television during the political upheaval in Libya where he called upon the millions “upon millions from desert to desert. We will march to purge Libya inch by inch, house by house, alley by alley.” Those words have now become so popular that they have been made into a song titled ‘Zenga Zenga’ which means ‘street by street’ (or alley by alley). Only interpreters of North African descent and good knowledge of Bedouin dialects could comprehend such regional slang.

Most recently, interpreters faced a new and rather difficult challenge: interpreting the speeches of the President of the United States, Donald Trump. Trump does not come from mainstream politics and his successful entry in politics presented interpreters with the challenge of explaining his rhetoric. According to some interpreters, it is almost impossible to interpret Trump’s rhetorical fulminations into other languages without any distortion in the actual meaning, so much so that the interpreters have coined a new word, “Trumpslation.”

Trump’s malapropisms, faux pas, factual inaccuracies and seemingly inappropriate expressions leave the interpreters wondering whether to interpret him verbatim or to cover up for him by leaving out potentially damaging statements while still retaining the speech theme at the same time. An error in expression, when interpreted, can be magnified many times and can be criticized as poor interpreting at times. The Twitter world has many comments by interpreters on how difficult it is to decipher Trump.

An article in Huffington Post (MacLellan, 2016) cited instances how translations of Trump’s unusual expressions showed him in a poor light. Trump’s reference to a woman as a bitch was translated in Chinese as “whore” and “slut” which was demeaning to both the woman and Trump himself. “Translators say they often



dodge Trump's crude language altogether, either because they have no choice or to get around internal censors," the article noted. Quoting Aida González del Álamo, who interpreted for Hillary Clinton in the debates, the article said Trump's use of exotic words like "bigly" and "braggadocious" stumped Spanish translators who chose to ignore both expressions.

Vicente De la Vega, a Spanish interpreter, invested time to study Trump's mannerisms, tone and turn of phrase. In another article Porzucki (2016, n.p.) said that according to De La Vega "You have to know intimately the person you're going to be interpreting for." The article made an interesting point: De la Vega does pay attention to the tone and cadence of whomever he happens to be interpreting. If Trump yells, so does he; if the candidate whispers, so does De la Vega. "We have to mimic what they do, in the foreign language," according to De la Vega (Porzucki, 2016, n.p.).

When it comes to the question of interpreting people in positions of power, De la Vega could be an authority as he has interpreted many presidents such as Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George Bush and Barack Obama. He admired Reagan for his elegance, his speech pattern, and ability to put emphasis where it was needed. Bush was difficult and De la Vega recalls his quirky way of pronouncing 'nuclear'. Clinton also challenged him as he left clauses dangling only to pick them up later, which made the work difficult for interpreters.

A report in the Independent, entitled "Donald Trump confuses French translators with mixed-up speeches" (Farand, 2017, n.p.), claimed that Trump's vocabulary was "limited, his syntax is broken; he repeats the same phrases over and over," and hence the French translators had a difficult time interpreting him.

Quoting translator Bérengère Viennot, the report said, the new US President was difficult to translate because "he seems not to know quite where he's going." The first step for a translator is to be able to "get into someone's mind," explained Mrs Viennot, but it is not always easy to understand the point Mr. Trump is trying to make, the report added (Farand, 2017, n.p.).

Is Trump easy to interpret for native English speakers? Not really. As mentioned earlier, Trump used “bigly” in the presidential debate to mean probably “big league”. He once said “swatches of land,” instead of “swathes of land”, which would confuse the interpreter as he would not know what word to pick (Osaki, 2017, n.p.).

Contrary to this, many pundits believe Barack Obama to be the most charismatic speechmaker in modern history. Television interpreters who carried live speeches of Obama have concluded that he was a very good orator as noted from the outset of his speeches delivered during the presidential campaigns and televised debates. It is very likely that this comes down to his capacity as a professor and adeptness in speaking before a mass audience. Undoubtedly, the community of interpreters will undergo a major transition between Obama’s well-crafted speeches flavoured with personal anecdotes, flowery language brimming with modesty and humility as opposed to President Trump who often speaks spontaneously, moving quickly from one topic to another and gravitating towards insults and vulgarities.

Errors in interpreting also bring up lighter moments during conferences. A CBC News report (Kent, 2016) noted that interpreter Anne-Catherine Boudot was a little confused as to why a speaker was repeatedly bringing up sea shells during an international gathering in Geneva, but she promptly translated it into the French *coquillages*. Then a colleague pointed out to her that the speakers were talking about the Seychelles, and not sea shells.

In a diverse assembly like the UN, sometimes, the interpreter may come across words or expressions that he or she may not understand. It is not for the interpreter to attribute what he thinks is the approximation which may not be completely accurate. The head of the UN’s interpretations service, Hossam Fahr, recalls that during one Security Council meeting Fahr was interpreting from English into Arabic, the speaker used the word “propinquity.” He did not know what the word meant and could not even guess its import. So he kept a dignified silence. “You don’t attribute to the speaker something they did not say,” says Fahr.

In the challenging profession of interpreting, in conferences, on television, at the UN or elsewhere, it is not entirely possible to avoid mistakes. “You are aiming for 100

per cent accuracy all the time,” says Fahr. Nevertheless, “all interpreters are human — and to err is human” (Kent, 2016, n.p.).

Television and conference interpreters are like actors. They impersonate the personality, tone of voice and other individual traits of the person who is speaking such as the emotion of Ahmadinejad, the expressionless face of Putin, tub-thumping of Hassan Nassarlah and Colonel Gadhafi. However, this does not imply their consent and approval to the statements delivered, but rather a fidelity of rendition.

### ***2.7.6 Errors in interpreting***

There are many instances where interpreters have committed egregious errors in the course of their work. During the textile conflict in 1970, the Japanese-English interpreter who was present during the negotiations between the US President Nixon and Japanese Prime Minister Sato had to interpret Sato’s response in Japanese “senshu itasimashu” literally meaning “I will do my best”, but with the more figurative meaning “I will look into it” (Tiselius, 2011). Though it was not clear what the interpreter actually said Nixon got the sense that he had a promise from Sato. When the expected results were not forthcoming from Japan, Nixon was very annoyed and bilateral relations suffered for many years.

Another infamous mistake was made while interpreting Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s speech in 2006. Referring to Israel, he said, “The regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time”. The interpreter however said Ahmadinejad had called for Israel to be “wiped off the map.” This led to a lot of debate and bad blood between Iran and Israel, and the error made by the interpreter also came into focus. But the damage had already been done (Rosado Professional Solutions, 2015).

There are much less damaging but hilarious mistakes, which, however, show the leaders involved in a poor light. In 1976, US President Jimmy Carter was addressing a Polish-speaking audience. His words “I left the United States this morning” was rendered as “When I abandoned the United States...”, and worse still his statement “...I have come to learn your opinions and understand your desires for the future...”

was interpreted as: “I desire the Poles carnally...” (Rosado Professional Solutions, 2015).

Another costly mistake was committed during Nikita Khrushchev’s speech at the Polish embassy in Moscow during the Cold War days. His statement referring to the United States: “We will outlast you” was interpreted as “We will bury you,” leading to aggravated tension between the two superpowers of the time (Rosado Professional Solutions, 2015).

Poor interpretation, even outside the remit of conferences and media, can lead to serious problems even in everyday life. In 1980, a teenager was admitted to a Florida hospital in coma and the Spanish interpreter made a terrible mistake while describing the cause of his condition. As a result, the patient was treated only for drug overdose whereas he was suffering from cerebral hemorrhage and was left a quadriplegic (Rosado Professional Solutions, 2015).

Even St. Jerome, the patron saint of translators, who translated the Old Testament into Latin was not beyond error. While describing the radiance of Moses’ head as he comes back from Mount Sinai, he wrote “keren” which means horned while the actual Hebrew word was “karan”. As a result, many paintings of Moses portrayed Moses with horns (Rosado Professional Solutions, 2015)

Errors made by conference interpreters are usually less serious in terms of their consequences, although they can be confusing. The examples cited are extreme cases. Such mistakes can be avoided when speakers or conference organizers take a few precautionary steps. It is an established practice in the industry to provide interpreters with enough reference material so that they can be well prepared. Moreover, conference organizers should hire quality and trained interpreters with accreditation even if they cost a bit more.

## **2.8 Chapter conclusion**

Tracing the history of interpreting, it emerges that as a professional modern discipline it is rather young and still evolving. How vital the role of interpreters is can

be determined by watching world leaders in one-to-one meetings accompanied only by their interpreters. From political summits, to conferences, and from religious discourses to sports events, interpreters are omnipresent the world over. A good interpreter not only needs to know the language they translate, but also the culture, history, and linguistic context of the source language as well as the target language, to get a better grasp of the content they are interpreting and to provide the best output. The importance of interpreting in a world without borders is increasing, and there is a need to study and improve the art, with a view to upgrading the skills of interpreters with better training and ongoing professional development. In this context interpreting assumes a key role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and in bringing world leaders and communities closer.

This chapter has outlined some of the literature regarding interpreting, on distinguishing it from translating, and on some of the challenges facing professional interpreters. The next chapter outlines the methodology used in the research.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology and Data Collection**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, attempts were made to examine the salient challenges facing conference and television interpreters from the relevant literature perspective. In this chapter, we shall look into the research questions, the research methodology; analyse the grounds for using the mixed methods approach, describe the instruments used for data collection and shed light on analysing data derived from the online survey and the one-to-one interviews.

This study will investigate the following research questions:

1. What are the major challenges facing professional conference interpreters and television interpreters?
2. What are the strategies that professional conference interpreters and television interpreters usually employ when interpreting?
3. What are the suggestions/techniques that experienced interpreters use to solve the many challenges in interpreting?

### **3.2 Research approach and methodology**

Studies in the area of conference interpreting have embraced a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Hale & Napier, 2013). For the research in question, the hybrid or mixed method approach design was employed as it provided a more in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by conference and television interpreters than merely applying quantitative or qualitative approaches individually. In fact, researchers from many fields have held both approaches in high regard and many of them suggest a mixed methods approach involving both qualitative and quantitative measures, whenever feasible, as a

valuable option (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). As the name suggests, the mixed method approach is a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methods. It has been called 'hybrids' (Ragin, Nagel, & White, 2004); 'methodological triangulation' (Morse, 1991), which recognizes the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data; 'combined research' (Creswell, 1994); and 'mixed methodology,' which acknowledges that it is both a method and a philosophical worldview (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 5),

*[m]ixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.*

Moreover, mixed methods research has gained increasing acceptance and recognition among investigators in psychology, linguistics and social sciences, reflecting the growth of qualitative research, together with the proliferation of elaborate qualitative analytical techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and of triangulation<sup>1</sup> strategies (Patton, 2002). Although relatively new in interpreting research, the number of publications reporting research with a mixed method design has been on the rise (Liu, 2011). In addition, this method is considered ideally suited for addressing the inherent complexity of interpreting processes and practices (Pöschhacker, 2011b), and is commended for its potential to allow for innovation in research designs (Hale & Napier, 2013). Moreover, the advantages of employing a mixed methods approach lie in the leeway the researchers have in using all the available tools of data collection rather than being restricted to the types of data collection typically associated with qualitative research or quantitative research. In addition, this approach is "practical" in the sense that the researcher is free to use all

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Triangulation involves looking at data from two or more points of view (Flick, 2004). <sup>1</sup>

the methods possible to address a research problem, and to approach the object of study from different angles (Creswell, 2003).

This research project involved collecting, analysing and integrating quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (semi-structured one-to-one interviews with conference and television interpreters). Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of employing this approach is to establish whether fellow interpreters share the same concerns in connection with the challenges they encounter while they are rendering simultaneous translation from the booth or interpreting live for television in a real-time setting. With this in mind, the data collection instruments employed in this research – namely, online survey and the semi-structured interviews – aim at exploring the participants' standpoints on these challenges and the strategies they apply to overcome these. In other words, the survey questionnaire aimed to elicit as much input as possible from respondents, not merely by asking them about most frequently encountered challenges, but also about the strategies and the techniques they use in order to mitigate the undesirable outcome of such challenges while they are in action. The semi-structured interview questions (Hale & Napier, 2013) were based on survey responses and served to examine such challenges and strategies in a more in-depth manner.

In summary, the methodology used in this thesis is very standard, taking the form of a questionnaire, containing an invitation for participation in a subsequent semi-structured interview, which allows follow-up on certain questions and an opportunity for in-depth discussion and analysis of the participants' opinions.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

In the course of conducting this research project, due regard was given to the imperatives of strict compliance with the code of ethics that should be observed so that no potential issues arise while collecting the data from the participants. The Ethics Committee of Auckland University of Technology granted its approval to this research project on 27 April 2016 under reference number AUTEK 15/360.



The identity of the respondents taking part in the questionnaire remained anonymous for the protection of their confidentiality, and they were identified as Interpreter 1, Interpreter 2 and so on in the data analysis section. The confidentiality of information from participants and the confidentiality around the identity of all interviewees were strictly maintained as per the Ethics Approval conditions. In addition, practising conference and television interpreters recognize this binding commitment which lies at the heart of the code of this industry. For example, Article (2-A) of the Code of Honor of the AIIC's Code of Ethics states (AIIC, 2012):

*Members of the Association shall be bound by the strictest secrecy, which must be observed towards all persons and with regard to all information disclosed in the course of the practice of the profession at any gathering not open to the public.*

Accordingly, all participants were sent a request seeking their informed consent before posting the questionnaire online. In the Consent form, the researcher briefed the participants on the purpose and benefits of the research project, and underscored that participation was not mandatory, and they had the freedom to withdraw from the research at any stage prior to the completion of data collection. In other words, they should not feel that they were entering a binding agreement to participate if they signed a consent form (Hale & Napier, 2013). In addition, participants were advised to refer any concerns they might have regarding the nature and the conduct of the research to the researcher's supervisors and the Acting Executive Secretary of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) respectively, with the consent form shown in Appendix B.

### **3.4 Data collection instruments**

The instruments used for collecting data in this research project included an online survey and semi-structured interviews.

### ***3.4.1 Online survey***

Surveys are one of the research methods used frequently for data collection in interpreting studies, in the form of questionnaires. Bühler conducted the first major questionnaire study in interpreting in 1986, followed by many others such as Kurz (1993), Moser (1995) and more recently Angelelli (2004), as well as Crezee, Jülich and Hayward (2011). Surveys serve as an effective tool for gathering a massive amount of data relatively quickly in a form that is readily processible (Dörnyei, 2007).

According to Burns (1994), the main advantages of undertaking a survey in research include, inter alia:

- (i) it is a useful tool when the questions asked are simple;
- (ii) each respondent receives the identical set of questions, phrased in exactly the same way;
- (iii) it can cover a wide spectrum of subjects as well as subjects in diverse locations; and
- (iv) it can guarantee confidentiality and may, therefore, elicit more truthful responses.

#### ***3.4.1.1 Design of questionnaire***

The online survey questions in the research project were developed based on the existing literature review and the anecdotal evidence provided by the researcher's fellow television and conference interpreters. More specifically, survey questions were designed to address a wide spectrum of issues possibly encountered by a high percentage of respondents (based on the literature and anecdotal evidence) which might pose serious challenges that could have an adverse impact on interpreter performance.

The questionnaire and interview questions were formulated in an open-ended style so as to allow participants to discuss issues affecting them. So, rather than giving respondents a set of alternatives to choose from in the closed-ended questions, the open-ended questions style allowed the respondents to express their opinions

without being influenced by the researcher (Foddy, 1993, p. 127) as the latter may lead to undesirable consequences on the quality of the survey data. Ferligoj and Mrvar (2003) argue that the advantages of using open-ended questions include the possibility of uncovering responses that individuals give spontaneously, thus avoiding the bias that may occur in the case of close-ended questions. Although the latter style may generally yield a higher percentage of response rates as opposed to open-ended questions for answers that are identical in both question forms, the use of close-ended question forms means respondents will be restricted to fixed responses, whereas open-ended questions can result in a more diverse set of answers. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) hold the same view and argue that focus groups are often described as a qualitative technique because they combine interviewing and observation, and focus group questions are typically open-ended; therefore, they generate narrative data. The same may apply to the use of open-ended questions in both surveys and interviews.

In the course of formulating the questionnaire questions, the researcher ensured that the content was in alignment with the research aims and goals. In other words, particular emphasis was placed on addressing a wide scope of challenges which anecdotal evidence suggests are frequently encountered by television and conference interpreters. As an example, respondents were asked to share their input on certain issues including, among others, speed of delivery, interpreting idioms and religious context, dealing with technical glitches such as audio quality during television live coverage of important addresses by heads of states or other dignitaries, and dealing with the interpretation of culturally sensitive issues.

Finally, in drafting the online survey questions and conducting the one-to-one interviews, the researcher was conscious of the imperative of avoiding bias. According to Furnham (1986), response bias is a general term for a wide range of cognitive biases that influence the responses of participants away from an accurate or truthful response. These biases are most prevalent in the types of studies and research that involve participant self-report, such as structured interviews or surveys. Response biases can have a large impact on the validity of questionnaires or surveys and drop-out rates (Furnham, 1986). Therefore, the researcher adhered to

the principle of impartiality and avoided writing questions that could potentially lead or confuse the respondents. Moreover, the majority of respondents are AIIIC members (due to the posting of the participation invitation via AIIIC) and experienced television or conference interpreters and could be said to represent the general group of conference and television interpreters.

### *3.4.1.2 Focus of questionnaire*

The online survey aimed to determine how interpreters, regardless of their A language<sup>2</sup>, deal with the difficulties they encounter and what methodologies they employ to overcome them. For example, how would television interpreters handle the dilemma of poor relay from another language on air, or manage constant noise or a buzzing sound coming from the audio source? How do conference interpreters deal with religious discourse with zero error probabilities when a speaker is reciting verses from the Holy Quran or the Bible just like Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or other Iranian clerics who tend to spend the first ten minutes of their statements in spiritual invocations and supplications? What would be the interpreters' limitations and options of last resort to seek when they take on assignments like "Interfaith Dialogue" where scholars of different faiths delve into purely theological matters and citing quotes from the Quran, Gospel, Torah or the Book of Psalms or even managing a relay for the Pope's speech from the Italian booth, for example? To what extent can television interpreters deal with a master speechmaker like president Obama whose statements include a great deal of metaphoric and idiomatic expressions as opposed to President Trump whose speeches mark a radical shift in terms of style and lucidity? Again, the survey set out to explore the best techniques that conference and television interpreters report using when dealing with figures, especially in the case of Security Council resolution numbers or relaying speeches for the UNHCR, which are usually loaded with numbers, especially in the context of delivering humanitarian aid to the refugees in the hard-to-reach areas of war-plagued countries. All these questions are worth lengthy consideration and dealing with such difficulties would be conducive to high quality performance in various interpreting assignments. However, in spite of the salient features of interpreter performance set out by AIIC, this research project does not aim to measure the quality of performance of conference and television interpreters in terms of producing a target language rendition that is thoroughly and stylistically equivalent to the source text. Neither does it aim to examine the most

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An A language is the interpreter's mother tongue, while the B language is that which they are perfectly fluent in (AIIC, 2012). <sup>2</sup>

important output-related quality criteria (such as fluency of delivery, correct grammar, lively intonation, logical cohesion, completeness, native accent, pleasant voice, and sense consistency), with the original proposed by AIIC (Pöchhacker & Zwischenberger, 2010). In fact, making a determination on the quality performance of television and conference interpreters has always been a contentious subject among scholars, and various criteria were proposed to examine this area from both interpreters and users of interpreter services alike. For example, Pöchhacker (1994) proposed the assessment of users' cognitive grasp of the message conveyed, measuring variables that may have an impact such as speed, pauses, hesitancy, intonation, fluency, mistakes, register, style, and so on. Beyond the methodological difficulties of this approach, even if it were possible to objectively determine and achieve consensus on the real quality of a specific interpretation, said quality might not necessarily be the same as the quality perceived by users or even interpreters themselves (Kahane, 2000). Therefore, the ultimate goal of conducting this survey was not meant to quantify the extent of conference and television interpreters' compliance with the criteria proposed in various literature research but instead to identify challenges that conference and television interpreters face, and strategies that they use to deal with these challenges.

#### *3.4.1.3 Questionnaire items*

Questionnaire items are shown below:

- 1. How do you manage a situation in which the speaker has a strong accent that is difficult to understand?*
- 2. If you are interpreting a live speech on television, and there is interference from noise, how would you address this situation?*
- 3. If someone is telling a joke and the audience is laughing, how would you interpret the joke and consider any cultural sensitivities?*
- 4. If you are getting a speech relayed from a (Spanish, Chinese, etc.) booth and the relay was unclear and not easy to interpret, how would you address this situation?*

- 5. How would you manage religious speeches which have quotes from the Bible or Quran?*
- 6. How do you manage interpreting for speakers who speak very quickly and do not pause between thoughts?*
- 7. How would you address the difficulties of interpreting idioms that do not have the same equivalence as in your first (A) language?*
- 8. Can you identify particular challenges that have had an impact on your performance as an interpreter?*
- 9. What do you feel is the maximum amount of time that a solo interpreter can interpret on his/her own without compromising the level of performance?*
- 10. How do you interpret in a situation in which the speaker is saying something that is totally against your beliefs?*

These questionnaire items aimed to collect data about the participants' opinions and experiences on the particular target issues mentioned in each question.

