

THE LISTENER'S PERSPECTIVE:
AUDIENCE COMMENTS ATTACHED TO A
QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PERCEPTION OF
QUALITY IN CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING
ASSIGNMENTS PERFORMED BY TRAINEES^{1, 2}

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Abstract

This study is part of a project investigating user-perceived quality of consecutive interpreting assignments carried out as part of an on-the-job training scheme offered

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1. This paper has been jointly developed by the two authors. However, the first four sections were written by Elena Errico, and Mara Morelli did the others.
 2. This article is the English version of “La palabra a los oyentes: Los comentarios del público en un cuestionario sobre la percepción de la calidad de la interpretación consecutiva de estudiantes en prácticas” by Elena Errico & Mara Morelli. It was not published on the print version of *MonTI* for reasons of space. The online version of *MonTI* does not suffer from these limitations, and this is our way of promoting plurilingualism.

to our students. From a theoretical-methodological point of view we have adopted the ethnographic perspective (Angelelli 2004; Valero-Garcés & Martin 2008) and administered users and other participants a questionnaire replicated from Collados Aís's research (1998). Thus far, we have collected responses from 403 informants in 14 different events. In this paper we focus on the "Additional Comments and Suggestions" section which the informants can fill in at the end of the questionnaire. We examine the types of commentaries added, their frequency and consistency with the rest of responses. We also explore whether the informants who provide negative assessments in the questionnaire add details in this section.

Resumen

Esta contribución se inscribe en un proyecto en el que estamos investigando la percepción de la calidad por parte de los usuarios de un servicio de interpretación consecutiva (IC) español-italiano desarrollado por estudiantes en prácticas. Desde el punto de vista teórico-metodológico, hemos adoptado la perspectiva etnográfica (Angelelli 2004; Valero-Garcés & Martin 2008) y utilizado una combinación de herramientas investigadoras que incluye un cuestionario para cuyo diseño nos hemos guiado por el desarrollado por Collados Aís (1998). Hasta la fecha contamos con 403 cuestionarios recogidos en 14 actos diferentes. En esta ocasión nos centramos en la sección del cuestionario llamada "Más comentarios" que pueden rellenar los oyentes al final. Nos interesa ver con qué frecuencia se agregan comentarios, de qué tipo son y si resultan coherentes con el resto del cuestionario. Además, veremos si los que atribuyen juicios y notas negativas en el cuestionario añaden detalles en la sección "Más comentarios".

Palabras clave: Comentarios del público. Interpretación consecutiva. Par de lenguas español-italiano. Estudiantes en prácticas. Percepción de la calidad.

Keywords: Audience comments. Consecutive interpreting. Spanish-Italian language pair. Trainees. Perception of quality.

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1. Introduction: training context

This paper aims to share the results of a research project on the user-perceived quality of a consecutive interpreting (CI) service performed by trainee students. Thus far, we have collected 403 questionnaires (excluding self-assessment ones) administered at 14 different events. After presenting the main results of the first stage of our research (Errico & Morelli 2013) and a case study (Errico & Morelli 2012), we now focus on a specific questionnaire section, “Additional Comments and Suggestions”, which listeners can fill in at the end. We would like to analyse the frequency and type of comments added as well as their consistency with other questionnaire sections.

As lecturers, our working environment is a 100-teaching-hour *Corso di Laurea Magistrale*³ at the University of Genoa where students learn interpreting techniques (especially CI) in the Spanish-Italian language pair. Throughout the degree, students have the chance to engage in an on-the-job interpreting training scheme in real-life situations, mainly seminars and training courses on community mediation with the participation of Spanish-speaking experts. This on-the-job training scheme is now a key component of our pedagogical project, inspired by the social-constructivist approach applied to interpretation pedagogy (Morelli 2008; 2010). Under this approach, focused on students’ active, self-aware participation in the learning process as well as on opportunities “[of] authentic situated action, collaborative construction of knowledge, and personal experience” (Kiraly 2000: 3), we consider it highly useful that students are faced with real situations. That way, skills they should be able to apply to working environments outside the classroom can be put to a test.