#### *3.4.1.4 Questionnaire delivery*

The online survey was hosted on the Survey Monkey website ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). Survey Monkey is an online survey site for creating and distributing surveys via email, websites and different social media avenues. It simplifies the survey process considerably in terms of downloading the collected data from various respondents in various formats. In addition, it can generate frequencies for each question and provides the facility of exporting data into various programs such as SAS (Statistical Analysis Software) or SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) used for a more complex analysis. Although the self-administered survey has the feature of automatically recording the IP addresses of the participants, identifying respondents was beyond the researcher's ability.

#### 3.4.1.5 Participant invitation

An invitation to participate in the survey with a URL link was also sent via [www.linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com) *Interpreters and Translators Worldwide* group which has a large number of interpreters from the AIIC directory (<https://aiic.net/directories/interpreters/lang/1>) and other UN certified interpreters of different language combinations. In order to ensure that respondents could have access to the online survey, it was first tested with some colleagues before it was opened to respondents in general. The 10-question survey was launched on 24/6/2016 and closed on 23/7/2017.

Invitations were sent to participants via the above-mentioned links, and responses remained relatively low throughout the first week of launching the survey. In order to boost the number of respondents, two reminder emails were sent within a one-week interval assuring the anonymity of the respondents and that their responses would be used in the findings of the research in question. By the closing day, the survey had generated 41 individual responses out of the 60-recorded visitors. The response rate was above 60% which was acceptable. Manfreda and colleagues (2008) conducted 45 published and unpublished experimental comparisons between web-based surveys and other survey modes. They found that the former yielded an 11% lower response rate compared to other modes. Though it is widely recognized that high survey response rates is usually an effective factor to ensure that survey results have largely represented the target population, Nulty (2008) believes that whether or not a response rate is adequate depends (in part) on the use that is being made of the data. Richardson (2005, p. 139) who conducted online surveys targeting students in many Australian universities found that "Response rates of 60% or more are both desirable and achievable for students who have satisfactorily completed their course units of programs." A sixty percent response rate was considered representative of the target population of conference and television interpreters. In this study, 41 respondents took part out of 60 people (68.3% response rate). The television interpreter numbers are unknown, so the researcher is not sure what exact response rate was achieved with this particular subcategory of interpreters.



#### *3.4.1.6 Preparation of collected questionnaire data for analysis*

Analysis of the online survey findings was carried out using the Survey Monkey tool to analyse quantitative responses, along with downloaded data in MS spreadsheets and the qualitative data analysis package nVivo, which was used for a thematic analysis of replies to the open-ended and narrative questions. The frequent challenges identified by the questionnaire respondents were further explored in the one-to-one interviews conducted – either in person or using SKYPE – with those who volunteered to be interviewed. The findings of these interviews are outlined extensively in the next chapter.

#### **3.4.2 Participant interviews**

The survey was followed by semi-structured interviews with survey respondents who volunteered. The interviews aimed to elicit new perspectives on the challenges facing conference interpreters at large. Interviews have been used extensively as a key method for collecting data in many disciplines of knowledge, and there are many interviewing techniques that could be employed to achieve this end. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (1994, p. 273), interviews can be divided into four categories, namely the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview, and the focused interview. Another category is that of in-depth interview (Mack et al., 2005). In this research, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with participants in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of their opinions of the challenges they frequently encounter when undertaking a conference or television interpreting assignment and what strategies they employ in such situations. The in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a clear picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. During in-depth interviews, the person being interviewed is considered the expert and the interviewer is considered the student. The researcher's interviewing techniques are motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research topic as noted in guidelines given at conferences (Mack et al., 2005). As

stated above, for the purposes of this study, the researcher prepared a list of ten open-ended questions to allow the participants to answer on their own terms without any restrictions.

#### *3.4.2.1 Interview design*

In the field of translation and interpreting studies, the usefulness of interviews has long been recommended as an effective approach for building a holistic snapshot, analysing words, and reporting informants' detailed views. In addition, interviewing enables the interviewees to "speak of their thoughts and feelings" (Berg, 2007, p. 96). Interviewing, Dörnyei (2007) argues, is a widely accepted way of collecting data as it can be used in various situations covering a variety of topics. In line with this, as recommended by various researchers (e.g. Bell, 1987; Kvale, 1996; Berg, 2007), interviewing should be adopted as a tool for social research as it facilitates obtaining 'direct' explanations for human actions through a comprehensive speech interaction.

The objective of employing interviews as a qualitative method of inquiry stems from the fact that they have 'usually' been thought of as a key factor in research design (Weiss, 1994). In a similar vein, according to Kvale (1996, p. 174) an interview is "a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee" with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the 'described phenomena'. Schostak (2006, p. 54) adds that an interview is an extendable conversation between partners that aims at having 'in-depth information' about a certain topic or subject, and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it.

Conducting interviews can be a time-consuming exercise and entails purposeful efforts to collect and analyse data. As Schostak (2006, p. 92) puts it: an interview "...is not a simple tool with which to mine information. It is [rather] a place where views may clash, deceive, seduce, enchant." With this in mind, the researcher was conscious of the complexity of the interviewing process itself, and therefore, considered the characteristics of interview design before moving to the data analysis stage. To ensure that interviews were conducted in a way that would yield the

desired objective, the researcher used a basic checklist (Berg, 2007) that would help to cover all the topics contemplated in the research. The advantage of such a checklist, as Berg argues, is that it “allows for in-depth probing while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study” (p. 39).

The design of the interviews conducted in this research was semi-structured and the researcher opted for this type of interview since “it allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 88). In addition, it combines a set of pre-determined open questions stimulating discussion on the part of the interviewees with the opportunity for the researcher to further explore particular topics or themes. The questions were the same as those in the questionnaire, but the interview format allowed for much greater exploration of the answers.

One of the advantages of using semi-structured interviews is that it allows the researcher to prepare the questions ahead of time and set the stage for conducting the interview efficiently. While the majority of the interviewees are experienced conference and television interpreters and their responses could have many aspects of resemblance or convergence, the ultimate goal was to seek very specific answers from them where they had the freedom to voice their perspectives on their own terms, and to count how many people fell into each category of responses. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews provide a good platform for the respondents to discuss and raise issues that the researcher might not have considered in the first place, and consequently collect valuable data from the context of their experience. Moreover, the open-ended nature of the interview questions provide a more relaxed atmosphere for collecting information and the respondents may feel more at ease in having a conversation with the researcher as opposed to filling out a survey (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 1998).

#### *3.4.2.2 Interview delivery*

Eight participants voluntarily took part in the one-to-one interviews in response to the researcher's invitation set out in the information sheet and the Survey Monkey online questionnaire. The researcher initially considered holding a Focus Discussion Group (FDG) (see invitation in Appendix A); however, it was difficult to organize such an FDG as interpreters all had conflicting schedules, so the researcher opted to have one on one interviews with experienced researchers instead.

The participants, with different language combinations, held accreditations such as membership of AIIC and had many years of experience working as interpreters for broadcasting corporations and other media. In addition, a couple of participants were very experienced in conference interpreting with various UN agencies, international tribunals and other regional bodies. The participants were from different countries including Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kenya and Switzerland.

The majority of participants in the one-to-one interviews were AIIC members, experienced conference and television interpreters with records of accomplishments as well as long service with various UN agencies, international tribunals and premier broadcasting corporations. In addition, they were based in different countries around the world including Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kenya and Switzerland. All of the survey participants, who worked with a range of language pairs, received an invitation to take part in the interview. This invitation took the form of the information sheet which was also included in the Survey Monkey survey when they submitted their online questionnaire. Prospective participants were informed of the purpose of the interview, what it might involve and that participation was voluntary. The potential interviewees were then invited to contact the researcher by email at [shareef.issa@gmail.com](mailto:shareef.issa@gmail.com). Participants who confirmed their willingness to take part in the interviews were advised of the date, time and venue arrangements of the interview.

From those that volunteered, the researcher identified eight participants to take part in the one-to-one interviews. Eight participants was considered suitable because they represent a good sample size of specialist interpreters who also have a great

deal of experience, which makes them representative of the population of interest. The selection criteria were based on various factors including, among other things: affiliation and membership with an international organization; seniority of the participants and leading roles undertaken throughout their career like chief interpreters or consultant interpreters and finally language combinations. The participants represented a good sample size in terms of the wealth of experience they possessed to cover the various topics contemplated for discussion in the interview. Interviews with four participants were conducted in Dubai, UAE during December 2016-January 2017 and other participants holding posts in international organizations having their domicile in various countries were interviewed via Skype.

Conducting an interview entails good communication skills. The researcher should be adept at phrasing the questions, using the right voice tone and pitch with a particular stress on few key words, and having good listening skills in terms of evincing interests in what the interviewees say, knowing when to wait and when to probe. According to Dörnyei (2007), a 'good' qualitative interview has two key features: "(a) it flows naturally, and (b) it is rich in detail" (p. 140). To attain this, the researcher made a checklist for each stage of the interview which included the following:

- advising the participants about the purpose of the interview;
- explaining why the participants had been chosen from all who volunteered for the interview;
- explaining why the interview would be tape-recorded; seeking their oral or written consent to do the recording;
- explaining what the recordings would be used for, and who would listen to the recording;
- noting the expected duration of the interview;
- seeking their informed consent and explaining how their information would be kept confidential (Rose, 1994).

In the pre-interview stage, the researcher laid the groundwork to ensure the availability of the necessary logistics for conducting all the interviews smoothly and

effectively. The venue of the interview was set at locations of convenience to the participants. Prior to starting the interviews, the researcher tested the Philips Mic Voice Tracer Audio Recorder (DVT2510). In the interview stage, the researcher aimed to establish a rapport with the participants (Miller & Crabtree, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) so the participants would feel more comfortable and at ease. The participants were informed of the aims of the research project and the way the interview data would be used. Each interviewee was then briefed about the format of the interview and the researcher ran a quick check on the background noise and set up the audio recorder.

The interview with each participant lasted for approximately 40 minutes. The questions asked are set out in the subsection 3.4.2.3 and were presented in the same order. In the course of the interview, the researcher attempted to maintain the momentum and motivation of the interviewees by keeping boredom at bay (Berg 2007, p.210). Some interviewing textbooks recommend that the interviewer "appear slightly dim and agreeable" (McCracken 1988, p.38) or "play dumb" so that respondents do not feel threatened and are not worried that they will lose face in the interview. However, the researcher maintained a professional atmosphere throughout the interview and listened attentively. At the end of the interview, the researcher turned off the digital recorder, thanked the participants and asked them if they had any questions. Again, the interviewees were assured of the researcher's strict adherence to the confidentiality of their information, and that the recordings and transcribed data would be kept for 6 years, according to the guidelines established at the university where the researcher was based, and then destroyed.

The audio recordings were done in MP3 format and were transcribed by the researcher himself.

#### *3.4.2.3 Interview questions*

The pre-set interview questions are as follows:

- 1. How do you manage a situation in which the speaker has a strong accent that is difficult to understand?*

2. *If you are interpreting a live speech on television, and there is interference from noise, how would you address this situation?*
3. *If someone is telling a joke and the audience is laughing, how would you interpret the joke and consider any cultural sensitivities?*
4. *If you are getting a speech relayed from a (Spanish, Chinese, etc.) booth and the relay was unclear and not easy to interpret, how would you address this situation?*
5. *How do you manage religious speeches which have quotes from the Bible or Quran?*
6. *How do you manage interpreting for speakers who speak very quickly and do not pause between thoughts?*
7. *How do you address the difficulties of interpreting idioms that do not have the same equivalence as in your first (A) language?*
8. *Can you identify particular challenges that have had an impact on your performance as an interpreter?*
9. *What do you feel is the maximum amount of time that a solo interpreter can interpret on his/her own without compromising the level of performance?*
10. *How do you interpret in a situation in which the speaker is saying something that is totally against your beliefs?*

#### *3.4.2.4 Preparation of data for analysis*

The online survey and the semi-structured interviews generated a significant amount of data for analysis. The detailed responses provided by the participants were categorized with separate themes and patterns for comparison and to identify new trends. Each theme was given a code for further in-depth analysis, and the responses were compared with those in the literature review to find out whether they were in line with outcomes of previous studies or had resulted in new findings. All these areas are covered in detail in the next three chapters.

### **3.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of the design and methodology, as well as the rationale for applying this particular approach. It has also looked at the data collection instruments used. Particular emphasis was placed on the advantages of using open-ended questions as a qualitative research method in conducting the semi-structured interviews. The next chapter will discuss the findings and analysis of the online survey.



## **Chapter Four: Questionnaire Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

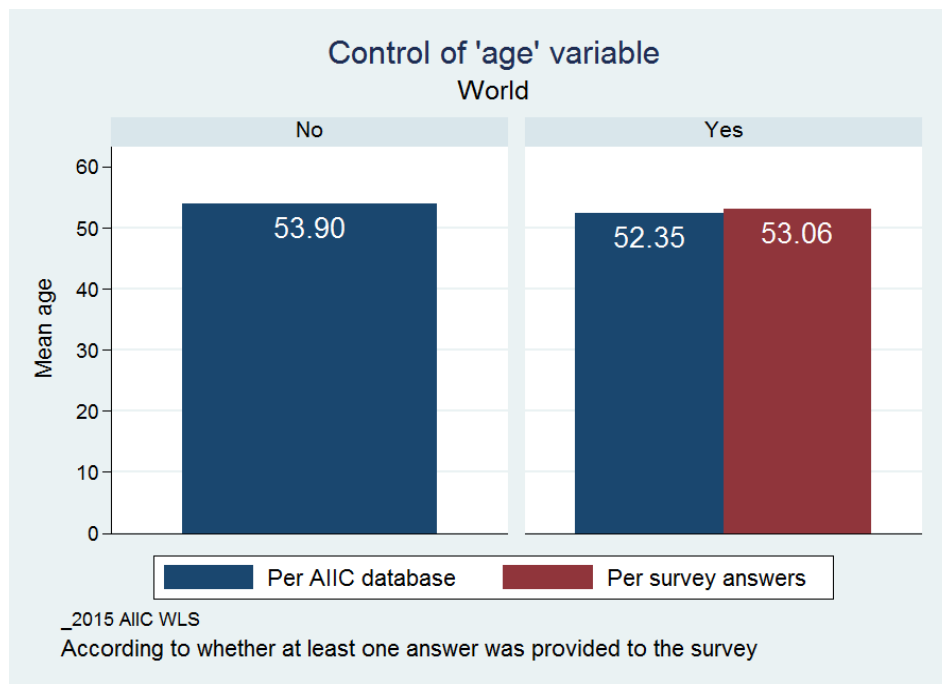
As stated in the introduction and methodology chapters, the present study aimed to address the following questions:

1. What are the major challenges facing professional conference interpreters and television interpreters?
2. What are the strategies that professional conference interpreters and television interpreters usually employ when interpreting?
3. What are the suggestions/techniques that experienced interpreters use to solve the many challenges in interpreting?

The researcher's approach to investigate these questions encompassed conducting an online questionnaire and one-to-one interviews with professional television and conference interpreters. This chapter highlights the analysis and findings of the online questionnaire.

### **4.2 Questionnaire participants**

The 10-question online questionnaire posted on the Survey Monkey website ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) generated 41 individual responses out of the 60-recorded visitors. The survey was sent with a URL link via [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) (Interpreters and Translators Worldwide) group that has a significant number of interpreters listed on the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) directory <https://aiic.net/directories/interpreters/lang/1>. The majority of respondents are experienced professionals and over 50 years of age, the same as the AIIC workload surveys (Battiaz, 2017, pers. comm.) which also examined the average age of AIIC active members as shown in the chart below.



*Figure 4.0: Respondent average age*

### 4.3 Questionnaire data analysis

The participants were asked ten questions which covered a wide spectrum of challenges facing conference and television interpreters. All the questions are open-ended and aimed to prompt the respondents to answer without any restriction, to provide their own stories and insights. Furthermore, the order of questions in the questionnaire does not reflect the seriousness of any particular challenge vis-à-vis the rest of challenges examined in this research. Rather, they were addressed randomly in the same format sent online to the respondents. Although the 41 respondents answered all the 10 online survey questions, some of them tended to give brief responses without delving into the core substance of the questions. The main challenges are discussed below.

#### 4.3.1 Challenges encountered with strong accents

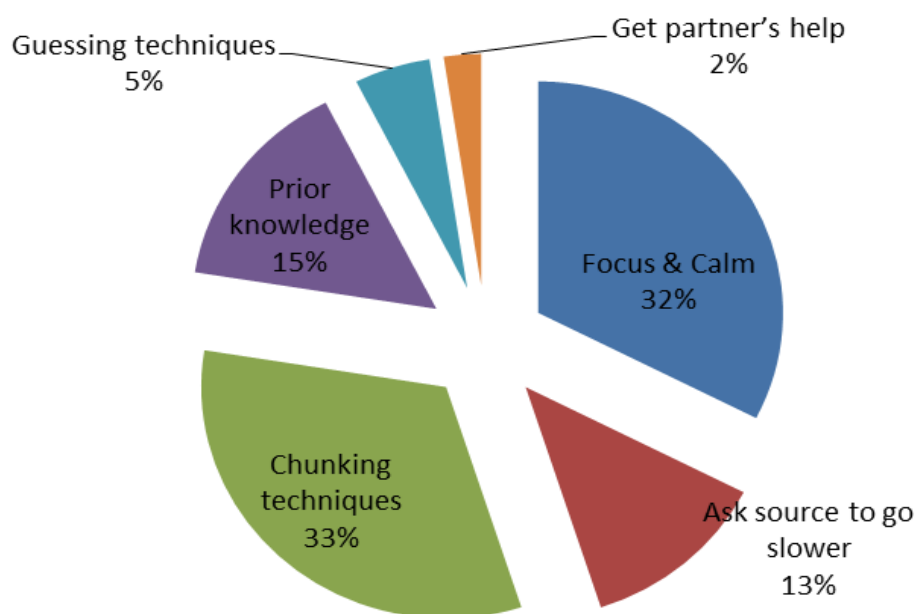
The first question asked respondents how they dealt with the issue of interpreting for someone with a strong accent. As shown in Figure (4.1) below, 13 respondents

(32%) were of the view that focus and calmness represent a good strategy to manage the situations in which the speaker's accent is strong or difficult to understand. Respondent #2 reported as follows:

*I make an effort to stay calm, lower my voice and try to make the best of the speech I understand.*

---

## How to manage speakers' accent



---

Figure 4.1: Managing accents

Five respondents (12.2%) stated that they would ask the speaker to talk at a slower pace. 13 respondents (32%) reported that they would use the “chunking” technique. Gile (1995, p. 196) views chunking as a strategy that “can save short-term memory capacity requirements by unloading information from memory faster.” Similarly, Jones (1998) urges [simultaneous interpreting] trainees to use a technique based on chunking that he coined the ‘salami technique.’ It involves slicing up long sentences into a number of shorter ones. He says, “The salami technique is particularly useful when working from languages that have a natural tendency to long, complicated

sentences” (p. 102), just as is the case in the Arabic language. Yagi (2000, p. 523) considers chunking “a coping strategy that interpreters use to divide up TL [target language] long stretches of discourse into chunks of manageable size.” Al-Salman and Al-Khanji (2002, p. 617) refer to this strategy as summarizing. Summarizing, according to them, is a strategy that interpreters use to cope with long sentences by reducing them into shorter ones without compromising the meaning of the message they are conveying.

Six respondents (14.6%) reported that they rely on their previous knowledge and experience when dealing with speakers with accents that are hard to interpret. Respondent 13 stated the following:

*I rely on the patterns I have experienced before with accents. Accents can be grouped into certain characteristics. Once you know them, the task becomes easier. I also rely on the speakers’ background (country, field of interest...etc.) to make up for what I clearly do not understand. Incidentally, when the speaker is a pleasant person, the job is easier, because you feel motivated to understand. I always think it is not really the speaker’s fault if he has a horrible accent (apart from French people who insist on speaking English... there, I make no effort!).*

Two respondents (4.9%) referred to the “guessing technique” to resolve the issue of dealing with a strong accent. For example, respondent 38 stated as follows:

*If the accent is too strong to understand, I try to adapt to the speaker’s frame of mind. In other words, I put myself in his shoes and try to anticipate what he is trying to say.*

Bartlomiejczyk (2006, p. 162) describes how anticipation occurs in simultaneous interpreting as follows: “An anticipation is believed to occur when the interpreter makes a prediction about what is going to appear in the source text. Such a prediction may be based on the content as well as on the form of the source text or on information about the text that the subject received before interpreting it.”

Jones (2002, p. 107) urges simultaneous interpreters to learn how to anticipate their speakers. First, interpreters can predict the broad structure and sometimes the general thrust of the speech through its context. Second, interpreters need to

recognize speech patterns and rhetorical structures of the source language in order to be able to anticipate their speakers. Third, interpreters can anticipate certain words or phrases in a sentence in the speech when they know for sure how the sentence will end; this skill tends to increase with experience.

#### **4.3.2 Challenges encountered with noise**

When interpreting a live speech on television, there may be noise interference. As shown in Figure 4.3 below, 12 survey respondents (29.3%) stated that they would explain the problem to the audience and extend an apology. Respondent 20, for example, indicated:

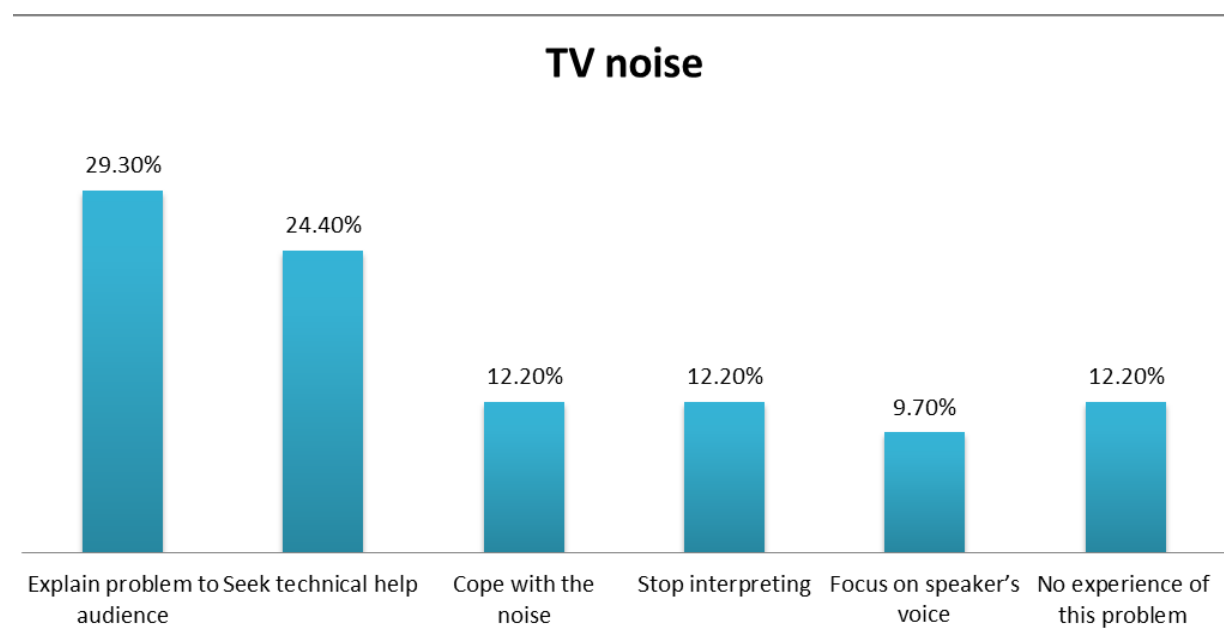
*The professional reaction is to inform the audience that you cannot get the voice from the source and refrain from interpreting if that source is not clear enough.*

Ten respondents (24.4%) reported that they would seek the assistance of the technical team or sound engineers. Respondent 36 suggested the following:

*In this case, there must be someone from the audio engineers where I can make eye contact with him/her all the time and ask for help in eliminating or reducing the noise. However, if the situation spiralled out of control, I have no issue in extending an apology to the viewers for the unintentional distortion.*

Five respondents (12.2%) held the view that they would stop interpreting the speech, even though it was live television being streamed as this could be a safer approach than making or putting words in the mouth of the speaker. Again, 5 respondents (12.2%) suggested that reducing the level of the incoming distorted audio could mitigate the noise to some extent. Respondent 40 commented as follows:

*This is one of the most annoying problems facing television interpreters on air. As interpreting requires decoding a message from SL to TL, as accurately as possible, noise can be dealt with by reducing the volume or catching the main ideas that can be heard clearly.*



*Figure 4.2: Dealing with noise while TV interpreting*

According to Gile, when the interpreter's job is exposed to an audience of millions, just as the case in television interpreting assignments, the interpreter then has a barrage of additional factors to attend to that cannot but add to the already complex set of competing efforts he is simultaneously engaged in (1995, pp. 159-190).

The working conditions in television settings, according to the chief interpreter of Al Arabiya (AA) Broadcasting Corporation (<https://english.alarabiya.net/>) could be less ideal vis-à-vis conference interpreting assignments from the booth where sound technicians are always on the job to intervene when noise or sound quality issues arise. The challenges faced by television interpreters are exacerbated when they have to interpret for speakers or anchors sitting in an environment with lots of noise in the background as the case when the television outdoors program "Diplomatic Avenue" featured on the Al Arabiya television channel (<https://english.alarabiya.net/webtv/programs/diplomatic-avenue.html>). All these factors could have an adverse impact on the interpreter's focus and increase the chance of a low quality rendition, AA's chief interpreter stated.

### 4.3.3 Challenges encountered with jokes

As shown in Figure 4.3, many respondents believe that interpreting humour is a difficult task. 17 respondents (41.5%) said that they would interpret the meaning of the joke. For example, Respondent 28 stated:

*I will try to find an equivalent joke that gives the same intended meaning. Therefore, it is all about meaning....If there is no equivalent meaning; I would interpret the joke as it is and explain to the audience that this was a joke in the speaker's culture.*

Thirteen respondents (31.7%) provided a similar answer to the first group of respondents, and added a new concept to overcome this issue. Respondent 5 said:

*If the joke can be translated without offending your audience, but does not make sense to them, you may want to explain that it is a cultural thing and only source language speakers are able to understand it. If you find the joke offensive to your audience, you may come up with your own joke and tell the audience "the speaker makes a joke, can you please laugh."*

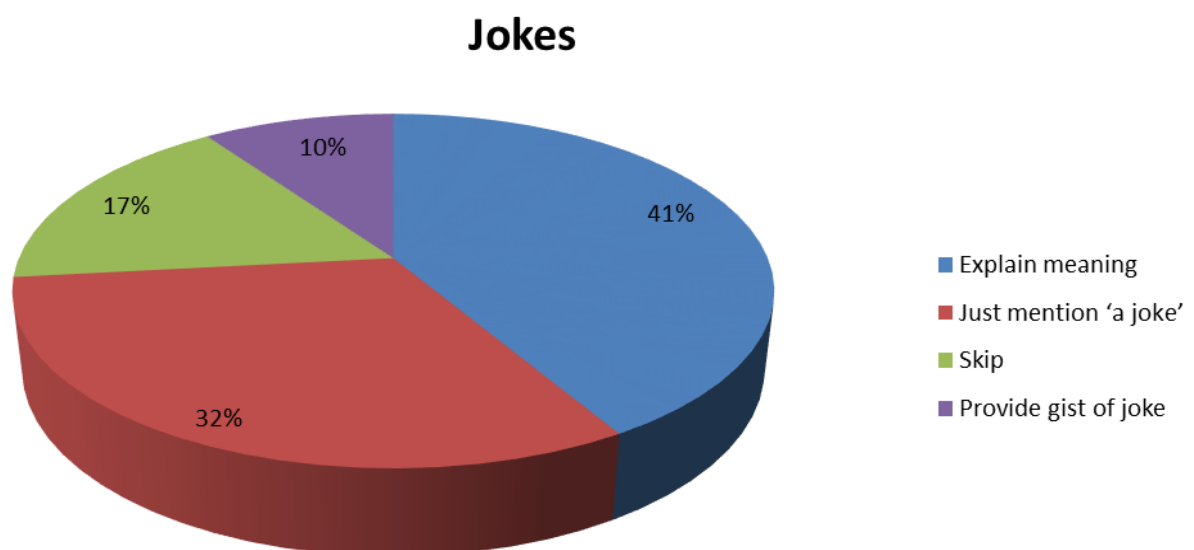
Seven respondents (17%) reported that interpreting a joke poses a real dilemma, even for experienced interpreters. For example, respondent 36 noted as follows:

*It is actually one of the most critical and embarrassing situations that an interpreter may come across, due to the cultural diversity among the audience. I really may get stuck if I cannot convey the essence of the joke in its original funny spirit. Apology is essential to the audience, with a gentle explanation that a joke in its genuine spirit might not have the same effect when interpreted to another language.*

González and Mejias (2013) believe that many speakers tend to use humour or make a joke as an opening gambit. The purpose could be to break the ice when a negotiation has reached a deadlock. Other speakers tend to begin their speeches on a humorous note just to be clever or simply to establish rapport with the audience, while others might use a joke to couch a key point of their speech. In those cases, the message is more important than the humour, and it is the content of the message that interpreters should strive to interpret. Yet the general rule, from

González and Meijias's perspective, is that failure by interpreters to convey humorous messages in the target language to the audience is only comparable to a defeat in a battlefield, and that interpreters are there to provide a reliable and a trustworthy version of what is said in the conference hall.

Conference and television interpreters should have bilingual and bicultural knowledge. Therefore, cultural references, puns and other humorous devices must be transferred to the interpreter's repertoire so that the target audience enjoys what is being said (Castro Roig, 2002). Moreover, according to Nolan, the joke-telling ability can improve with practice, and interpreters should cultivate this art in order to improve their chances of being able to interpret humour (Nolan, 2005) when necessary.



*Figure 4.3: Dealing with jokes*

#### **4.3.4 Challenges encountered with a speech relay (Chinese, Spanish, etc.)**

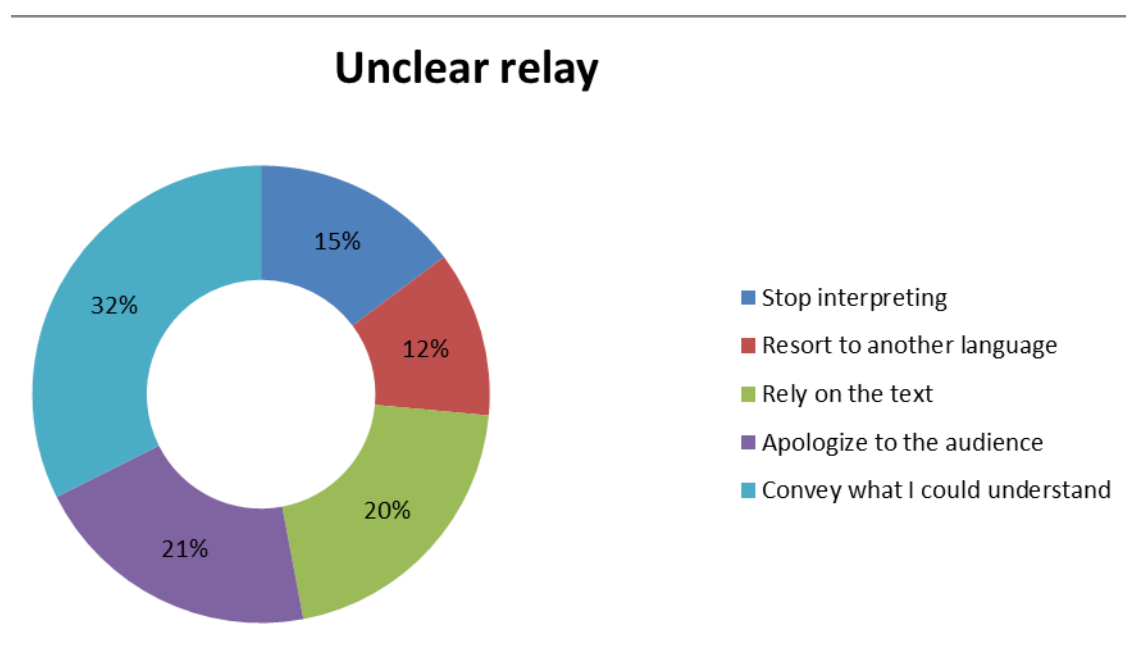
As illustrated in Figure 4.5 below, eleven respondents (32%) stated that they would try their best to convey whatever they can understand. Respondents 19 and 20 respectively noted:



*I try my best to make sense of what I hear and render it as complete as possible.*

*I would interpret only what I receive from the pivot. This is the risk of doing relay interpreting, and I cannot invent words. The team leader would normally report this to the client later.*

In relay interpreting, the ‘pivot’, i.e. the interpreter the other booths are listening to and taking relay from, has a very special responsibility. Apart from those delegates who are listening to the original, everybody else at the meeting is relying on the pivot to deliver the speaker’s message. When you are the pivot, all the principles of quality interpreting apply, and a good pivot is, first and foremost, a good interpreter. However, the pivot must also make a special effort to interpret with the needs of colleagues in mind, and to be maximally clear and helpful (AIIC, 1999).



*Figure 4.4: Dealing with unclear relays*

In the same vein, seven respondents (20%) reported that when facing challenges in understanding the relay interpreting, they rely on the texts that are usually provided by the organizer, when and if available. Respondent 40, for example, commented as follows:

*If the text was available, it will help a lot. However, if the relay was unclear, one has to act immediately by giving signals to the relay booth to adjust the sound or clarify their rendering. Experienced interpreters can infer the meaning from what they hear and restructure it into a better shape provided that they do not add or delete words of their own.*

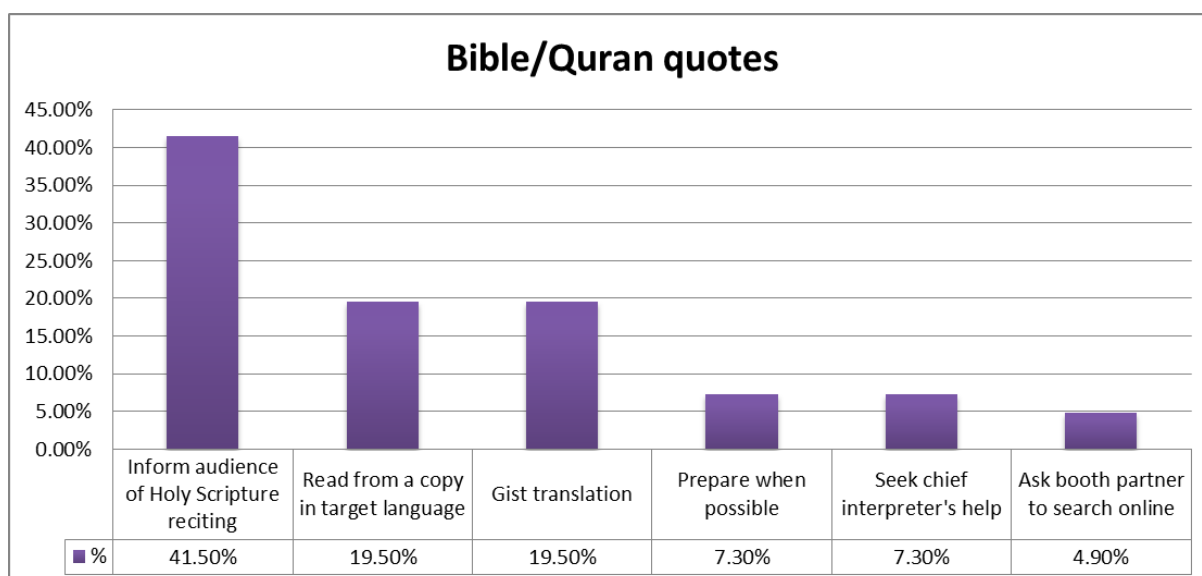
A similar number of respondents (17%) said they would apologize to the audience; four respondents stated they would resort to another language they understand, while five respondents said they would stop interpreting. Respondent 36 commented:

*I've got to deal with it as it is. I mean, there is no way to correct someone else's mistakes even if such mistakes would affect your performance. It is really a pain in the neck.*

In the practical guide for professional conference interpreters, the AIIC proposed guides for interpreters acting as pivots including, inter alia, giving copies of the speaker's text received in advance to all other booths; make special efforts to articulate clearly, construct simple and complete sentences, avoid long pauses in interpreting and other helpful suggestions. (<http://aiic-italia.it/page/628#35>).

#### **4.3.5 Challenges encountered with religious speeches and quotes**

Seven of the 41 respondents (41.5%) shared the same views on handling the problem of interpreting scripts from holy books, and reported that the least risky strategy is to inform the audience that 'the speaker is reciting scripture from the Quran or the Bible'.



*Figure 4.5: Dealing with religious quotes*

For example, Respondent 21 said:

*I would probably say that it is a quote from the Bible and would try to summarize it.*

Eight of the 41 respondents (19.5%) were of the view that they would avoid verbatim interpreting, and render the main message only. Respondent 20 commented as follows:

*If the speech is not received in advance, I would try as best as I can to interpret the meaning only. Nevertheless, this is exactly one of the cases where having a copy of the speech or presentation is necessary.*

Three of the 41 respondents (7.3%) were unanimous and regarded preparation beforehand could be the best approach to ensure the accuracy of the rendition. Respondent 11 said the following:

*I work sometimes for the Vatican, and we usually have the text beforehand to prepare it properly.*

Similarly, Respondent 35 reported:

*I would always prepare for such encounters. I would YouTube the speaker's name or the title of his lecture beforehand and write down all religious verses on paper in both languages. If the speaker has caught me off guard by way of digressing or quoting a verse I never heard of, I would then convey the meaning rather than interpret the verse in letter and spirit.*

Eight of the 41 respondents (19.5%) were of the opinion that keeping copies of translated holy books handy in the booth would be very helpful. Respondent 5 said:

*You have to have a copy of the text in the target language and pray the speaker tells you what she/he is reading (verse, chapter, etc.).*

Respondents to this question were in harmony with Blake's conclusion (2007) in which she writes about interpreting the scriptures in sign language that interpreters must have access to all the event materials beforehand, and providing interpreters with sufficient time to prepare appropriately is central to the interpreting function.

Three of the 41 respondents (7.3%) believed they would resort to the booth partner's assistance in searching for the Holy Scripture translation online. Respondent 3 provided a lengthy answer covering many of the aforementioned strategies, and said the following:

*Usually we know the most popular Quranic verses that are often repeated in conferences. So as part of our preparation for the event, we tend to extract the verses and their translation, write them down and prepare them. Again, there are online translation websites that could be very helpful. This is a great service that my booth partner will provide me with if he/she could find it so quickly. Otherwise, I will keep silent after informing the audience (now the speaker is reciting verses from the Holy Book) and try to relay the gist of it, and refrain from verbatim interpreting.*

The strategies discussed here seem to have been helpful for those interpreters faced with the particular challenges of interpreting religious material.

#### 4.3.6 Challenges encountered with fast speakers

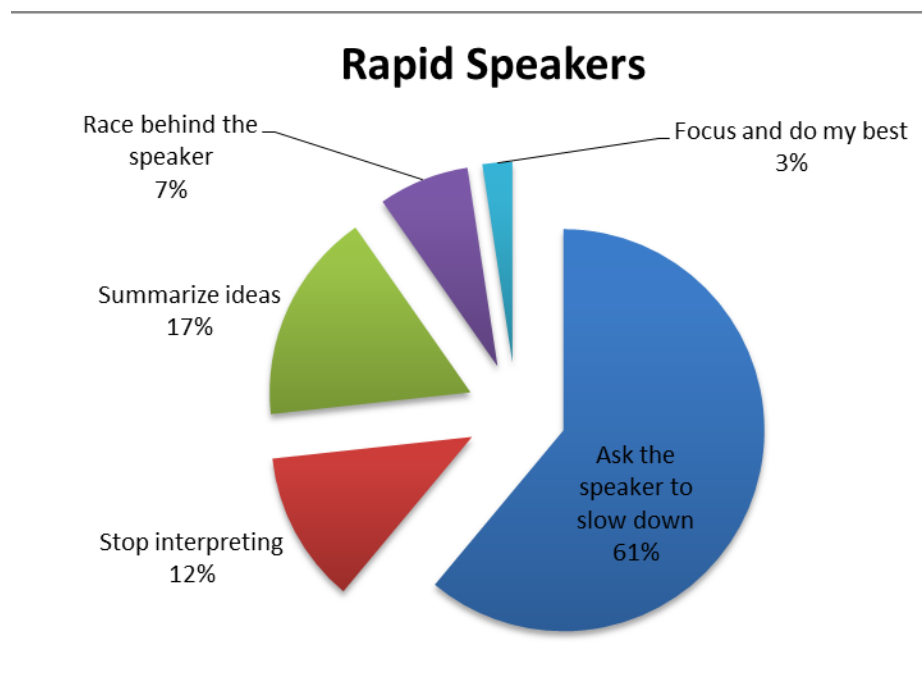


Figure 4.6: Dealing with fast speech

25 respondents (61%) shared the same opinion and underscored the established practice they believed to be the most effective when encountering speakers with a high speed of delivery. They suggested that they would wave from the booth for the speaker to slow down, or send a polite message to the audience to remind them of the interpreters' difficulties. Respondent 3 provided a detailed narrative about such scenarios:

*If it is a relaxed meeting and I do have access to the speaker(s), I can give a wave or any other sign so that they slow down. Usually speakers would approach us in the booth before they start to agree on how the event will proceed. They usually caution that if they run too fast, we have the liberty to wave or show through the booth that we cannot keep up. If the speaker is far away and won't see us from afar we seek the help of the audience and ask politely if they can tell the speaker to slow down. Speakers are generally nice people and respond to our remark. If the meeting was very formal and we don't have this luxury, the only thing we*

*could do is to continue and keep our emotions in check and grasp a full phrase to be able to interpret it.*

Respondent 5 voiced the same views as above and suggested that when all the attempts to make the speaker slow down end up in failure, he/she would stop interpreting. He/She said the following:

*I first try to communicate with the speaker or the chair of the meeting and ask them to slow down. If that does not work, I explain what is happening to my audience and tell them to tell the speaker to slow down. My option of last resort (and I have done it on a number of occasions) is to shut down the microphone, stop interpreting and tell my audience why.*

The respondent echoed Li's (2010) remarks on this issue. Li reported the experience a NATO interpreter who even tried to seek the assistance of the AIIC website to this effect. He proposed installing a "word flow monitoring device" to monitor speakers' speech rate (Communicate, 1999). If a speaker speaks too fast, the device will automatically issue a warning to remind him/her to slow down.