Since promoting student autonomy is one of the fundamental premises of social-constructivist pedagogy, we are constantly endeavouring to make students take responsibility for their choices. In the case of the on-the-job

3. In the Italian university system, *Corsi di Laurea Magistrale* are second-cycle studies following a first three-year cycle (*Corsi di Laurea Triennale*, 180 ECTS credits). To complete the degree, students must obtain 120 ECTS credits over two academic years.

training scheme, the candidates to interpreters are not selected by the lecturers; instead, a call for applications opens for all on-the-job training opportunities. This system has worked thus far, as the interpreters taking part in the programme have never been completely incompetent. On most occasions the audience has reacted positively and, even in the event of negative feedback, the experience has not disheartened the students concerned but, in fact, in some cases has encouraged them to improve and even participate in later training assignments (Errico & Morelli 2012). Thus, although not all interpretations have had a positive audience reception, they have indeed been successful in the context of our pedagogical project.

The scope of our data collection is two-fold: in the first place, it is useful for testing the effectiveness of our teaching methods and students' reaction when interpreting for an audience. In the second place, the availability of real data, even if the subjects are students, has allowed us to gradually create an archive for studying audience reactions to interpreters or, in other words, their quality perception of the *product* in specific situations.

2. Background of quality research in interpreting

In the early stages of quality research in interpreting, the focus was usually set on expectations, that is, how an optimum interpretation should be regardless of situational variables (cf., for instance, Bühler 1986; Kurz 1993; Moser 1995; Chiaro & Nocella 2004)⁴. Although these studies diverged greatly in the number of respondents, they mostly agreed that quality is primarily assessed in terms of content, but nothing is said as to actual audience reactions to a specific interpretation.

The first works on the assessment of specific interpretations were developed by Gile (1990; 1995), who considered the possibility of a gap between expectations and assessment and doubted the reliability of user assessments. Along these lines, Collados Ais's pioneering study (1998) provided empirical evidence on the contradiction between listeners' conduct and the major importance they allegedly accorded to content, as in her experiment in simultaneous interpreting assessment a monotonous voice had a negative impact on global perception. A more musical voice, on the contrary, was likely to be better received in spite of inaccuracies in content (undetected by the listener). In a pilot study, Garzone (2003) found out that poor prosody had a negative

4. For a thorough literature review on perceived quality in interpreting from a multidisciplinary standpoint, see Collados Ais et al. (2011).

effect on assessments even if, according to respondents and their expectations, form was one of the least important factors.

In recent years more systematic and rigorous research on quality perception in interpreting has been conducted. Collados Aís et al. (2007) expanded and refined a complex and rigorous experimental approach already adopted in Collados Aís (1998), applying it to 11 parameters⁵. The experimental results confirmed those from previous studies, detecting a higher impact of non-verbal aspects on quality assessment even if these are precisely the most variable factors (Collados Aís et al. 2007: 218-219). On the other hand, the order of priorities is the opposite in the case of expectations, in which informants still give a greater importance to verbal and content parameters such as conveying the meaning accurately and completely (Collados Aís et al. 2007: 220), despite the fact that these parameters can only be assessed when comparing with the source text. This is obviously impossible in simultaneous interpreting as the speaker and the interpreter overlap, but it is also problematic in CI (Gile 1995).

3. Materials and methods: ethnographic research

The study proposed is based, among other things, on administering a questionnaire. The design is inspired by the questionnaire developed by Collados Aís (1998). As in our case we mainly used CI, some modifications and additions were made considering that in this modality the interpreter must stand before the speaker and the audience. That way, the situational context and the students' speaking skills before an audience could also be analysed.