Seven respondents (17%) were in complete accord about how to manage fast speakers, and suggested wrapping up or summarizing as a good tactic to employ in such situations. For example, Respondents 8, 14 and 21 respectively were unanimous in their suggestion and said as follows:

*I wrap up his ideas and keep the audience connected with his/her speech.*

*No recipe. Try to give as close a synthesis as possible.*

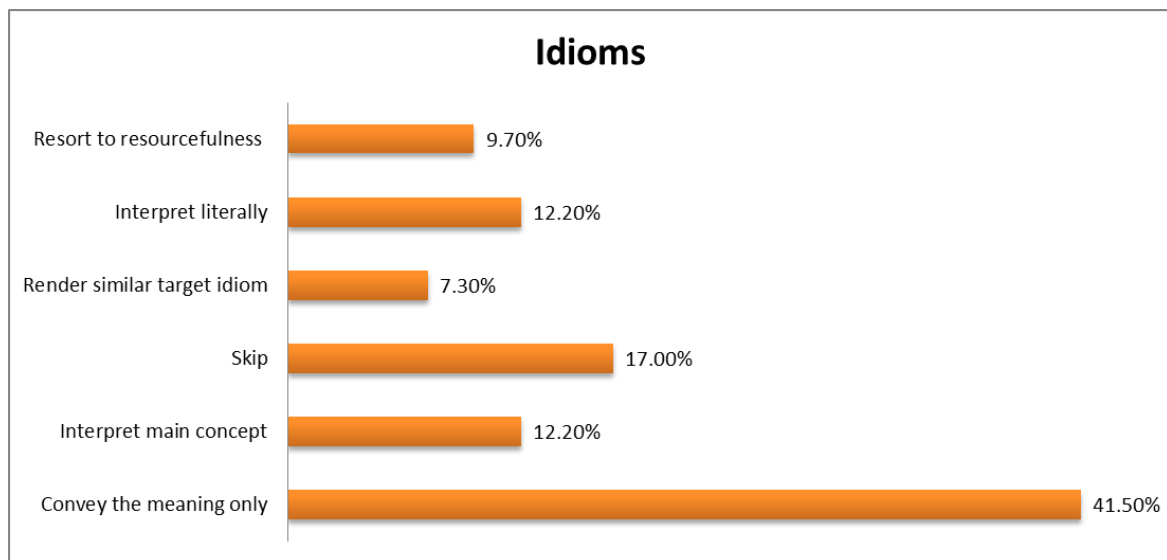
*Try and summarize and leave unimportant points of the speech.*

Three respondents (7.3%) suggested that they would 'change gears' and race behind the speaker. Respondents 39 and 40, for example, reported the following:

*Shift gears and try to catch up. Yet, extreme speed gets on my nerves. So I try very hard to control my voice.*

#### **4.3.7 Challenges encountered with idioms**

Baker (1992) proposed four problem-solving strategies as follows: 1) using an idiom of similar meaning and form; 2) using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form; 3) translation by paraphrase; and 4) translation by omission (pp. 71-72). Moreover, she states that, “the way in which an idiom or a fixed expression can be translated into another language depends on many factors....questions of style, register, and rhetorical effect must also be taken into consideration” (pp. 71-72). In addition, Fernando and Flavell (1981, p. 82) warn translators against “the strong unconscious urge in most translators to search hard for an idiom in the receptor language, however inappropriate it may be”.



*Figure 4.7: Dealing with idioms*

Seventeen respondents (41.5%) stated that they would convey the meaning only; 5 (12.2%) respondents suggested they were of the view of interpreting the gist or main concept and 5 respondents believed “literal interpreting” to be the safest technique to employ with idioms that do not have the same equivalence in their first (A) language.

Seven respondents (17%) took a different approach and believed that it is impossible to translate idioms, and the best thing to do, from their perspective, is to skip them. Respondent 35, for example, said:

*If you are in doubt, leave it out. It is extremely important not to mix up idioms. If you understand the idiom but it has no equivalent, then you might as well brief the target audience with the meaning. Otherwise, you might skip it as well.*

Finally, 7 respondents believed that they would render a similar target language idiom, and that resourcefulness can resolve this problem. Respondent 40 commented as follows:

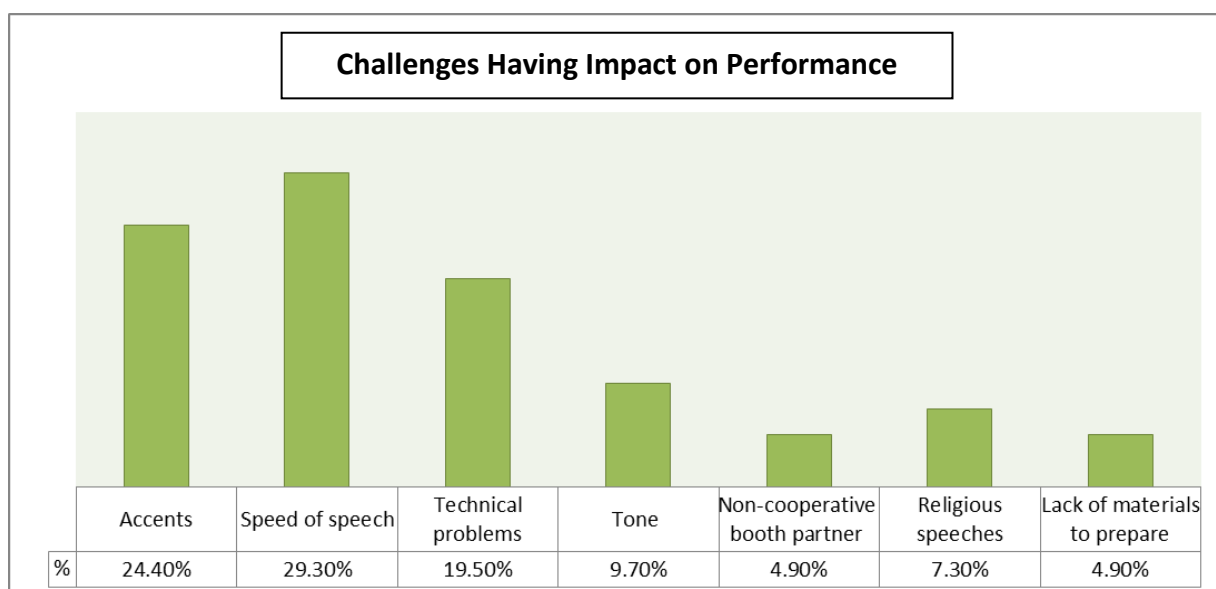
*There must be something close to replace these idioms in the target language. Mastering two languages is a must here, and the morphological rules would help interpreters find an outlet to derive equivalents.*

Idioms are some of the most difficult material to interpret, and the various strategies here show how interpreters may deal with them.

#### **4.3.8 Major challenges that have an impact on the interpreters' performance**

Speed of delivery was a major challenge which 12 respondents (29.3%) considered to be an impediment for quality performance. Regarding the other categories shown in Figure 4.8, few respondents reported that managing a speaker with a monotonous tone which lacks any intonation or even pitches makes the interpreter's rendition more difficult. Others believed that working with a booth partner who does not abide by booth protocol (such as providing assistance when needed by writing numbers, searching for the meaning of a difficult term, using a loud voice when taking over, leaving the booth for a long time or not arriving until it is time to take over in rotation, and so forth) may have a negative impact on the interpreter's performance. Though these issues are closely relevant to the overall challenges, they do not represent the core focus of this thesis, and perhaps more research is necessary to explore these issues in the future.





*Figure 4.8: Main challenges affecting interpreters<sup>3</sup>*

Respondent 13 described the situation as follows:

*A speaker who does not breathe; a speaker who yells are extremely tiring for me. I don't mind speed as long as the speech is natural. Interpreting written speeches, even with a text, can be very challenging. Some people don't know how to read or perhaps don't care for what they are reading. What really puts me off is when I feel that my work is not respected.*

Strong accents came in second place from the perspective of 10 respondents (24.4%); this was followed by technical problems as suggested by 8 respondents (19.5%). 4 respondents (9.7%) stated that handling speakers with a monotone without a change in pitch or intonation or otherwise ranting and speaking loudly had an adverse impact on their performance. Finally, 2 respondents (4.9%) said that having a non-cooperative or a fidgeting booth partner could be the worst situation for any professional interpreter. Respondent 16 commented as follows:

*The most difficult situation is if you are paired with an interpreter who has a big ego. They don't want to be helped and they don't want to help. Sometimes you*

<sup>3</sup> Several issues are shown in the graph (such as tone) which are not discussed in the thesis as they are not part of the focus of analysis.

*are being paired with people you don't know and their performance quality is not the same as yours....*

On the other hand, respondent 3 summed up most of the challenges mentioned above and noted the following:

*Non-cooperative or fidgeting booth partner, low quality equipment, very fast speakers, speakers who are monotonous or maintain one single intonation, speakers reading texts without giving us a copy or guiding us to what they are talking about, prejudiced speakers who keep saying after every question "they did not get it" and blame it on the interpreters, which is not accurate... Low voiced speakers, non-sound proof booths... etc.*

Respondent 34 also identified the same issues as follows:

*People who come and talk to you from outside your booth window asking for random things like headsets, directions to the Xerox machine. Bad sound input. Television guys who cannot manage to get their feed from the sound system and decide on their own that they can barge into the booth while you are in action to stick a hot microphone under your nose.*

The data here show that speed and accents are by far the most difficult of the challenges facing interpreters in their work.

#### **4.3.9 Maximum amount of time a solo interpreter can function without compromising quality performance**

Thirty-six respondents (88%) believe that 30 minutes to one hour is the maximum duration that a professional should do solo, and failing to do so means the interpreter will be fatigued and his/her performance will be largely compromised.

## Maximum time before fatigue

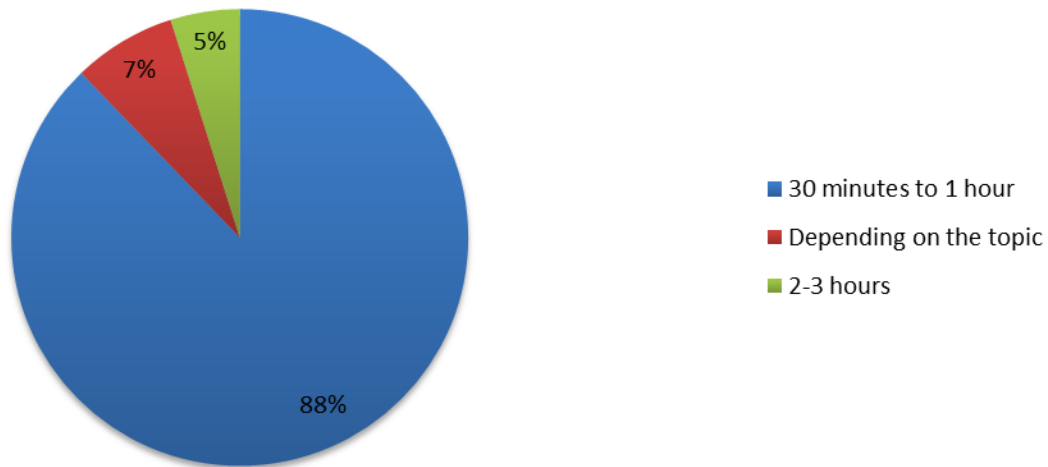


Figure 4.9: Maximum time interpreting before critical fatigue

Respondent 13, for example said:

*30 minutes, definitely. Of course, I can hold for 40 minutes, and indeed I manage it, but it takes longer to recover. Fatigue accumulates and it is not good for performance over the entire day, or capacity to recover from stress overnight.*

Three respondents (7.3%) shared the view that the maximum duration before fatigue depends on the topic and other factors. Respondent 35 suggested as follows:

*It depends on the topic, stamina, age, level of concentration and different other factors. But I think it could be to the tune of 40 minutes.*

AIIC has already established the rules pertaining to the working hours of conference interpreters (AIIC, 2014) as follows:

For meetings with two working languages, working both ways in a single booth:

- Maximum 40 minutes – 1 interpreter
- Maximum 3.5-4 hours – 2 interpreters
- Maximum 6 hours – 3 interpreters
- Maximum 8 hours – 4 interpreters

#### 4.3.10 Challenges when interpreting subject matter against beliefs

The majority of respondents were of the view that an interpreter's job is only to convey the message neutrally and that he/she is the voice and has no right of personal opinion, and only one respondent (2.4%) said that he/she would stop interpreting if the speaker said something harsh.

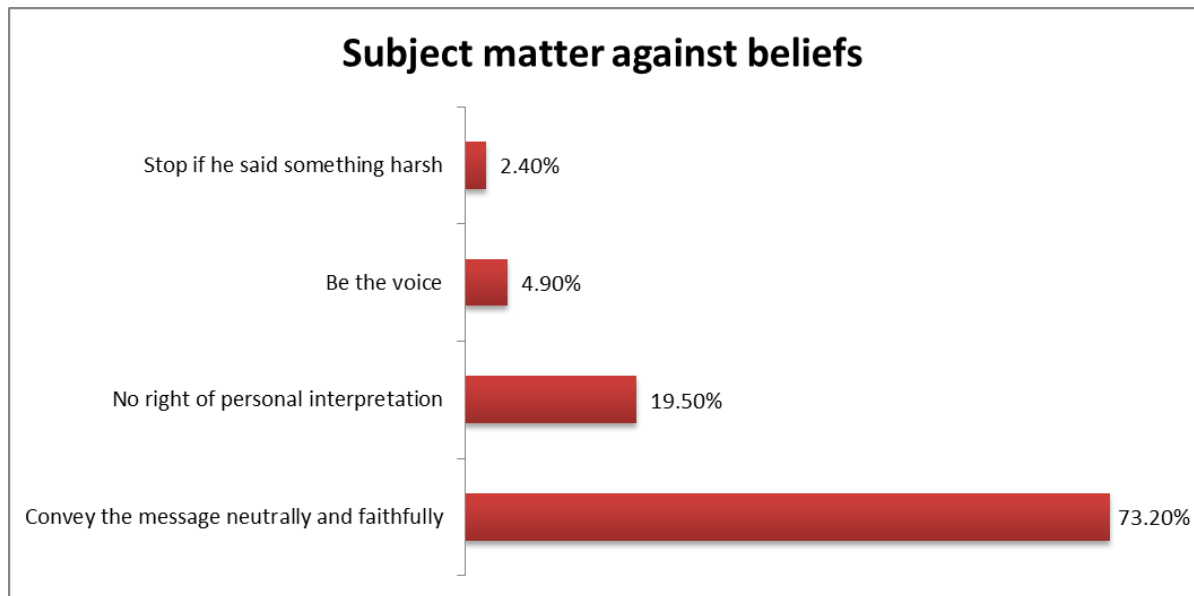


Figure 4.10: Interpreting subjects against personal beliefs

Respondents 13, 34 and 40 made the following comments:

*I am an interpreter, and I am paid to make it possible for other people to react to that person's opinion. So I do have to state it as is. In pleasant situations, I try to have a convincing tone and some dynamism in my voice. But in the case you describe, I state what I hear, without emphasis. I find it extremely difficult not to reveal my feelings..... So, I try to remember that I am being paid to interpret everything I hear.*

*I am not here to voice my opinion but to interpret for the speaker. I wait until the microphone is off and my capacity as an interpreter comes to an end to vent and voice my objection offline.*

*Interpreters are like doctors. They must do their jobs without prejudices or emotional or personal attitudes.*

Fidelity to the speaker's source message has been at the heart of conference and television interpreters. Herbert (1952, p. 4) affirmed the tenet of "fully and faithfully" interpreting a speaker's original idea. In addition, Seleskovitch (1968), one of the co-founders of AIIC, called for the interpreter to work with 'fidélité absolue,' translated in the 1978 English version as 'total accuracy.'

#### **4.4 Summary of analysis**

The findings of the online questionnaire indicated that conference and television interpreters faced an array of challenges at work including, among other things, interpreting for fast speakers whether in television or conference settings, dealing with idiomatic expressions where interpreters stated that on many occasions, they could not find the right equivalence of the idiom on the spot. Respondents also voiced their concerns when doing relay interpreting from the 'pivot' interpreter if the latter's rendition was not up to the expected professional standard. Joke interpreting was another issue of concern for respondents who believed that it could be one of the hardest tasks that an interpreter could undertake given the difference the sensitivity of this area, let alone the cultural differences from perspective of the target audience.

Respondents proposed various strategies to cope with the challenges in discussions included chunking, summarizing, reformulation, error correction, and prediction techniques. In other instances, the respondents' few other coping strategies agreed with the previous literature review.

The one-to-one interview data will be presented and discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Interview Data Analysis**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will examine the findings of interviews conducted with a group of professional television and conference interpreters who volunteered to be interviewed in relation to certain challenges they might frequently encounter when they are working. The interviews investigated the challenges encountered by the participants as set out in the questions below. The researcher transcribed all the interviewees' responses and comments verbatim from the audio recordings. The interview data findings will be analysed and compared with the previous literature in the next chapter.

### **5.2 Interview participants**

As stated in Chapter 3, of the total of eight interviews, four were conducted in Dubai, UAE during December 2016-January 2017 while the other four participants were interviewed via Skype. The interviews were conducted in Dubai at the time as this was a venue of convenience to the interviewees. The researcher used a Philips Mic Voice Tracer Audio Recorder (DVT2510) for recording all interviews in MP3 format, which were then transcribed. All the participants gave their consent for the interviews to be tape-recorded and were told that their information would remain strictly confidential. Interviewees are identified by number, not by name.

### **5.3 Interview data analysis**

The researcher used open-ended questions in view of the numerous advantages that this approach could yield, including the fact that it would not impose any limitations upon the participants' responses. This gave them the freedom to provide as much detail as they wished and to share their experiences in their own voices. In the one-to-one interviews, the researcher maintained the same order of questions as follows:

- 1) *Can you tell me what you do when you have a situation where a speaker has a strong accent?*
- 2) *Can you tell me what you do when there are occasions where technical issues arise such as interference from static disrupting your interpretation of a live speech on television?*
- 3) *Because humour differs from language to language and culture to culture, can you tell me what you do when a joke is told, and the audience laughs?*
- 4) *Can you tell me what you do when in the UN conference settings there are relays from different language combinations in action at the same time such as Spanish, Chinese, etc. and the pivot handling the relay was unclear or his/her rendition lacked clarity?*
- 5) *Can you tell me what you do when speakers recite quotes or verses from the Holy Scripture like the Quran or the Bible. What is the best strategy that you employ in such scenarios?*
- 6) *Can you tell me what you do when a speaker has a quick delivery and doesn't pause between thoughts?*
- 7) *Can you tell me what you do when speakers overuse idiomatic language? What do you think is the best strategy that television and conference interpreters could implement to deal with this?*
- 8) *Can you tell me what you do to overcome the major difficulties that could have an impact on your performance?*
- 9) *Can you tell me what you do when in television and conference interpreting assignments, an interpreter has to work solo until being relieved by a back-up colleague(s) – how long do you think a solo interpreter can interpret on his/her own without compromising the level of performance?*
- 10) *Can you tell me what you do when a speaker is saying something that is totally against your beliefs?*

These issues will be dealt with separately in the following sections.

### **5.3.1 Dealing with strong accents**

Lippi-Green defined the term accent as a “loose bundle of prosodic and segmental features distributed over geographic and/or social space” (1997, p. 42). As she noted, prosodic features include intonation, pitch, stress and tempo, and segmental features the phonological structure of vowels and consonants. Simply put, an accent is a way of speaking, and every single speaker of a language has his or her own accent.

All the interviewees responded to this question and cited the strategy that they usually employ to manage speakers with strong accents. Television interpreters held the view that their position is likely to be more stressful and uncomfortable than that of their conference interpreter colleagues working from the booth, as the latter have a lesser margin of freedom to seek the assistance of their booth partner or the chief interpreter when encountering a speaker with an accent that is hard to understand. Moreover, a television interpreter covering live statements or speeches usually acts solo for a certain duration of time, and there is no way to undo any error or inaccurate rendition. According to the interpreters interviewed, interpreting for live television broadcasts is almost unanimously regarded as more stressful than any other forms of interpreting (Stolz, 1997; Kurz, 2002), the main reason being that interpreting for a mass audience entails a much bigger exposure in case of failure to accurately interpret than would be the case in conventional conference settings.

English has become the prevailing medium of international communication. The scope of using English has dramatically increased to cover all aspects of life and disciplines starting from being the language of international relations, international trade, tourism, science and culture as well as the common language of communication among UN interpreters. It is a commonly used lingua franca, and Crystal (2003) estimated that non-native speakers of English at that time outnumbered native speakers by a ratio of 3 to 1. In view of such a wide spectrum of English uses in various fields, non-native speakers have also brought with them a variety of English accents in terms of the spoken language. Against this backdrop, television and conference interpreters have encounters with speakers of different varieties of English around the world. Gile (2001), Darwish (2009) and Al Qinaï (2001)



believe that speakers' pronunciation and non-standard accents are listed among the greatest challenges that interpreters are likely to encounter.

Though the participants in the one-to-one interviews addressed this issue from different perspectives, they unanimously stated that accent, especially with live statements on television, has always been one of the major difficulties, and one which may amount to an impediment to quality performance. The participants interviewed were coded below as [Int1], [Int2], [Int3] and so on.

To address this issue, the first interpreter highlighted various strategies that he/she usually embraces in the translation booth, stating the following:

*At the beginning, I will try to manage as much as possible. I will try to use the knowledge I have about the topic of what he/she is talking about to understand more what he/she is trying to say. I will try to find keywords that can help me get the message and I try to retrieve more information from the power point presentation. However, if it were a speech in an opening ceremony and I do not have a copy of the speech I will have to try to work it out and try to get at least the essence of what he/she is saying. If the accent is extremely heavy and topic is sensitive and I am not able to get more than 70% of what he is saying I will check with my booth partner to see if he/she can take over. If the latter cannot I will announce to the listeners that the speaker is speaking in a heavy unclear accent and that I am trying my best to give them an idea about what he is talking about, but this will be in extreme rare cases. [Int1]*

The second interviewee held the view that focusing on certain key words of the speaker with a strong accent could mitigate the problem, stating the following:

*The only and best approach in dealing with speakers who have strong and difficult accents is to focus on the way of articulating certain vowels, diphthongs and consonants that will be repeated in the speech or presentation. Concentrating on the structure of the sentences along with the repetition of some focal points and words will help the interpreter sort out the problem to a large extent. [Int2]*

Other interviewees proposed other strategies which are similar to some extent and responded as follows:

*Professional interpreters usually alert television producers or conference coordinators about this issue before the initiation of the interpretation, (particularly if the speaker is Spanish or Portuguese as I find the accent extremely challenging). The speaker is reminded to slow down a bit and make sure the sounds are clearly uttered. This will minimize the issues related to the strong accent remarkably. If it is a live transmission by a speaker who is not 'contactable' before the interpretation session, I just make sure that the equipment and sound level are right and suitable for me to get as much clarity as possible. [Int3]*

Another interviewee shared some tips relating to the use of existing recorded material by way of preparation.

*Proper preparation for any event is a key success for interpreting. To avoid this problem, I would always try to meet the speakers to talk a little bit to familiarize myself with their accent before the start of any event. And if it was hard to catch them, I would ask for any recorded material on YouTube or other websites. [Int4]*

A third interviewee also underlined the importance of correct preparation.

*Accent has always been my nightmare and I think there are no quick fixes for this issue. I am always surprised by those speakers who spend a long stint of their career as ambassadors of their respective countries, yet their accent never gets neutralized over all these years. From my personal experience, I had to struggle a lot every time one representative of Russia to the United Nations has to make remarks at the press stakeout following a closed meeting at the Security Council. Apart from his speech of delivery, there is still the dilemma of his accent which is burdensome at times, and my fear is not to make any mistakes for lack of understanding as I will be the one to take the blame at the end of the day. When I have a new guest to be interviewed on television, I always do my homework, and the first thing I check is the speaker's accent, intonation and pitch on You Tube or any blog, if any. It is a helpful tactic, but it does not work all the time. All you have to do is to focus and pray. [Int5]*

Another interpreter emphasised the importance of opportunities to meet speakers before the interpreting assignment.

*My Approach is the “Proactive approach” Of course, the name of the game is “preparation, preparation, preparation & preparation”! Yet, it could still turn into a disaster! Complexity of the topic as well as importance of the occasion are also of the essence. Interpreters may need to be “lip-readers”! If only you could see the speaker’s face, his facial expressions, and the movements of his lips, then this may save you one day, reading his lips, of course, provided that you have such a skill! If the speaker is reading from a slide during a presentation, the interpreter could refer to this slide, either on the screen, if seen clearly, or through his laptop or even a printout. Generally speaking, this is how I approach any interpreting task/assignment: I always try not to let a situation like that arise in the first place. The very first moment I undertake an interpreting task/assignment, I start doing my homework, studying the subject, researching the speakers’ backgrounds, searching for any pertinent information, and trying to contact them, even trying to speak with them, if at all possible, before the speech. A very good practice I learned and benefitted a lot from, is the pre-event receptions that are held sometimes the night before an event/occasion/conference. During these receptions, I try to meet some speakers, many of their assistants or colleagues, get to know and speak to them. And when I have a chance to talk to the speakers, I would explain the fact that I am going to be interpreting for them, trying to get the speaker’s message across to the audience, as best as I humanly can. And in order to do so, they need to speak slowly & clearly and avoid the use of jargon which I gently ask for. If none of the above was possible, and I find myself in such a situation, then it depends! Am I a team leader? Am I an interpreter in a team of 2 or more? [Int6]*

Yet another interviewee argued that it is useful to focus on the way certain vowels and consonants are articulated when interpreting speakers with unusual accents:

*Ambiguity of the message, the rapid pace with which speakers give their presentations, shortage of time allocated to the speaker, and the accent will contribute to the difficulty that interpreters face. Each one of us has his own accent that he has inherited from his environment or surroundings. As we have different dialects and accents in English, modern Arabic presents the same*

*problem for the Arabs themselves. If the speaker was from Arabic-speaking North African countries, and started to discuss or respond to the questions of the participants in his own dialect flavoured with a French accent and words, the interpreter, especially from the Arab Orient, will not understand him at all. Therefore, it is advised to have North African interpreters on such events though their interpretation may seem odd to the ears of other Arabs attending the sessions. The same applies to American English speakers who tend to use and insist on using their own local dialects and even idiolects in international conferences, thinking that the world must understand their way of speaking just because they are Americans. When they listen to our interpretation from Arabic into English, they are amazed thinking that there is some sort of magic in the matter. This explains the fact that a large proportion of speakers forget about the presence of interpreters in the back of the room. The same applies to African and sub continental accents that really confuse interpreters. The only and best approach in this case is to focus on the way of articulation of certain vowels and consonants that will be repeated in the speech. Concentrating on the structure of the sentences along with the repetition of some focal points and words will help the interpreter solve the problem to a large extent. Some of our colleagues in the booth give it up when Indian or Pakistani presenters take the floor. The reason is that they never attempt to decode the discourse or they have not trained their ears on receiving the “strange” diphthongs uttered by these speakers. The difficulties may also be connected to the speakers whose mother tongue is not English. Some Arabic-speaking presenters tend to show off and insist on using English. They commit terrible mistakes and you as an interpreter must tune it up and give in correct Arabic. Koreans and other East Asians suffer from difficulties in English but there is no way out. You have to listen carefully and try to understand the jargon! [Int1]*

Most of the interviewees stressed the importance of previous preparation and of being provided with at least summaries of the speeches or statements before the actual start of the assignment. However, television interpreters stated that this luxury is not available to them, and they have to be prepared to go live at very short

notice without even knowing what topic the speaker might be addressing. In major broadcasting corporations, television producers usually have access to a variety of news sources, which send them alerts about scheduled speeches in terms of time and venue, and television interpreters are rushed to the booth at very short notice in such events, and have very little time to prepare. Nevertheless, the interviewees were all of the opinion that prior knowledge and good preparation are conducive to alleviating the challenge of unforeseen problems for interpreters, and that strong accents are no exception. According to Dillinger (1994), preparation reduces the importance of contextual variables such as accents and emphasizes correct terminology. Interviewee findings were in alignment with survey findings in this respect as 6 out of 41 survey respondents also felt that preparation helps mitigate the issue of interpreting speakers with heavy accents.

### ***5.3.2 Dealing with noise***

Seven out of eight interviewees underlined the vital importance of noise-free and quality audio feeds in simultaneous interpreting. The two television interpreters, however, believed that the working environment in television settings is not ideal compared with those their fellow conference interpreters work in, when they are in the interpreting booth. Moreover, these two interviewees said they considered the working conditions of conference interpreters to be less stressful as they work in a team of two or three and always receive timely backup from a team of sound technicians for troubleshooting any sound quality or noise issues. Both the television interpreters interviewed also claimed that they encountered many situations where they had to interpret for speakers in outdoor settings with lots of noise and distractions in the background. They even had to undertake assignments for military commanders making phone statements from flashpoints or war zones. They identified television interpreting assignments that were particularly challenging, such as where the microphone is wrongly placed or where there is an overlapping noise, which could be the sound of wind blowing, chants of protests and demonstrations, weak sound signals in Skype interviews and other similar situations. These are

generally not ideal for any interpreter and will increase the chances of making mistakes on air. Gerver (2002) conducted a study on the effect of noisy listening conditions on the performance of simultaneous interpreters by asking subjects to shadow and simultaneously interpret French prose into English at three different signal-noise ratios. Gerver concluded that noise had a significant effect on the proportions of speech correctly shadowed and interpreted and that there were significantly more errors committed when interpreting in a noisy environment.

The interviewees reported the following with respect to the problem of noise:

*First, I raise my hand to alert sound engineers, but simultaneously manage to extract as many speech elements as possible from the speaker. Sound engineers / assistants, from experience, are supposed to deal with the issue in a relatively short time. Focus is the key word; catching the key message and relaying it is of paramount importance to keep the chain of thought uninterrupted. However, I believe this issue is the most distressful aspect of spontaneous interpretation, and only an experienced interpreter can ensure effective delivery, with no less than 30 per cent of the content wasted due to a technical hiccup. [Int1]*

The second interviewee added that live coverage may compound problems for television interpreters:

*It depends if it is an interview or a live coverage. If live coverage and I do not have control of my microphone, as is the case in the majority of television interpreting jobs here in Dubai, I will announce on air that we are facing a technical problem and the sound is unclear in order for the producer and sound engineer to know because I do believe that there is a higher responsibility of television interpreting specially regarding sensitive issues. If it is an interview I will do my best and when I am translating the question to the guest I will pass the message to the sound engineer that I cannot hear properly. [Int2]*

Interviewee three had comments to make about various aspects related to noise:

*Television interpretation requires pre-knowledge of the interviewees, their background and the topic to be discussed. However, noise may add up to the burden of delay, or speed. In this case, the interpreter has to reduce the pitch of*

*his voice so that he could hear the sentences that will follow, catch up with the speed of the speaker, and focus on the main ideas or points without letting important words slip, if possible, as these words may reflect the attitude of the interviewee. By and large, the matter may not be in the hands of the interpreter who should do his best to overcome noise or any other technical problem on air.*

[Int3]

Interviewee four commented on the negative impact on interpreting when the interpreter is rushed to interpret live on television and there is no time for a sound check:

*In case of interpreting speeches on television, there is a protocol in place where you run a quick sound test off-air with the audio engineers before turning on your microphone to start interpreting. However, on certain occasions when rushed to the television interpreting booth, then you may have to skip this part to cover some important breaking news and you are likely to face unpleasant surprises of noise or hearing other sound interference. In general, you must test the headsets, microphone and incoming sound level to ensure that no interference or noise are heard in the background. Professional sound engineers keep eye contact with television interpreters to make an immediate intervention in case there were any pressing technical hiccups. Worst case scenario, I have to resort to the last option to press the voice off button for a few seconds and yell to the sound technician to help. [Int4]*

Interviewee 5 shared some experiences in relation to working with a sound engineer who forgot to mute another sound source:

*In television interpreting, it is unfortunate that your destiny is always in the hands of the sound engineers you are working with. Some of them are scrupulous and never turn a blind eye to any single audio issue during interpreting live speeches. However, others somehow lack professionalism and consider that once you had the audio feed in your headsets, then their job has to come an end without keeping an eye on the incoming audio track. It is a stroke of luck, and in our culture there is an old adage saying "Grant me some luck and throw me in the*

*sea". I had a terrible experience when I was doing a relay interpreting job for a 2-way guest, and as it happened, the sound engineer forgot to mute the sound of the television gallery where all the technical crews operate from including the director, producer, audio and video editors, and I had to hear all their chats, jokes and noise while I was doing the interpreting slot, and my performance was disastrous as I could hear an awful lot of sounds coming together with the guest at the same time. [Int5]*

Interviewee 6 shared some tried and tested strategies he/she used to be prepared for any sound and noise-related issues.

*I think first and foremost, conference and television interpreters have to ensure that their headsets are equipped with noise cancellation features. It helps a lot if the interference is merely a humming noise, and in this case all you have to do is to double your level of concentration. However, if it is cracking and you are missing words, I would say "I am sorry, we are experiencing a technical difficulty" rather than forcing yourself to translate when you might get the message wrong. Checking and rechecking the audio system, headsets and microphones are very essential before the start of interpreting any live speech task. [Int6]*

Lastly, one interviewee commented on the importance of experience, in that interpreters learn to filter out only what they need to interpret.

*Over the years and with experience you will learn to filter the speech and you only hear what is important to you and you ignore the surrounding noise in which case the latter is reasonably manageable. I always try to make sense of what I can get and deduce the rest amid the noise. However, if it becomes too invasive to the extent that it would be humanly impossible to hear anything, I will pause and apologize to the audience, and ask the audio engineers if they could find a different source of the same speech or statement. [Int7]*

The next section will look at strategies used by interviewees when presented with the challenge of interpreting jokes.



### 5.3.3 Dealing with jokes

While all the interviewees admitted that interpreting a joke or humorous story has always been a challenge for conference and television interpreters, they believed that some speakers or even politicians tell a joke as an opening gambit in order to break the ice, establish rapport with the audience and build relationships. Most of the conference interpreters interviewed stated that “explaining” the joke was the least risky approach to pursue in such circumstances. However, this technique seems to be extremely inconsistent with the recommendations of Hoffman (2012) who believed that nothing kills a joke more than having to explain it. According to Hoffman, telling a joke is an art that relies on both creativity and luck, and it is advisable if possible for interpreters to find a cultural equivalent or create new puns of the joke in the target language. Some interviewees had a different perspective and stated that interpreting jokes comes with experience, as well as intensive knowledge and readings of the interpreters’ A and B languages. In fact, they echoed the views of González and Mejias (2013) who argued that interpreting jokes or humour, like any other skill, is something that can improve with practice, and who recommended developing this particular talent, as humour is so universal to the human race, and because interpreting humour helps interpreters achieve pragmatic equivalence (Hale, 2014).

Six out of eight interviewees elaborated on this question as follows:

*I always translate the joke as much as I can and I start by saying that the speaker is telling a joke يقول المحاضر مازحا in an attempt to set up the listener’s expectations. However, this strategy is not always effective as there are many jokes that are widely regarded by the culture of source language audience to be very funny when it could be considered really dull or lacking liveliness for the target language listeners and vice versa. Interpreting a joke is a difficult task because I really do not know what kind of cultural connotations this joke has behind it. Again, sometimes telling a joke relies on puns, rhythm and the punch line or twist of words that is really hard to relay to the listeners on the spot. In such scenarios, I always tend to explain the meaning of the joke as much and as quickly as possible. I do my best to make the nearest and shortest rendering*

*possible so that the target language audience is not left behind, misses the purpose of the joke or gets the meaning when it is too late. [Int1]*

The next interviewee agreed that jokes are very culture-specific and that this makes them difficult to appropriately convey in the other language:

*What is funny in one language or culture is not necessarily funny in another. Humour is difficult to translate and even more difficult to interpret. For an interpreter, to draw a laugh from the audience at the same time that those hearing the original is a rare achievement. An interpreter must be attentive to the purpose of the joke. Many speakers begin with a joke to establish rapport with the audience. Jokes are sometimes used to convey a key point of a speech. In this case, the message is more important than the humour. However, it is preferable to preserve the sense of humour whenever possible. I still remember once when one Syrian representative to the United Nations told a joke mocking the US ambassador by saying "He who needs the help of Satan is advised not to seek it from Mephistopheles". I suspect that the UN interpreter made a good rendition of the joke, otherwise the US delegate response would have been fiery. Professional interpreters should have good knowledge of English literature including Dr. Faust's play by Christopher Marlowe . استخدم بشار الجعفري ممثل سوريا في مجلس الأمن جملة ساخرة . بحق مندوبة الولايات المتحدة عندما قال بالعربية " من كانت له حاجة عند الشيطان فلا يذهب إلى إبليس " ولا أظن أن المترجم تمكن من ترجمتها وإلا لكان الرد الأمريكي عنيفا مثل 'هذه السخرية تتطلب معرفة واسعة بالأدب الانجليزي وخاصة مسرحية الدكتور فاوست لكرستوفر مارلو المأخوذة عن مسرحية ألمانية، يأخذ بالأدب الانجليزي وخاصة مسرحية الدكتور فاوست لكرستوفر مارلو المأخوذة عن مسرحية ألمانية، يأخذ Mephistopheles. وإبليس هو Satan الشيطان فيها اسمه المعروف [Int2]*

A third interviewee expanded on the culture-specific nature of jokes, and provided a strategy he/she uses to avoid offending cultural sensibilities.

*I believe if a joke in a foreign language makes one belonging to that culture 'laugh', it would make others from a different culture at least 'smile' or, in worst cases, shrug off the joking remark. I would interpret the joke in the best possible way even if it had no correlation with the cultural environment into which I am interpreting. However, cultural sensitivity is very critical; if a joke is in serious breach of social norms, from our experience in the Middle East, we would refer to*

*it in the so-called 'reported speech' approach. (i.e. the speaker is citing the example of xyz to take the point home....). This has saved many awkward situations and helped continue the flow of the interpretation without adversely affecting the authenticity of the content or the professional level of delivery. So, I am always careful in interpreting the joke as a third party without laughing and indicate that that this is a humorous remark. [Int3]*

A fourth interviewee agreed with the previous one, sharing a strategy that appears to be quite commonly used:

*Usually, jokes do not travel between different cultures. The safest thing that I would do is telling the audience that the speaker has told a joke about the particular point of his lecture, or I would try to tell a similar joke to the context of the speech. Interpreters realize how difficult is the task of rendering the true spirit of a joke and we can immediately judge if the translation made sense to the audience. In case of failure, I explain by saying that this is a cultural thing that only source language recipients will be able to understand. Again, sometimes the joke could be offensive to the speakers and in this case I would tell them so, come up with a similar joke or tell the audience "please laugh, the speaker made a joke". [Int4]*

The next interviewer stated never hesitating to explain the 'funny' aspect of the speaker's joke to the audience, rather than just asking the audience to laugh.

*In case there was no equivalence to the joke in the target language, I would only interpret the general meaning and explain the cultural aspect to the target society that led the audience to laugh. I usually never hesitate to give an explanation to the audience of what is funny in this situation. However, there are always cultural sensitivities that could be hard to render or avoid, and for this reason, I employ a safe strategy of relaying the meaning and perhaps add a little flavour to it. I know some interpreters who simply say: the speaker is telling a joke that is impossible to translate, so when I say 'laugh please', you can laugh. [Int5]*

Lastly, one very experienced interviewee outlined his/her approximation strategy as the best option to convey the nature of a joke:

*Overcoming the dilemma of interpreting jokes or humour comes with deep experience and intensive cross-cultural readings and knowledge. That's why we are called interpreters. I have to use the same equivalent proverbs that would give a sense of amusement to the joke and refrain from literal interpretation of the words. Interpreters with a broad knowledge of proverbs, idioms and jokes in both the source language and target language could easily manage this situation. However, if the speaker is telling a joke where it is extremely hard to retrieve the ideal equivalent of a specific phrase in the source language, I use the approximation strategy and seek to provide a near equivalent term or a slightly less precise version of the joke to the target audience. [Int6]*

The next section will look at strategies used by interviewees to deal with yet another challenge: that of unclear relay interpreting.

#### **5.3.4 Dealing with unclear relay interpreting**

AICC defines relay interpreting as a mode of indirect interpreting where an interpreter may work from a colleague's translation instead of rendering a speech directly from the source language to the target language. Relay interpretation can be justified at conferences where many languages are used and where some interpreters do not understand all the working languages, or in cases where an unusual or rare language is spoken or required. In relay interpreting, the pivot interpreter is the interpreter who will be working directly from the source language, and whose translation therefore, serves as the basis from which other interpreters may relay an utterance into other languages.

Both television interpreters reported that only in exceptional circumstances do they have to resort to relay interpreting as in the case when there is breaking news or a speech and where they are not familiar with the language of the speaker. Moreover, these two interviewees said that television producers have a tendency to use external sources of news broadcasting the same event in a language known by the target audience. For example, if President Putin is scheduled to make an important statement, producers will broadcast the relay feed from Russian television

(<https://arabic.rt.com/>) or in one case where the Chinese permanent representative to the Security Council was making a statement, television producers broadcast the relay in English or Arabic from the UN Web TV (<http://webtv.un.org/>). Conference interpreters, on the other hand, believe that the severity of this challenge is greater for them than for their television interpreter colleagues, and who principally rely on external news sources providing the relay interpreting.