Apart from studying a different interpreting modality, the main methodological difference with our reference research is, as mentioned above, the origin of the data collected (a real-life context instead of an experimental one), analysed through a variety of tools. Closed-ended questionnaires (also completed by trainees for self-assessment) and audio and video recordings allowed us to quantitatively reinforce the analysis and identify main trends. We have also employed ethnographic tools⁶; for instance, we participated as observers and the audience and trainees were free to make comments. Trainees were asked to comment on the audience feedback as well. In some cases, trainees'

5. The parameters studied are: accent, voice pleasantness, fluency, cohesion, accuracy of meaning conveyed, completeness of meaning conveyed, diction, intonation, style, grammaticality and terminology.

6. The ethnographic approach has been applied to Interpreting Studies in works developed by Angelelli (2004) and Valero-Garcés & Martin (2008).

remarks became true personal narrations about their experience. Besides, we drew on longitudinal contextual data on the trainees, such as their academic record in interpreting and the field notes we took in class.

We have adopted an ethnographic approach because, as it is an open, flexible set of data collection techniques, it may be useful to study the particularities of each interpretation and trainee in context, analysing the role of trainee interpreters, their reactions, and the communicative relationships between participants; in other words, the discourse relations negotiated in a specific context. This approach is particularly well-suited to the social-constructivist pedagogical perspective, which focuses on individual factors and, rather than necessarily separating learning causes from consequences, examines them holistically as interacting processes. The flexibility of qualitative research allows us to even review our approach on the fly, as the corpus is expanded and new data is provided. With the data available thus far we can make horizontal observations, contrasting each event, as well as longitudinal observations, taking each case study individually and completing it with further information. This information comes from sources not limited to the event itself; rather, they deal with our students' training evolution before and, in some cases, after such event. We think that this set of research tools and the size of the analysis corpus are suitable conditions for promoting and highlighting the relevance of reconstructing and interpreting the participants' subjective point of view in the study⁷ while at the same time respecting the key standards of scientific rigour and research transferability.

4. Communicative situations

After this overview of the training context and the theoretical-methodological approach, we will now proceed to review the communicative situations in which trainees interpreted.

The first event took place in May 2010. Back then, we organised a conference on mediation in Genoa (see www.iberistica.unige.it, Archivio Comunicazioni, for further details). Before the conference five workshops were held on the following issues: community mediation and public safety, community mediation and neighbourhood networks, intercultural mediation,

7. In the words of anthropologist Duranti (2000: 86), ethnography is but “un dialogo fra diversi punti di vista, compresi quelli delle popolazioni studiate, dell'etnografo e delle sue scelte teoriche”.

mediation in health, and mediation techniques⁸. Each workshop comprised approximately 18 people from different backgrounds: civil servants, social workers and assistants, psychologists, doctors, educators, linguists, etc. All workshops were interpreted by a couple of students from our degree.

The second event selected was held in Genoa in mid-October 2010. It was the World Conference of Therapeutic Communities, with the participation of over 200 people from around the world. Simultaneous interpreting (provided by AIIC) was scheduled for plenary sessions. In the working groups, of about 20 people each, interpreting was provided by our faculty's students. The working groups had several moderators rather than de facto speakers. It was a highly polyphonic, multifaceted situation in view of the participants' geographic origin and age.

The third and fourth events were one-day training sessions within the framework of a one-year course (2010-2011) run by the Fondazione e Associazione San Marcellino from Genoa and the Fondazione Culturale San Fedele, in collaboration with the University of Bologna's Faculty of Political Science. There were roughly 30 participants, mostly female university students. Two trainees provided Spanish-Italian and Italian-Spanish interpretation in all sessions. A total of 7 trainees interpreted, as one of them took part in two different sessions. The first day when interpreters had to work during the course was October 23, 2010. The trainer that day was Spanish sociologist Pedro Cabrera, from Comillas Pontifical University. He is a good speaker and his presentations are very clearly structured and paused. Traditional CI was used. The second working day for our interpreters was January 15, 2011. The speaker this time was Pedro Meca, from Parisian association *Compagnons de la nuit*.