Responses of television and conferences interpreters to the issue of unclear relay interpreting are set out below as follows. The first interviewee encountered the problem only once, at a conference, and described an ad hoc 'solution' to it:

*I had this situation only once (from a Portuguese speaker in a conference): there was a short lull in interpretation continuity as I alerted the sound engineers. The problem was not fixed, so I had to open the door of the booth to hear the speaker directly from the conference hall and interpret as much as I could until the situation got better. In television, however, I would imagine the situation is more intricate, and cannot comment on a solution to address it. This is one of the classic dilemmas in spontaneous interpretation. [Int1]*

The next interviewee outlined two possible strategies to address the challenge of unclear relay interpreting:

*This is one of the tough situations where you cannot do much about it. I had many encounters where the pivot interpreter's rendition was not up to the desirable expectation either because of the lack of training or lack of experience in handling relay interpreting. I always tend to embellish the incomplete or unclear sentences that I get from the pivot interpreter taking the lead so that my rendition would make sense to my target audience. However, sometimes this trick does not work well. My option of last resort is to inform the audience that we are taking relay and we are doing our best to give them the essence of what we received of the interpretation from Chinese or Spanish into my target language. [Int2]*

The third interviewee agreed in that when the quality of relay is bad, it is best to just focus on the essence of the message:

*If the speech relay was unclear because of the interpreter's bad performance, we can imagine how difficult it would be for the audience to understand. I would just do my best to understand the essence of the message and do the interpretation as well as I can. In other words, I start from whatever I can retain of the relay given to me by the pivot interpreter. I make my own speech based on what I think the speaker would say, and therefore, there is a kind of anticipation strategy involved here. However, I keep neutral and non-committal that is the secret. [Int3]*

Another interviewee outlined a strategy for delivering a coherent-sounding rendition in the face of poor quality relay interpreting:

*It happened more than once when I have to struggle with the bad performance of relay interpreting. Last year I had an assignment in Turkey, Istanbul and I had to manage the relay rendered by the pivot as the floor language was in Turkish. I think all other booths struggled largely as the relay was clumsy and sentences lacked clarity in form and substance. Therefore, I did my best to stay calm and focused, and interpreted the best from what I was receiving from the Turkish booth. I think the tone of the voice is a saviour here; meaning the serious assertive tone would do the job. I do not mean deceiving the speaker, but it is a trap that we sometimes fall into and we will be to blame in front of our same language audience. Hence, I have to be meaningful to the best of my knowledge and depend sometimes on other factors to appear coherent. [Int4]*

The fifth interviewee emphasised the importance of mostly adhering to the English version of the script which may be handed out shortly before the speaker starts, and of following the pivot interpreter whenever the speaker goes 'off script':

*In major conferences in which the UN five languages are involved, the Chief interpreter knows ahead of time whether there would be speeches or statements on the agenda that may entail relay interpreting. The established norm in such cases is that we get copies of the script in English to prepare beforehand. However, this is not always the case and sometimes the English version script is handed out to all booths only five minutes before the awaited speaker takes the floor. I believe the safest tactic is to stick to the script that will guide me along*

*with the flow of relay interpreting. However, sometimes the speaker decides to skip a few paragraphs or add any personal comments that are off script, and here I have to follow the pivot interpreter's rendition. [Int5]*

The importance of working with a reliable booth partner was brought up by another interviewee:

*A friend in need is a friend indeed. Your booth partner should also help you when you are in distress, because it is different when you are listening and talking at the same time in comparison to your partner who is on full alert listening. The problem is that the audience do not care and do not know that your performance at that session was based on relay interpreting. I had faced a situation as such in a booth with Spanish-Indonesian interpreters. I approached the booth and spoke to one of the interpreters who is more skilled in translating to Indonesian, and asked her whether there should be a Spanish speaker taking the floor, can you please act as the pivot and render into Bahasa Indonesia? This does not insult the booth partner... It is up to them how we sort out things in the booth. [Int6]*

The next section will look at another specific challenge, namely that which occurs in situations where speakers recite from the Holy Scriptures.

### **5.3.5 Dealing with quotes from the Holy Scriptures**

Five out of eight interviewees emphasised the importance of in-depth preparation for events or functions of a religious nature, and where quotes from the Holy Scriptures or Quran are often recited. Two interpreters elaborated on their encounters in the Interfaith Dialogue Conference which had hosted well-known scholars, clerics and clergymen from all over the world. Television interpreters, on the other hand, stated that since the overwhelming part of their service is news related, they had few occasions when they have to interpret for a speaker reciting from the Bible or the Holy Quran. However, one of the television interpreters said that when Pope Francis visited Jordan in 2014, he knew that he had to do the Pope's speech (relay interpreting) and prepared many different quotes from the Bible and Quran relevant to the occasion of the Pope's visit and made them readily available to

the interpreters in the television interpreting booth. This interviewee again underlined the importance of preparation:

*It is very important to prepare in advance and review what would be presented in the conference. However, if this happens in a surprise situation, I would mention that the speaker is reciting a verse from the Quran/Bible and would try to remember the chapter's name and verse's number to mention it to the audience. I think interpreting religious texts requires a broad knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and a word-for-word translation is a recipe for failure in such situations. [Int1]*

Another interviewee emphasised the importance of being very familiar with certain verses or chapters from the Holy Books:

*One can say that interpreters in inter-faith conferences should be well-versed in religions. Memorization of certain verses or chapters from Holy Books is essential in rendering the meaning in a smooth and acceptable way. Besides, the interpreter must have a strong background in the history of religions. Rhyme and rhythm play a very important role in giving out an interpretation that echoes the original version of the text and appeals to the ears of listeners. [Int2]*

A third interviewee underlined the importance of summarising skills in this context:

*I just translate the meaning. I wait for the speaker to say all the verse, comprehend it and try to explain it. In general, it is hard to interpret verses from the Holy Quran or the Bible unless you have copies of them in writing. However, a smart interpreter should clearly summarize them to the benefit of the audience. [Int3]*

A fourth interpreter again emphasised the importance of being familiar with certain oft-cited verses, while also outlining a strategy for interpreting less familiar verses which are being recited:

*Most interpreters say: "the speaker is reading verses from the Quran". However, I think it would be better to interpret the quote as it is. Before accepting the assignment, I would make sure to prepare myself very well and familiarize myself with both the Bible and the Quran. There are few verses in the Holy Quran which*



*are repeated frequently in many conferences so I know these by heart. The problem either is when they recite unfamiliar verses and here I improvise or pursue the same method of most interpreters. [Int4]*

Interviewee 5 outlined the challenge and useful strategies in some detail:

*Arabic-English and English-Arabic conference interpreters face individual and contextual problems when interpreting recitals from the Holy Books in the Arab world.*

*Problems related to the interpreter include the following:*

*Problems immediately surface when untrained interpreters attempt to translate works that he or she has insufficient knowledge thereof. This covers a lack of knowledge of the language of the religious text, especially the Quran which requires deep understanding of the diction, structure and changes of meaning. Lack of awareness of the historical changes in the field of semantics will make it more difficult and one may make serious mistakes. Besides, such a text is always rich with the use of idioms, metaphors and hidden connotations. Wrestling with these difficulties will put the interpreter in a very difficult corner. Many of my non-Muslim colleagues refuse to take any job that involves religious subjects. I admire their attitude because they know very well that mastering the skills of interpretation will not save them if they do not understand the language they receive from the podium. The Quran and Biblical subtleties may confuse the interpreter especially since most of the Arabic speakers tend to be fast in reading quotations from the Holy Book. The same applies to some Christian speakers who attend inter-faith conferences. They think that interpreters in the booth are aware of what they say. In a seminar held in Abu Dhabi almost six months ago, a Coptic clergyman was speaking in English reciting verses from the Bible. I did that part and it seemed that I had succeeded in conveying his message. The chairman of the session was an old Muslim scholar who asked me later on during the break whether I was Christian or not. When I told him that I am not a Christian, he was astonished and said "How did you manage to interpret what was being said by the Egyptian Coptic priest?" I simply replied that I have read the Bible several times*

*and read the history of the Eastern Church; otherwise I would not have been able to render the presentation. However, interpreters should be very careful in translating the text they hear. In some cases, I take the translated version of the Quran with me. It may help if the quotation is long and if the speaker refers to the title of the Sura or chapter. Collaboration between interpreters in the booth can help a lot in this respect. The problem of insufficient knowledge of identical words, for instance, can be sorted out by close cooperation with the partner who may find the correct equivalent while his other colleague is doing his job. He can write it down and show it to him/her to avoid any confusion which may arise as a result of identical usage of a certain word in classical Arabic.*

*As for the contextual problems, it can be said the setting, the environment and the knowledge of the context in which the recitation takes place can help the interpreter avoid falling into embarrassing situations. The constructions of sentences of the Quran differ from one chapter to another. As such, even if the interpreter does not remember the exact words, he can give the general meaning of the verses provided that they should be rendered in well-knit sentences that may remind the Non-Muslim listener of the fact that they are hearing a sublime language. Therefore, the interpreter in such events should equip himself with many tools, and prepare his material days ahead. If the conference was about Islamic banking, interpreters must format their internal computers and get ready to remember all verses related to Islamic transactions, soft loans, rates of interest, contracts and other terms used by Islamic finance institutions; otherwise, problems may happen. The same can be said about linguistic problems and names in Islam and Christianity. If the speaker pronounces a name of a prophet or an apostle, the interpreter should be aware of the name used in his language. I hear some of my partners repeat the name Moses in Arabic while they should have pronounced it Mosa because this is the name of this prophet in Islamic discourse. Most of the Muslim interpreters that I have worked with are not aware of the terminology used in the biblical discourse. The same applies to my Christian colleagues who even hesitate to translate the opening address of any speaker who usually starts with simple words such as "in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious,*

*the Most Merciful". They feel terrified by the difficulty and sophistication of the Quranic diction. Therefore, they hand over the task to their partner lest they should make a mistake. In conclusion, one can say that interpreters in these events should be well versed in both religions. Memorization of certain verses is essential in rendering the meaning in a smooth and acceptable way. Besides, the interpreter must have a strong background in the history of Islam, Christianity and other religions that co-exist in the region. The accent of the speakers is another aspect that interpreters should take care of as the Arabs have different schools of recitation. The rhyme and rhythm play a very important role in giving out an interpretation that echoes the original version of text. It appeals to the ear of the listener, giving them a sense of comfort that the interpreter is a devoted person though he or she may not be so! [Int5]*

The next section will look at another common issue for both conference and television interpreters, namely that of interpreting speakers whose rate of delivery is too fast.

### **5.3.6 Dealing with the speed of delivery**

All interviewees voiced their concerns about speakers with a fast rate of delivery. Television interpreters stated that there is nothing worse than having the viewers watching the interpreter racing to keep up with a fast speaker delivering a live speech. The interviewees' views were congruent with those set out by Li (2010), when he described fast speech to be a significant problem for simultaneous interpreters, and noted that prior preparation may address deficiencies in knowledge and terminology, and to some extent, alleviate the pressure of fast delivery. However, if the speed is beyond a certain limit, no interpreter can transmit the message in full, even if the interpreter is an expert in the subject.

Six out of eight of the interpreters interviewed acknowledged that speed of delivery represents one of the most serious challenges they usually face in conference and television interpreting, and stated that it is the underlying cause for lagging behind the speaker, and could possibly create a very embarrassing situation, especially

when undertaking television interpreting assignments. The responses of interviewees were largely congruent with Li's (2010) findings. Li found fast speech delivery to be an impediment for interpreters' performance and one which quite often leads to misinterpreting, loss of information and difficulty of comprehension. In general, all the interviewees believed that even highly skilled and knowledgeable conference and television interpreters are likely to struggle when the rate of speech goes beyond reasonable limits.

The interviewees reported different strategies which they usually employ for handling this issue as follows:

*The key solution is to catch the opening part of the speech and try to keep the sequence of thought-streams alive by careful listening. It is unescapable that some words would be lost, but a good interpreter is the one who can keep the thoughts (or the key ones) alive and kicking. Sometimes I ask my booth partner to inform the chief interpreter to relay a message to the conference organizer of the speaker to remind him that there is a simultaneous translation so he needs to slow down. However, some speakers are fast by nature, and even if you remind them to slow down, they will do that for a couple of minutes and put the turbo speed on again.*  
[Int1]

Interviewee 2 would also engage the assistance of a partner to ask speakers to slow down.

*This is a very common problem. I would ask my assistant or partner to tell the speakers or organizers to slow down. If the speakers or the organizers failed to listen, then I would just do my best to cope up with the pace. Alternatively, I try to explain the meaning of what is being said after mentioning that the speaker is too fast, reconstruct and reformulate a summary of the speech by leaving out unimportant points and transmit the main message.* [Int2]

Interviewee 3 outlined why he/she felt it was not a good strategy to try and keep up with a fast speaker, as listener comprehension might suffer. This interviewee instead suggested interpreting the essentials in a coherent manner.

*During my early journey in this profession, I used to run after the speaker trying to catch up with him/her as if I am in a race. However, I am no longer pursuing this strategy as it proved to be a failure. On one occasion, I was running behind the fast speaker, and in the coffee break, one of the conference attendants approached our booth and told me that I speak too fast and he cannot get what I am saying. Lesson learned. Knowing that this is a serious issue of frequent occurrence in the conference industry, I started to use a different strategy where I would use all my brainpower to pick up the essentials of what is being said and try to make it coherent with minimum drops. I stopped racing along with the speaker, as the delegates will not understand much. [Int3]*

Similarly, interviewee 4 advised focusing on ideas rather than on individuals words and in the worst case scenario advising the audience that he/she was unable to keep up.

*I make sure not to panic, I take a deep breath, keep my focus at 100%, attempt to interpret the ideas rather than word per word, and make sure to complete sentences and ideas. The only solution is to keep pace with the tempo of fast speakers in terms of not losing track of his/her ideas, and I will try to render the most important parts, dropping a few sentences or words that the speaker may have said before or which I feel are not significant. If none of the above tricks works well, I will stop and turn off the microphone after extending an apology to the audience for not being able to follow the speaker. It is better to be honest sometimes to admit the problem rather than mislead the audience or end up in a disastrous performance. [Int4]*

Interviewee 5 outlined the importance of appropriate preparation in a number of ways:

*Fast speakers constitute one of the main challenges for interpreters. Keeping pace with fast speakers requires sustained mental alertness. The interpreter must maintain attention and concentration for hours and absorb the contents of lengthy discussions on many subjects. Gaining familiarity with the material of an upcoming event is an important step in order to rise to the challenge. Careful*

*observation of the speaker's gestures, lip movement, and body language may help the interpreter anticipate the next sentence and thus save time and effort. Getting copies of the speeches and documents will help keep up with fast speakers who know themselves and provide interpreters with copies of their speeches. However, the interpreter may be caught off guard by a new idea, a sudden change in the text, an eccentric speaker with an incomprehensible accent, poor sound quality and ambiguous acronyms. All these difficulties can be doubled by the speed of the speaker who forgets about the presence of the interpreter. Here, the main task is to render the main ideas, ignore the repeated words and expressions and focus on the essence of the message. [Int5]*

Interviewee 5 admitted to being a very fast speaker and finding this to be an advantage when interpreting speakers who are talking very quickly.

*Perhaps because I am a fast speaker myself I am fine. I speak very quickly. Sometimes faster than the speaker himself. I know some of my friends would stutter and struggle because they do not speak fast. Usually they hand the microphone to me. You need to know your strengths and weaknesses. If you know that, you can do it. On certain occasions, I send a telegraphic version of the speech if it is a meeting that I have done many times. The problem is not when the speakers go fast; rather it is when they READ fast. [Int5]*

Jones (2002, p. 101) suggested "generalization" as a coping strategy that would save time when dealing with a very fast speaker. For Jones, "generalization" is when a "number of specific items mentioned can be expressed in one generic term." Moreover, Al-Salman and Al-Khanji (2002) introduced the code-switching strategy that "refers to style shift from standard to informal colloquial Arabic" (p. 617). Al-Salman and Al-Khanji believe that interpreters resort to this strategy when faced with time pressure, especially in the case of fast speakers.

Investigating what range of speech rate is suitable for simultaneous interpreting, Gerver (1975, p. 1201) found it to be 100 to 120 words per a minute, and what was perceived as an increase in the speed of speaking proved to be a decrease in the amount of pausing. Galli (1990) studied the effects of speech rate with three

professional Interpreters translating between English and Italian, at speeds ranging from 106 to 156 words per minute. According to Galli, speech rate correlated with an increase in omissions and mistakes, so this is something that interpreters must always be mindful of. This is reflected in some of the strategies shared by the interviewees in this section, and which included acquiring scripts beforehand, or interpreting the essence in a coherent manner.

### **5.3.7 Dealing with idiomatic language**

All the interviewees have unanimously stated that interpreting idiomatic expressions is a serious challenge regardless of the topic as it entails good knowledge of the cultural differences of both the source and target languages, and the ability to distinguish between idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions. According to Larson (1984) an idiom is “a string of words whose meaning is different from the meaning conveyed by the individual words” and it “carries certain emotive connotations not expressed in the other lexical items” (p. 142). The Cambridge dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) gave a similar definition of idioms and considered them “a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own”. The two television interpreters said that the problem of interpreting idioms is exacerbated on air as they have to find the right equivalent that would appeal to the audience on the spot. In general, most of the interviewees believe that in a case they are not familiar with the idiom in both languages, the best approach is to explain it, as literal translation may lead to confusion.

Four of the interpreters interviewed explained how they dealt with interpreting idiomatic language as follows. The first interviewee appeared to advise paraphrasing the core message of the idiomatic expression:

*The problem of idiomatic expressions equivalence in translation and interpretation has been the focal point of many studies and discussions. The concept of equivalence remains an essential and highly controversial issue in translation theory and practice. It involves the relationship between SL and TL texts as*

*Barbara Kielar points out. In interpretation, the question becomes more complicated as you are required to provide an equivalent in a fraction of a second. The interpreter must be encyclopaedic to facilitate the process of communication. As such, the content and the core message matter more than the equivalence.*  
[Int1]

The second interviewee advised two strategies which are also outlined by Baker (1992), namely paraphrasing or even omitting when the idiom is not really relevant to the communication.

*It depends on the complexity level of the idiom. Some idioms are easy to understand within the context of the speech, so in this case I would explain the meaning. Wide knowledge and the continuous reading in your (B) language is the best to do as part of the career continuous development. In most cases, I try to convey the message without worrying about finding the suitable equivalent expression. If I don't have time to explain the message, and if the idiom is not relevant to the communication, I just ignore it.* [Int2]

Another interviewee advised explaining the idiom in the target language.

*I only work into my A language, so it is not always hard for me to find an equivalent. In addition, many English idioms have equivalents in Arabic, and even those literally translated these days have become commonplace. My suggestion is that if you have an idea in your mind in your A language, then transpose it to your B, possible with an explanation, if required. I think explaining the idiom in a very simple language could sometimes be helpful to compensate the absence of the equivalents.* [Int3]

Yet another interviewee rejected the 'omission approach', and instead advocated paraphrasing idioms whenever possible:

*As a very cautious approach, I always tend to paraphrase the idiomatic expressions in case I could not find the right equivalent. In conference interpreting, we do not have the luxury of time to search for the right equivalent term that should be used as the case in translation. We have to act on the spot. I know other colleagues who prefer to omit the entire idiom from their rendition, but I do not*



*think this is a wise strategy, and keeping your audience in the loop by presenting clarifications of the idiom that the speaker said is much better than keeping them in the dark. [Int4].*

According to Baker (1992), the danger of paraphrasing an idiom lies in losing its intended effect and the cultural significance in the cultural language. This is something that interpreters must be constantly aware of with regard to interpreting idioms. This may be why some interviewees advocated omitting the idiom altogether, especially if they felt it was not really important in the context of the speech. Next, I will look at miscellaneous challenges which may have a negative impact on interpreter performance.

#### **5.3.8 Dealing with other challenges which have a negative impact on performance**

Three interpreters reported on other serious challenges that could have an adverse impact on their performance as follows:

*One of the most difficult tasks that conference interpreters have to deal with is the speakers who are not lucid in their way of presentation. These speakers may be compared to university professors who hold PhDs but do not know how to communicate with their students. They jump from one point to another without connecting their ideas. In such cases, the audience may think that the interpreters are not good and unable to decode the message. In fact, one has to be very patient with pompous lecturers and must trace the thread that connects the ideas. It is true that something will be missed but by concentrating on the main points, the interpreter could manage to send out a coherent discourse that will convince the listeners. The other problem is that, in addition to the confusion that these speakers create, they tend to speak very fast, adding another obstacle to the process. Here, the interpreter must follow up quickly and try to catch the highlights that the speaker wants to convey, making use of the PowerPoint presentation on the screen, if any, or any other device to help him grasp the main points of the presentation. Sometimes, the organizers attract the attention of the fast speakers to reduce their speed. This is something helpful. However, in some*

*conferences, it seems almost impossible to intervene and ask the speaker to slow down. The experience, quick tempo, and the background of the interpreter can be an effective means in sorting out the problem. [Int1]*

Interpreter 2 talked about the need for teamwork between interpreters and the technical team:

*There is no silver bullet to surmount all the challenges in television interpreting. This is due to the fact that there are many external factors that are beyond your control and you could do nothing about it as an interpreter. Many factors come into play in television interpreting. For example, when there is a televised speech set to be transmitted at a certain time, and the editor-in-chief believes it is important to carry it live, MCR (Master Control Room) team and sound engineers should decide immediately which news source (Reuters, APTN, AFP "Agence France-Presse" etc.) which they have to transmit to the interpreter's booth after ensuring that there are no overlapping sounds in the feed, neither buzzing effect in the background nor cracking or long delay happening as all these audio features could make the interpreter's task a mission impossible. Therefore, sound engineers have to do many tests with the interpreter before they carrying any live event to make sure that he/she receives a strong and clear audio signal for doing the job. [Int2]*

Interpreter 3 discussed various experiences related to their work over their career:

*Being in the industry for more than two decades, I feel proud of my professional achievements which did not happen overnight. It took years of constant studying and practice of this craft to reach to where I am now. Nevertheless, I must admit that there are always sticking difficulties that could compromise the performance of any interpreter, even the most seasoned ones. I will not touch on the most common ones such as speed, accent, or interpreting numbers, but rather I will flag a few other minor issues of relevance. For example, I had many encounters in conferences when the speaker gets away from the microphone, and ignores the principle of this industry which is you cannot interpret what you do not hear. This problem occurs frequently where there is a fixed microphone on the stage, and the*

*speaker keeps moving in all directions making it extremely difficult for us in the booth to hear what he/she is saying. Other speakers leave the podium area and walk around the audience and mingle with them without even giving any consideration to the interpreters. In this situation, I had to announce interpreters in the booth are not able to hear, apologize to the audience that we will not be able to carry on until the speaker goes back to the stage and speak from the podium microphone, or alternatively ask to give the speaker a handheld microphone. Another problem crops up when the speaker refuses to share his speech with the interpreters. The established practice in conference interpreting is that we get all the materials including the list of speakers, their profiles and resumes beforehand to do our homework. In such cases, the best strategy is to seek the permission of the conference organizer/agency to talk directly to the speaker and explain why it is extremely important to have copies of his/her speech. [Int3]*

As can be seen here, there are a number of key challenges faced by interpreters in this area, and they add a level of difficulty to interpreting work which requires training, experience, and a calm approach to effectively overcome. The next section reports on interviewee strategies when encountering issues while working as a solo interpreter.

#### **5.3.9 Dealing with working as a solo interpreter**

All the interviewees stressed the importance of abiding with the code of ethics and other professional standards governing this profession. Four conference interpreters stated that to ensure high quality of performance, there must always be a backup team of interpreters on standby to relieve a solo interpreter after functioning for approximately 30-45 minutes. This is in consistence with Article 6 of the AIIC code of professional ethics ([AIIC](#), 2012) which states the following:

##### **Article (6)**

##### *Teams of Interpreters*

*Given the physical and mental fatigue that are caused by sustained concentration, certain constraints will necessarily apply to the composition of teams in order to guarantee that the work done will be of an optimum quality.*

*The minimum number of interpreters required to make up a team is a function of these constraints as well as the mode of interpretation, the number of languages used, the language classifications of the interpreters making up the team, the nature of the conference, its duration and the workload.*

Television interpreters held the same view as their fellow conference interpreters. However, one of the television interpreters said that the working conditions of media interpreters are not always ideal, and that on certain occasions, he has had to work solo for more than an hour during night shifts.

Two interpreters made the following comments on working as solo interpreters:

*From my long experience, I think that the maximum amount of time that an interpreter can work alone without compromising the output is 30-45 minutes. I had a bad experience once where I was recruited to work solo for a 45-minute press conference. There was a statement which lasted for 20 minutes and a Q&A session for the audience which, to my chagrin, was for one full hour. As I had no booth partner to take over, I had to skip and omit at times due to memory failure and mental fatigue which compromised my performance at the end. With this unforgettable incident, I always investigate with the recruiter all the working conditions and decline any assignment where I have to work solo for more than half an hour. [Int1]*

The second interviewee concurred, stating that working more than 45 minutes would be inadvisable for two main reasons as set out below:

*45 minutes maximum after years of experience knowing that no interpreter should work alone for various reasons. I do not think it is advisable to work beyond this duration for health and quality reasons, and interpreters should take a break every thirty minutes to maintain the same level of quality performance. [Int2]*

The interpreters' responses were aligned with the findings of a study conducted at the University of Geneva which, demonstrated the effects of interpreting over increasing periods of time. The conclusion of the study was that an interpreter's own judgment of output quality becomes unreliable after increased time on task (Moser-Mercer & Korac, 1998).

The final section addresses another common issue, which interpreters in every setting (including community interpreters) may face sooner or later, namely that of dealing with speakers who make statements which go against the interpreters' own beliefs.

### **5.3.10 Dealing with statements against your beliefs**

All interpreters held the same view and maintained that an interpreter should be neutral, and faithful in his/her rendition to the speaker as set out in the AIIC Practical Guide for Conference Interpreters (AIIC, 1999) which stipulates the following:

*It is your job to communicate the speaker's intended messages as accurately, faithfully, and completely as possible. At the same time make it your own speech, and be clear and lively in your delivery [...] make sense in every sentence [...] be not only accurate but convincing.*

The views of four interviewees have been represented below:

*Interpreters, like doctors, must be neutral and objective. They shall not misinterpret the words that they receive even if the statement was against their personal beliefs. If they find it difficult to accept that situation, they should not take the job in advance especially that the organizers of events usually provide them with the agenda, names of speakers and some documents that may give them a clue about the theme of the conference. [Int1]*

The second interviewee occurred, citing professional integrity:

*Professional integrity necessitates and dictates adherence to the true content of the speech and loyalty to the speaker. It is not the interpreter's responsibility to "edit" or make any variation to any live speech, no matter how the speaker might*

*be citing views against my own beliefs. At the end of the day, I am just a messenger. [Int2]*

Interpreter 3 had also experienced this, and shared their experiences:

*This situation happened to me once. I was very nervous, but I did my best to maintain my calmness and not to reflect that in my tone. I would advise any interpreter to make a good search about the event or the speaker that he/she is about to interpret for him/her. It will be wise to reject the assignment from the outset if you think the speaker has some extreme thoughts against the interpreters' beliefs, because we are ethically bound to the duty of faithful rendition of the speaker's statements, and we have no right to interfere with or voice our opinion. [Int3]*

The fourth interviewee appeared to endorse the 'conduit model' of interpreting:

*We have to realize as interpreters that it is not about us. I am not conveying my ideas or opinions; I am only a human machine. I have to be impersonal and interpret the sentences and ideas as the speaker said it. You are an interpreter, a communicator. Your sole responsibility when in the booth is to your speaker and to your audience. There is no room for your opinion in that communication. Any other consideration is out of question, and if you doubt it, you are not an interpreter. [Int4]*

The most commonly encountered challenges were addressed in considerable detail by interviewees. I will now move to a summary of results.

#### **5.4 Summary of results**

Interviewee comments aligned generally with those of the questionnaire participants, especially in terms of agree-upon or established norms among them for addressing common problems like speed, humour, idioms, etc. The rich data provided in the interviews supplemented the questionnaire data in the way that was hoped for, which the themes being discussed further and in more depth. This was

the original aim of using a mixed-methods approach, and the results contributed to answering the research questions more fully.

My interview data suggest that all the interviewees considered the speed of delivery, strong accent and idiomatic expressions to be serious challenges that they usually encounter in conference and television interpreting. However, two interpreters believe that such issues could be addressed through previous knowledge, experience and above all, thorough preparation. The interviewees proposed various coping strategies to address these challenges including, among other things, using a filtering strategy which aims at compressing the length of an utterance in order to find an economical way of expression; using an approximation strategy which is employed when an interpreter cannot retrieve the ideal lexical equivalent and therefore, provides a near equivalent term.

On the question of noise, all interpreters stressed the importance of working with a qualified team of sound engineers and technicians, and two television interpreters believed that they have to work at times in stressful conditions when covering news in flashpoints or war zones. As for interpreting recitals from the Bible and Holy Quran, the interviewees believed that interpreting in religious settings requires outstanding skills and knowledge, and stated that keeping copies of the Holy Books in the booth proved to be a helpful strategy. However, one interpreter stated that as she had worked for the Vatican many times, she has no problem in managing such situations. On the question of working as solo interpreters, all the interviewees underlined the importance of compliance with the AIIC code of conduct, which spells out the rules of forming teams of interpreters in all modes of interpreting as well as rules concerning the number of languages used in various settings. Finally, all interpreters held the view that they are under ethical obligation to convey the speaker's message accurately and faithfully, without any consideration for their personal opinions.

In the next chapter, I will revisit the research questions and the methodological approach before discussing my findings in the framework of the literature. I will conclude by outlining the limitations of my study, as well as some recommendations.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The present study had the overall aim of exploring the challenges faced by television and conference interpreters at work, so as to provide more insight into how interpreters deal with specific difficulties. It is hoped that the findings may provide a valuable foundation for devising training programmes by specialized institutions in the MENA (Middle East, North Africa) region. This type of research has received scant attention to date and therefore the researcher hopes that the outcome of this study may contribute to future television and conference interpreter development. The main findings of both the online questionnaire and the one-to-one semi-structured interviews were examined in detail in the previous two chapters. This chapter aims to first of all review the methodological approach in relation to the research questions, before moving to a reflection on the findings in the context of the relevant literature. It will also provide an overview of the coping strategies employed by conference and television interpreters in the most difficult situations. Recommendations for ongoing professional development for interpreters along with recommendations for future research in the area of conference interpreting in general and television interpreting in particular are also discussed.

### **6.2 Review of the methodological approach**

The rationale for employing a mixed-methods approach is that it combines the strength of both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies and minimize the weakness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). It proved to be the most suitable approach for this research and contributed to the richness of the data, as Bryman (2006) suggested. Moreover, and the approach yielded a wealth of data for addressing the research questions which were the focus of this research project. One of the main values of using a mixed-methods approach stems from the integration component which may lead us to have more confidence in the results and any conclusions drawn from the study (O'Cathain, Murphy, & Nicholl, 2010).



The methodology involved the use of an online questionnaire which generated responses from 41 participants from among the AIIC membership who shared their expertise in the area of conference and television interpreting. In addition, the respondents shed light on the coping strategies they usually employ when facing a number of recurring challenges while they are working. However, due to the anonymous nature of the survey, the researcher does not have any way of knowing whether all of these worked between English and Arabic. In addition, the survey did not inquire about respondents' working languages. The survey questions are listed in Appendix G.

A separate advertisement invited interested conference interpreters to participate in one on one interviews. The researcher had no way of knowing whether interviewees had also taken part in the survey. The interviews allowed the researcher to explore survey responses in a more in-depth manner. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to thoroughly examine survey responses relating to challenges encountered, understand the participants' strategies in dealing with them and judge whether or not they proved effective.

The one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight conference and television interpreters domiciled in different countries, four of which were conducted online by Skype. Of the 14 interpreters who volunteered, eight interviewees were selected based on their many years of experience in the conference industry, affiliation and membership of professional international bodies and associations as well as their language combinations which are the working languages of the United Nations and many other international organizations. All of the eight interviewees worked between Arabic and English, with Spanish and French appearing as C languages with two of them. The high demand for English-Arabic interpreting in particular around the world may have its roots in geo-political issues, and the resulting meetings to deal with these issues. The information generated from the interviews provided in-depth knowledge on how the participants tried to address or prepare for specific challenges in conference and television interpreting settings. The questions in the online questionnaire (see Appendix G) and interview (see 3.4.2.3) were formulated in an open-ended style with a view of allowing the

participants more of an opportunity to voice their opinions freely and spontaneously without being confined to a set of alternatives.

### **6.3 Review of the research goals and an overview of the findings**

The three research questions that were the primary focus of the study were presented in Chapter 3 and are shown again here:

- 1. What are the major challenges facing professional conference interpreters and television interpreters?*
- 2. What are the strategies that professional conference interpreters and television interpreters usually employ when interpreting?*
- 3. What are the suggestions/techniques that experienced interpreters use to solve the many challenges in interpreting?*

Based on these research questions, the study aimed to:

- \* Explore and analyse some of the major problems that professional conference and television interpreters face in conference and media settings when they are interpreting in their A or B/C language. Although the major focus of the research is on interpreters whose A language is Arabic, the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews covered many other interpreters whose languages are among the six official languages of the United Nations.
- \* Outline the main strategies that professional conference and television interpreters employ during interpreting.
- \* Based on the findings, suggest solutions for the problems, and if possible, offer applicable strategies that may help improve the interpreters' competence and enhance their potential in interpreting, as well as providing useful insights for trainee and novice interpreters entering this industry in terms of highlighting the best practices pursued by the UN and AIIC interpreters surveyed and interviewed.

I will now reflect on my findings in the light of the literature. As mentioned at the beginning of section 2.7, these are organised by order of significance.

### ***6.3.1 Challenges encountered by conference and television interpreters***

The findings of this study generally aligned with those of previous studies on conference interpreting. These findings are consistent with previous studies in many aspects, which were discussed in the literature review. However, regarding television interpreting, some of the findings shed light on areas that have been under-researched, and have not been explored by previous researchers, especially in the area of interpreting political material in front of a television audience. Such studies have stopped short of reflecting on the details of behind-the-scenes activities that are a critical part of television interpreting, such as dealing with sound technicians, audio feeds, timing issues, and so on.

Findings of the online survey and the one-to-one interviews highlighted an array of issues that interpreters frequently face in conference and media settings. The degree of seriousness of those issues varied to a great extent among the respondents. While conference interpreters stated that they always managed to devise certain strategies to overcome a variety of challenges such as noise, fast delivery of speech, idiomatic expressions, reciting from the Holy Scriptures and so on, television interpreters held that their job was more daunting and stressful compared to that of conference interpreters, primarily because of exposure to large numbers of viewers and the fact of their actions being recorded and archived long-term. They also claimed that they faced immense pressure as a result of exposure to thousands, if not millions, of viewers who might negatively assess the quality of their performance. Therefore, they believe the bar was set too high given the high expectations based on the quality of their renditions compared to that of conference interpreters (Kurz & Pöchhacker 1995; Kurz 1997). Moreover, television interpreters reported that, as their work was always uncertain and unpredictable in terms of the content of the speech, potentially difficult-to-understand accents and the style of the speaker, this put them under immense pressure all the time with little room for preparation. Apart from the stress factors, fatigue, the enormous amount of concentration required and the unhealthy environment of the translation booth, television

interpreters stated that reporting for duty at irregular working hours at short notice and deficiencies of technical equipment aggravated the level of stress and made their job even harder.

Managing speakers with strong accents and fast rate of delivery proved to be a challenging issue for most of the participants. The survey and interview data analysis revealed that conference interpreters embraced specific coping strategies such as anticipation or prediction to overcome the problem of strong accents. On the other hand, television interpreters considered this challenge to be more daunting as they are not able to approach the speaker personally, to gather as much information as possible about the speaker's accent, body language and pace upon which they could base the right coping strategy. By contrast, conference interpreters are generally able to collect such important information beforehand, allowing them to be well prepared. In general, all participants held the view that heavy accents often have an adverse impact on interpreting performance, because they negatively affect processing (Gile, 1995). These findings mirrored the conclusions of the AIIC report of 2002 (MackIntosh, 2002) which considered unfamiliar accents to be a hindrance to interpreters' listening comprehension and a source of pressure. In fact, the Technical Group AIIC (AIIC, 2007) introduced a comprehensive checklist in which it set out the standard technical equipment that should be used when planning for any interpreting assignment. This checklist underlined the importance of there not being any background noise, nor interfering noise from the conference room as this may disturb the interpreters in the booth, and could be picked up by their microphones and relayed to the audience headsets (AIIC, 2007). The participants' findings were also in line with Kurz's conclusions (2008, p. 183) when she stated that

*[t]he more the speaker's pronunciation deviates from what the interpreter [is] used to, the more difficult the task for the interpreter in the processing phase, i.e. the comprehension. In the worst scenario, communication maybe constrained or impeded from the start.*

On the issue of fast delivery of speech, data analysis revealed that both conference and television interpreters shared the same concerns when dealing with a speaker

whose rate of speech delivery is beyond the reasonable limits. Unlike conference interpreters who unanimously reported that they overcome the issue by asking the speaker to “slow down”, television interpreters believe that the scale of this challenge is more burdensome for them in view of the lack of personal contact or coordination with the speaker. As regards conference interpreting, there are studies discussing interaction with speakers (as mentioned in the literature review, on such topics as getting the speaker to slow down), but in television interpreting, research has not provided much detail on the fact that television interpreters are essentially totally passive recipients of the message with no way of interacting with speakers, who must create their own strategies to deal with challenges that speakers provide them with (such as accent, fast speech, etc.), and how this impacts their work. These findings may have identified a new dimension of media interpreting research which is worthy of further investigation.

The participants raised the issue of background noise, sound interference and other technical audio factors while interpreting and considered them an impediment that could compromise the quality of their performance. All the participants stated that such external factors are beyond their control and may lead to more errors or omissions and reduce their ability to monitor their interpretations in the target language. These findings echoed the conclusions noted by previous researchers about the effect of external factors such as noise and heat inside the interpreter booth on the interpreter’s performance (Gerver, 1974; Riccardi, 1998; Shlesinger, 2000). As a ‘practisearcher’ (cf. McKee, 2017), I concur that these factors are sometimes detrimental to performance. Again, television interpreters stated that this challenge is aggravated when interpreting for guests in very unusual settings such as breaking news with a television correspondent reporting the unfolding events of riots amid protesters; statements by military commanders in war or conflict zones or appeals by spokespersons of humanitarian organizations for the delivery of emergency relief and aid at refugee camps. Television interpreters interviewed revealed that most of these interviews are carried out with minimal technical set up in terms of audio and video quality. Alternatively, they may be

conducted by Skype and phone with poor audio signal and frequent connectivity problems.

Interpreting jokes and idiomatic expressions posed a serious challenge for conference and television interpreters alike. In addition, online questionnaire and interview data revealed that interpreters have always had difficulties in interpreting jokes. The majority of participants were of the view that the risk of interpreting jokes and humour lies in the reaction and response of the target audience, in that there is a negative impact on the speaker if the audience does not laugh. Furthermore, they stated that the challenges of interpreting jokes do not emanate from their linguistic abilities or failure to use the right words in interpreting the joke, but rather from their lack of key knowledge of cultural sensibilities which often undermine transmitting the same desirable effect of amusement to the target audience (cf. Hale, 2014 on pragmatic equivalence). These findings echoed the opinions of Martin and Sullivan (2013).

Of particular interest is how the participants voiced their concerns about interpreting recitals from the Holy Scriptures. Conference interpreters emphasized the importance of prior preparation, bringing translated versions of the Holy Quran and Bible to the translation booth or seeking assistance from their booth mates when encountering such eventualities. Television interpreters, on the other hand, stated that they have fewer encounters with events involving religious discourse, since most of their work is news or current-affairs related. In general, the participants argued that the ideal strategy to pursue when failing to render the same verse or quote from the Holy Scripture is to give its general meaning and the rationale behind it or inform the target audience that the speaker is “reciting verses from the Quran/Bible”. Interestingly, there is very little literature found relating to particular techniques on specifically interpreting in a television context quotes from either the Bible or the Quran. This is a very specialized area of interpreting and to master it, interpreters (mainly conference, because there is little religious material on mainstream television) have to possess a thorough knowledge of the scriptures and their interpretation. In team interpreting, the interpreter with the most knowledge of the particular religion will do the interpreting for that segment.

On the question of the neutrality of interpreters and loyal adherence to the speakers' statements or message, no matter how they run counter with the interpreters' own beliefs, the survey and interview data showed that the participants held a principled view in this regard. Conference and television interpreters laid particular stress on the faithful and accurate rendition of the speakers' point of view pursuant to the AIIC guidelines (AIIC, 1999) for professional interpreters which state as follows:

*The interpreter's primary loyalty is always owed to the speaker for whom s/he is interpreting. It is the interpreter's duty to communicate the speaker's meaning as accurately, faithfully, and completely as possible, whatever the speaker's position or point of view. The interpreter is morally responsible for the integrity of his or her work and must not bow to any pressure in performing it.*

It is noteworthy to include the viewpoint of Graves who is working as a senior interpreter in the English booth, for the Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences, European Parliament, about dealing with the issue of neutrality when the speaker is saying something ethically not appropriate or politically incorrect in a certain context. Graves (DGINTE, 2009, n.p.) suggested the following strategy:

*We interpret faithfully and accurately from the speaker. So if a speaker is insulting, vulgar, swears, then we have to reflect that. As a rule though, we would take it down a little bit, never increase it, never make it worse.*

Even though this can be difficult due to personal beliefs, such as those regarding the use of vulgarity, the interpreter has to be able to isolate their feelings from their performance, and to render speech in an impartial way. This is important in talk shows and debates where each party must be interpreted the way they present themselves, and this approach is fundamental in the AIIC's code of ethics and in others such as the NZSTI (New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters) code of ethics (2013). Some studies investigating this area have been discussed in the literature review.

### **6.3.2 Coping strategies employed by interpreters**

Online questionnaire and interview data analysis revealed that interpreters face inevitable challenges that could have an adverse impact on their performance. Even interpreters with a record of accomplishment and long professional experience stated that they regularly encounter intractable challenges that are unavoidable. However, with the experience they gained, they developed a set of tactics to reduce the negative impact of their rendition. The tactics employed by the participants reflected strategies previously referred to with the aid of a range of different designations. Gile (1997), for example, calls them ‘coping tactics’, Jones (2002) named them ‘techniques’ while Riccardi (2005) referred to them as ‘strategies’. Participants in this study called them similar names, but the underlying meaning, according to the researcher’s analysis, is the same. They refer to ways to reduce negative aspects of the participants’ work in the television environment, and mitigate undesirable outcomes such as the producer removing an interpreter from the broadcast due to performance issues.