These two trainers were also interpreted at the 2011-2012 edition of the same course. More than 50 people, most of which were students, took this course. This time, two other representatives of Spanish associations for the homeless participated in the event. The data on this session (February 2012) is included in our corpus.

Another event included in this study was a training course in community mediation-conflict transformation, held in Genoa on March 14 and 15, 2011. Approximately 25 people attended the event in representation of a run-down area in the city, which is nevertheless included in an urban and social recovery project. The course was held in a room at the Neighbourhood Association.

8. The experts in charge of the workshops were Ramón Alzate Sáez de Heredia, Carlos Giménez Romero, Alejandro Nató, Dora Sales Salvador and Juan Carlos Vezzulla.

Participants included several neighbours from the area, including a local police officer, a refuse collector, and social workers and assistants, among others. Several nationalities were represented: Italian, Tunisian, Senegalese, etc. The trainer was Argentinian mediation expert Alejandro Nató. For the first time, the pair of interpreters was made up of an 'advanced' second-year student and a 'beginner' first-year student, both from the *Laurea Magistrale* degree. CI, either with or without note-taking, was the most frequently used interpreting modality.

Three events (mediation training courses) were targeted at Local Police civil servants and held in March 2011, May 2011 and February 2012, respectively. Except for the May course, in which the trainers were Mexican mediator Javier Vidargas and Alejandro Nató, this part of the project was taught by Juan Carlos Vezzulla, from Argentina. Depending on the month when the course took place, there were between 15 and 25 participants.

In November 2011, the third stage of the Genoa mediation project was run and 25 people received training in educational mediation. The course was held at a school in the outskirts of the city, with participants from the educational, sports and social spheres, and taught by Basque mediation expert Ramón Alzate.

The last events in our corpus are three sessions, each of which was three days long, of the 2012 edition of a course on community mediation awareness. Alejandro Nató was the instructor and there were about 70 participants (social workers, social assistants, intercultural mediators, local police officers, educators, psychologists, neighbours, etc.), many of whom had already taken part in some of the previous training sessions included in our corpus.

Due to the fact that the conferences organised by us every year in May since 2009 (always with the participation of trainee interpreters) were targeted at different, more numerous audiences, we have never administered the questionnaire at those events. Besides, the communicative situation changes; particularly, interpretations are much more infrequent (only CI is needed in the case of Spanish-speaking guests). We will comment further on the possibility of using these contexts too at the end of the work.

5. Overview of marginal comments in questionnaires

First of all, we will refer to the general comments collected in the May 2010 workshops (see previous section), as they helped us elaborate the questionnaire on which subsequent analyses were based. Below are some of the comments (translated from Italian) registered at the intercultural mediation

workshop, which had approximately 18 participants, many of whom were bilingual Spanish-Italian intercultural mediators and researchers:

Having an interpreter who can perceive basic lexical differences so that times of successive and selective translation are reduced and no participant is penalised.

It was very interesting but there was no interpreter, so it was difficult to understand the teacher.

The second comment is highly interesting, since the reason behind it might be an inadequate interpreter distribution in the room. Readers should be reminded that the two trainee interpreters were sitting at a certain distance, as most attendees could properly understand both languages. When an intercultural mediator from Africa came in she took a seat far from the interpreters, whom she probably did not recognise as such.

During the workshop on intercultural mediation in health, an attendee made the following comment:

Some language problems and, therefore, some drops in concentration.

This fact (listening to a different language and then interpreting with the subsequent concentration loss) is a potentially thought-provoking aspect we will discuss further below.

As for the questionnaire corpus on the perceived quality of interpretations by trainee interpreters, in November 2012 (when we started to draft this work), as mentioned above, 403 questionnaires had been completed (excluding student self-assessment questionnaires, worthy of a different study)⁹ with 62 comments in total, accounting for 15.3% of all questionnaires. At some events no comments were recorded, whereas the maximum percentage of comments at a single event was 25%.