Based on the data generated from the online questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews, the coping strategies employed by the participants for addressing the challenges set out in this research have been represented in the following illustration:

### Coping Tactics

<b>Transcoding</b>	<b>Attempting faithful rendition of the speaker</b>
<b>Explaining/Paraphrasing</b>	<b>Interpreting idiomatic expressions, jokes, and humor</b>
<b>Salami Technique (Chunking/Summarizing)</b>	<b>Interpreting long and complicated sentences</b>
<b>Generalization/Omission</b>	<b>Interpreting for fast speakers</b>
<b>Anticipation/Prediction</b>	<b>Dealing with strong accents</b>
<b>Error Correction</b>	<b>Fixing clear mistakes as a result of wrong anticipation</b>



<b>Reformulation</b>	<b>Addressing short-term memory problems</b>
<b>Informing the audience of an interpreting problem</b>	<b>Managing poor quality of relay interpreting, background noise, low audio quality...etc</b>
<b>Switching off the microphone</b>	<b>Managing extremely poor working conditions</b>

*Figure 6.1: Coping tactics*

The participants' choices of the strategies set out in Figure 6.1 are aligned with the previous literature, and reflect how each interpreter chose to manage the recurrent challenges discussed above. While these strategies could help conference interpreters in improving the quality of their rendition, this is not always the case for television interpreters. For example, the researcher believes that the 'omission' strategy is not widely acceptable in media settings where interpreters omit a few elements either under duress or by choice (Jones, 2002). This approach is not desirable especially when interpreting Security Council resolutions or important statements by world leaders, and the intended omission of any parts may be misleading to the viewers and may mean the interpreter is not remaining faithful to the speaker. Many participants also chose the 'prediction/anticipation' strategy based on their beliefs of what the speaker might be saying in the source language. Though this technique mirrors Jones' (2002) views which concluded that anticipation can be a 'precious tool' when used properly with the reformulation technique and improve interpreters' expressions significantly, the researcher is of the view that conference and television interpreters may employ this technique only for a few words or phrases when they are certain how they will end. The consequence of incorrect anticipation by conference interpreters is not as serious for television interpreters, and if the latter opted to 'predict' then, it should be done with extreme caution.

#### **6.4 Previous studies and relevance to the current study**

The relevance of the current study emanates from the fact that it focused on very specific challenges in the area of conference and television interpreting which have received scant attention to date, and only sporadic studies were carried out to explore them thoroughly, in the MENA region in particular. The research shed more light on the challenges encountered by conference interpreters and the tactics they employed in addressing them.

In addition, the study examined television interpreting which first came to the fore in the Middle East during 2001-2003 through premier broadcasting corporations in the region such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. More specifically, it created an opportunity for television interpreters to share their experience in this area of political interpreting, and most notably the speeches of world leaders in prestigious events such as the UN General Assembly, the G20 Summit and televised presidential election debates. According to Baker (1997, p. 124) “although less common than court or community interpreting, political interpreting as a genre deserves to be studied more closely in view of its importance in shaping cultural images and aiding or obstructing the cause of world peace”. This study supports her view.

### **6.5 Limitations of the study**

The most important limitation of this thesis is the fact that only two television interpreters participated in the one-to-one semi-structured interviews as other participants were conference interpreters. The involvement of more media interpreters would have generated more data for analysis, and therefore broader findings. Nevertheless, though the sample size is small, the research format applied gave room for collecting rich and detailed data. Another limitation is the time constraint which prevented the researcher from exploring the challenges faced by conference and television interpreters with all the working languages of the UN which could have provided a wider dimension on these issues to the research.

### **6.6 Recommendations**

### ***6.6.1 When mistakes in interpreting prove costly***

Television and conference interpreting is a challenging and trying task particularly when one is interpreting words spoken by a top dignitary or world leader. Needless to say, mistakes by conference and television interpreters can, at times, lead to serious misunderstandings between nations and the damage can take time to repair. A lack of thorough knowledge of the language and deficiency in interpreting skills may lead to such mishaps which cannot be rectified by a mere apology after the event. This is truer today as the mainstream media and social media instantly carry the interpreter's message across the world and there is little chance that any correction will get equal play.

Interpreters should spend adequate time researching and studying the subject matter, and exchange notes with their fellow colleagues. In case of a mistake, interpreters should honestly point it out to the client. Finally, article 3A of the AIIC code of ethics states that "Members of the Association shall not accept any assignment for which they are not qualified" (AIIC, 2012). These steps will minimize the chances of misinterpreting to a great extent.

### ***6.6.2 Importance of continuous professional development***

For a good interpreter achieving excellence in his/her profession requires ongoing professional development, commitment and preparation. Television and conference interpreters face many difficulties while working for fast speakers or those who use idiomatic language. Listening to their previous recorded speeches many times will help the interpreter to be acquainted with the speed and style of the speaker. Experience and concentration can help manage noise in the background while interpreting.

Recitals from the Holy Scriptures and interpreting jokes etc. are other tricky areas where the interpreter has to be very careful and aware of the listeners' sensibilities. Quotes from Holy Scriptures should be handled with great care as misquoting or wrong interpretations may even increase communal violence. A joke in one language can appear to be very offensive in another, and discretion should be exercised while

conveying the essence of the jokes. Utmost care should always be taken not to offend the listener community in such circumstances.

As the world becomes more interconnected and integrated in business, politics and culture, the need for trained and skilled conference and television interpreters is more obvious than ever. It is appropriate for more universities to consider offering comprehensive skill development courses in conference interpreting in general, and television interpreting in particular. In addition, professional conference interpreters may consider pursuing the refresher courses organized by AIIC (AIIC, 2002) where they are given the opportunity to interpret a wide spectrum of subjects under authentic conference conditions. Finally, it is worthwhile considering the establishment of an academy under the auspices of the United Nations or the European Parliament exclusively for recruiting young men and women with language skills and a keen interest in the subject matter that they will be working with, and training them as conference and television interpreters.

### ***6.6.3 Recommendations for training and future research***

The findings of this research do not offer a panacea for the overarching challenges encountered by conference and media interpreters. However, they could serve as a starting point for future and holistic research in this area with a view to managing the various challenges contemplated here.

Television interpreting is a relatively a new industry that has only come into prominence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) after the launch of premier broadcasters in the region following the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion of Iraq. Though only a small number of professionals are hired on a full time basis by television broadcasting corporations, other networks such as CNN and the BBC rely on freelance professional interpreters when broadcasting breaking news or other important events.

Though simultaneous interpreting is a common mode of interpreting used by conference and television interpreters, the latter should develop particular skills which may be summarized as follows:

1) Television interpreters should have a close coordination with sound engineers as the formers' ability to manage the task professionally depends mostly on the skills of the sound team. Television interpreters should develop a protocol before any interpreting assignment to ensure that zero errors may occur during any live coverage events. In addition, television interpreters and sound engineers may agree on a few visual signs as a means of communications between them in case something goes wrong while the television interpreter is on the job.

2) In talk shows, television interpreters have to interpret into their A and B language and vice versa. Of course, this makes the task more formidable as they have to interpret the anchor's question to the guests in their B language and then switch to their A language once the guests start answering. They have to be well-trained on how to switch in between two languages quickly and professionally taking into account the problem of delay which may arise for technical reasons and may be due to satellite operational systems.

3) Television interpreters have to be very cautious in interpreting the guests in their B language in the simplest and shortest possible way as this happens "off-air". From my experience, the worst thing that a foreign guest may say to the anchor is: "I did not understand the question, can you repeat it please". However, some guests and politicians, in particular, use this method as a courteous approach for evading a few embarrassing questions.

4) Before the start of any assignment, television interpreters have to undertake intensive preparation as regards the guest or the speaker they are about to encounter. For example, they may search for the guest on YouTube to listen to their rate of speech, style and accent. They may also consider reading about articles about him/her. Obviously, television interpreters do not always have the time to undertake such preparation before they go live, but even brief preparation will make the task easier.

5) In press conferences, the White House daily briefings and other 'stakeout' encounters, television interpreters have to exercise due diligence as the technical settings in such venues may not always be designed for television broadcasting, and

most of the time interpreters cannot hear the questions of the journalists or audience attending the event. The best approach is to apologize on air by saying “I am sorry I cannot hear the question”.

6) Television interpreters have to remember that they are the voice of the speaker and, therefore, have to embody the speakers’ tone, intonation and sound pitch. Moreover, they have to reflect a sense of serious and authoritative tone in official events or ceremonies, and on the other hand, an entertaining tone when interpreting for singers or artists.

7) Finally, since conference and television interpreters act as the voice of the speakers they interpret for, it might be equally important to consider developing tailored training programs and workshops to equip them with the skills of becoming public speakers, negotiators or moderators, in roles with charities, with the UN as goodwill ambassadors, and as moderators on discussion panels, which are just some of the possibilities available.

8) Television interpreters working for news broadcasters have to adhere to the editorial policy applicable and especially when it comes to interpreting names of places that are always disputed between two nations or more. For example, the term “Persian Gulf” is very offensive for GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) nationals, and interpreters have to interpret it as the “Arabian Gulf”.

In summary, interpreters face many challenges in interpreting speeches for conferences and television, and have to employ a variety of coping strategies that have been analyzed in this thesis. Many speakers, diplomats and politicians tend to use the power of speech to win the hearts and minds of their people or to mobilize public opinion to achieve certain goals. Interpreters’ success will inevitably rely on the way such speakers deliver their speech and the extent they give due consideration to the interpreters which may, in turn, make their task much easier. As Winston Churchill famously said: “A good speech should be like a woman's skirt; long enough to cover the subject and short enough to create interest.”

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***Challenges Facing Conference/TV Interpreters***

***Calling AIIC colleagues, UN interpreters and experienced conference/TV interpreters***

*A researcher from Auckland University of Technology is interested in your suggestions on identifying and addressing the challenges facing conference/TV Interpreters*

My name is Shareef Issa, I am a professional conference interpreter and AIIC member. I am interested in your perspectives on the challenges which conference and TV interpreters usually encounter, and the most effective strategies recommended for addressing them.

The research underway aims to explore the challenges facing conference and television interpreters at large. Both conference and television interpreters use the simultaneous mode of interpreting. Although the study will primarily focus on the English-Arabic language combination, the views and experience of interpreters of different language combinations will be equally explored to establish whether interpreters, regardless of their A language, experience the same difficulties they have to surmount in conference/TV settings. Moreover, the research will then hopes to shed light on how these challenges can be addressed and what strategies do interpreters employ in encountering such situations. The significance of this research stems from the fact that very little research, at least in the Arab region, has tackled the problems which conference and television interpreters face, and what kind of techniques they embrace to overcome the difficulties.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the following topics:

- \* What are the major challenges facing professional conference and television interpreters?
- \* What are the strategies which professional conference interpreters/TV interpreters usually employ when trying to cope with such challenges?
- \* What suggestions/techniques can be introduced in interpreter's education to help prepare student interpreters to solve the many interpreting challenges they will face in the real world?

The Focus Discussion Group is expected to take one to one and a half hours of your time and refreshments will be provided. Participation is voluntary and you will be able to withdraw from the research at any stage prior to the completion of data collection.

It is unlikely that you will suffer any embarrassment or discomfort, and you may feel free to refuse any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Ineke Crezee ([icrezee@aut.ac.nz](mailto:icrezee@aut.ac.nz))

Please indicate your willingness to participate in the Focus Discussion Group by emailing: [ineke.crezee@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ineke.crezee@aut.ac.nz).

*AUTEC Ethics approval number: AUTEC 15/360, 27 April 2016*

*For any questions please contact Dr Ineke Crezee [icrezee@aut.ac.nz](mailto:icrezee@aut.ac.nz)*



## Appendix B: Consent form

### Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

*Project title: **Challenges Facing Conference/TV Interpreters***

*Project Supervisor: Dr Ineke Crezee & Dr Lynn Grant,*

*School of Language & Culture*

*AUT University, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142*

*Researcher: **Shareef Issa***

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated August 2015.

☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

☐ I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐  
No ☐

Participant's

signature: .....

Participant's

name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

This research has been approved by the AUT University ethics committee on 27 April 2016, and is registered under file number AUTEK 15/360.

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix C: Ethics application approval

27 April 2016

Ineke Crezee

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Ineke

Re Ethics Application: **15/360 Challenges facing conference and television interpreters.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 27 April 2019.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 27 April 2019;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 27 April 2019 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Shareef Issa [shareef.issa@gmail.com](mailto:shareef.issa@gmail.com), Lynn Grant

## **Appendix D: Interview invitation**

Dear fellow interpreters

My name is Shareef Issa and I am a professional interpreter. I have worked for a premier broadcasting organization in the MENA region as an interpreter, as well as for many NGOs and UN agencies in the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions as a freelance conference interpreter.

I am currently studying a Masters in Interpreting at AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand, and I am interested in how interpreters manage some of the specific challenges at work.

For my research, I am conducting 1-hour interviews, in which I will ask a set of questions in the form of a semi-structured interview. With participants' permission, the interviews will be recorded and transcribed, and key comments will appear in my Masters text. In exchange for participants' time, I will provide \$40 vouchers.

Interviews can be face-to-face or via Skype.

Thank you for your interest, and please contact me at [shareef.issa@gmail.com](mailto:shareef.issa@gmail.com) if you would like to participate in the interviews, to arrange a time (and location), and to ask any questions you may have about the interviews.

Yours sincerely,

Shareef Issa

This research has been approved by the AUT University ethics committee on 27 April 2016, and is registered under file number AUTEK 15/360.

## Appendix E: Survey invitation

Dear fellow interpreters

My name is Shareef Issa and I am a professional interpreter. I have worked for a premier broadcasting organization in the MENA region as an interpreter, as well as for many NGOs and UN agencies in the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions as a freelance conference interpreter.

I am currently studying a Masters in Interpreting at AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand, and I am interested in how interpreters manage some of the specific challenges at work.

For my research, I am using a short, 10-question online survey, and I would be grateful if you would be able to spend 10 minutes to answer the questions and help me to collect data that will be useful for fellow interpreters. Your answers will be completely anonymous.

If you would like to participate in the survey, please visit this link, which will take you to the survey hosted on SurveyMonkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MN2BN5L>. After you have completed the survey, you will also have the opportunity to participate in a follow-up 1-hour interview, should you wish to do so.

Thank you for your interest, and please contact me at [shareef.issa@gmail.com](mailto:shareef.issa@gmail.com) if you have any questions about the research.

Yours sincerely,

Shareef Issa

This research has been approved by the AUT University ethics committee on 27 April 2016, and is registered under file number AUTEK 15/360.

## **Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet**

### **Participant Information Sheet**



### **Date Information Sheet Produced:**

August 2015

### **Project Title**

**Challenges Facing Conference /TV Interpreters- survey**

### **An Invitation**

My name is Shareef Issa, and I am a student completing my MPhil thesis at the Auckland University of Technology. First of all, I would like to thank you for volunteering to take part in this project.

The research underway aims to explore the challenges facing conference and television interpreters at large. Both conference and television interpreters use the simultaneous mode of interpreting, albeit the latter are more likely to encounter more stressful situations particularly when they are carrying live speeches or statements on air for a large number of viewers. Although the study will primarily focus on the English-Arabic language combination, the views and experience of interpreters of different language combinations will be equally explored to establish whether interpreters, regardless of their A language, are on the same page in terms of the difficulties they have to surmount in conference/TV settings. Moreover, the research will then shed light and how these challenges can be addressed and what strategies do interpreters employ in encountering such situations, albeit the researcher is of the view that there is no “one size fits all” in this industry, and each interpreter may devise his/her own techniques to hit the hurdles. . The significance



of this research stems from the fact that very little research, at least in the Arab region, has tackled the problems which conference and television interpreters face, and what kind of techniques they embrace to overcome the difficulties they encounter.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the following topics:

1. What are the major challenges facing you, as professional conference and television interpreters?
2. What are the strategies which you, as professional conference interpreters/TV interpreters, usually employ when trying to cope with such challenges?
3. What suggestions/techniques can be introduced in interpreter's education to help prepare student interpreters to solve the many interpreting challenges they will face in the real world?

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You are invited to participate in this research because you are a professional Conference/TV interpreter (AIIC Member) with valuable experience in the conference interpreting industry, and you emailed your willingness to be interviewed.

The criteria for the selection of courtroom interpreter participants will be based on whether you:

- 1) Are an AIIC member;
- 2) TV Interpreter;
- 3) And/Or an experienced interpreter with at least 8 years of experience.

### **What will happen in this research?**

You are to fulfil an online survey questionnaire including 9 questions which will take you about 15 minutes. I will also invite you to share some of your perceptions about your experiences in conference/TV interpreting.

If for any reason, you feel any discomfort when filling the survey questionnaire, you can choose not to answer a question or choose to withdraw from the questionnaire immediately. Again, as a participant in this project, you can access the AUT counselling online services if needed, even if you are not a student or staff member at AUT.

**What are the benefits?**

The suggestions offered by practising interpreters in my study will set a new trend for new interpreters embarking on this career, and contribute to interpreter education programme leaders and government organisation. The primary researcher hopes that your suggestions will take the profession into new heights and maximize the benefits for the community of interpreters at large.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Please note that all attempts will be made to protect your confidentiality. You will not be identified as I will only use codes, such as interpreter 1, interpreter 2, and so on.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There is no cost to you for participating in this project apart from the 45 minutes you spend in the interview. You will be offered a koha in the form of a \$30 voucher (choice of either a petrol voucher or a voucher for The Warehouse) to thank you for giving your time to this project.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

Simply fill out the consent form and return it to me.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

A summary of the findings will be posted on the AICC and NZSTI websites.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisors,

*Dr Ineke Crezee*, Phone: 921-9999, Ext 6825; Email: [ineke.crezee@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ineke.crezee@aut.ac.nz)

*Dr Lynn Grant*, Phone: 921-9999, Ext 6826, Email: [lynn.grant@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lynn.grant@aut.ac.nz)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Acting Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) , 921 9999 ext 8316.

Participation is voluntary and you will be able to withdraw from the research at any stage prior to the completion of data collection.

It is unlikely that you will suffer any embarrassment or discomfort and any discomfort is likely to be of a passing nature and will most probably only involve mild embarrassment. In addition, you may feel free to refuse any questions they do not wish to answer.

Health, Counselling and Wellbeing at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) are able to offer confidential counselling support for the participants in this AUT research project entitled:

You will need to contact our centres at WB219 or AS104 or phone 09 921 9992 City Campus or 09 921 9998 North Shore campus to make an appointment

You will need to let the receptionist know that you are a research participant

You will need to provide your contact details to confirm this

You can find out more information about our counsellors on our website:

**[http://www.aut.ac.nz/students/student\\_services/health\\_counselling\\_and\\_wellbeing](http://www.aut.ac.nz/students/student_services/health_counselling_and_wellbeing)**

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

***Researcher Contact Details:***

Shareef Issa. Email: [Shareef.issa@gmail.com](mailto:Shareef.issa@gmail.com)

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Dr Ineke Crezee, School of Language and Culture, AUT University, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142

Dr Lynn Grant, School of Language and Culture, AUT University, Private Bag 92006,  
Auckland 1142

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 April  
2016, AUTC Reference number AUTC 15/360.**

## **Appendix G: Questionnaire Introduction and Items**

My name is Shareef Issa and I am doing this study as part of my Master of Philosophy degree at the Auckland University of Technology. My study aims to investigate the challenges faced by conference and television interpreters. To this aim I am first doing a survey, to see what challenges appear to be the most common, and then following this with interviews with individual interpreters to get a more in-depth idea of the nature of the challenges. Finally, I will arrange a focus discussion group with some experienced interpreters to see if we can formulate some recommendations for how to address these challenges in either training, professional development or professional practice.

This survey is anonymous and completion of the survey questions indicates consent.

By completing this survey you agree to participate in this research.

Responses to this survey are completed anonymously, so please feel free to express your opinions frankly, without fear of negative consequences.

Your responses to this survey should take no more than 20 minutes of your time.

Thank you for your invaluable participation.

1. How do you manage a situation in which the speaker has a strong accent that is difficult to understand?
2. If you are interpreting a live speech on TV, and there is interference from noise, how would you address this situation?

3. If someone is telling a joke and the audience is laughing, how would you interpret the joke and consider the cultural sensitivities?
4. If you are getting a speech relayed from a (Spanish, Chinese, etc.) booth and the relay was unclear and not easy to interpret, how would you address this situation?
5. How would you manage religious speeches which have quotes from the Bible or Quran?
6. How do you manage interpreting for speakers who speak very quickly and don't pause between thoughts?
7. How would you address the difficulties of interpreting idioms that do not have the same equivalence as in your first (A) language?
8. Can you identify particular challenges that have had an impact on your performance as an interpreter?
9. What do you feel is the maximum amount of time that a solo interpreter can interpret on his/her own without compromising the level of performance?
10. How do you interpret in a situation in which the speaker is saying something that is totally against your beliefs?

Please contact Shareef if you are interested in participating in the interview (in person or via Skype) by emailing:

shareef.issa@gmail.com

Skype Address: Shareef.ISSA (Shareefnz)

A summary of the findings of this research may be found on the AIIC website.