Even when the audience and the trainer did not change (for instance, at the community mediation course, in which the questionnaire was administered three times, once at the end of each session), no regularity in the percentage of comments could be found between different sessions (ranging between 17.8% and 8%). An additional factor, however, which should not be discarded and is a potentially biasing variable is the attendees' haste or lack of attention to fill in the questionnaires before leaving.

Regarding the characteristics seen as positive in the comments, the following are listed: a timely, appropriate and adequate service; the perception

9. Right when this work was about to be submitted for publication, one of our students handed in her final-year project for defence. Her work is along this line of research, which we consider to be highly promising.

that students love the job; the importance and necessity of starting to test their abilities in working environments; their willingness to improve; the interest, empathy, professionalism and reliability they convey when interpreting. Conversely, these are the most frequently mentioned aspects in negative comments: first, voice-related paraverbal features, namely low volume, excessive speed and poor articulation.

Yet, if certain comments are analysed, the most noteworthy and frequent remark is the difference in 'level' and 'quality' between both interpreters. This is particularly highlighted at certain events, one of which served as the basis for a previous case study (Errico & Morelli 2012). No fewer than 29 respondents complained about this issue and, on average, at certain events this amounted to over 80% of all comments. Some examples are shown below¹⁰:

There are remarkable differences in the quality perceived: one leaves a gap to elaborate the speech; the other is too fast when interpreting, which causes occasional losses of clarity and some instances of word omission during translation.

and:

The quality of the interpretations is not homogeneous. One of the two interpreters was very clear and professional, while the other was more insecure, less faithful, and less accurate in style.

Many listeners, also when one of the two researchers was present, complained about this and said that it would be better to split the questionnaire into two in order to assess each interpreter separately. In these situations, the researcher had the chance to explain the importance of tandem work in interpreting, as well as the fact that, difficult as it was for the audience to provide a global assessment of the service, it was a key element in the survey. She also informed them that they could include marginal comments in the questionnaire section analysed.

Apart from the remarks comparing each interpreter's quality, the general breakdown shows a certain balance between positive and negative comments. Once again, some mixed comments were found depending on the interpreter they referred to. An example is included below:

I found the Tuscan interpreter to be more reliable and professional, although her thick accent and her pronunciation were highly distracting. I preferred the other interpreter for her enthusiasm and the sense of involvement she conveyed. It was a pity, though, that she omitted and 'interpreted' so much. I think she would be better suited for different kinds of events.

10. All examples of comments have been translated from Italian.

It is interesting to note that, in two of the previous comments, two paraverbal aspects are highlighted: speed of speech and the accent's diatopic variant. Besides, the other comment above refers to the concept of faithfulness, although we ignore whether the listener had direct access to and a profound knowledge of the source language.

We also wanted to analyse whether some comments were closely related to technique, but such remarks turned out to be infrequent. Among the positive comments, we find the following: the common sense to omit things when the concept is obviously clear and the ability to take concise notes; among the negative ones, an inadequate use of the microphone (this is, standing too far from it) and interpreters' excessive pauses in shift changes. This remark is repeated, but only on one specific occasion. We now include a couple of examples of these comments, both positive and negative:

Congratulations: they are very good. I think they had the common sense not to translate when they perceived that the trainer had understood. Otherwise, it would have been too tiresome. I insist on my good impression as a whole: thank you! Something I liked was they managed to translate long fragments with the aid of written notes, so the speaker did not have to make many pauses.

And finally:

The pauses when the interpreters changed shifts were annoying. The rhythm was interrupted.

Remarks on specific content are also scarce (less than 10% of the total), and all negative. After a review, and going from general to specific issues, some noteworthy aspects are related to the interpreters' lack of familiarity with the topics discussed, with listeners feeling somewhat upset about the omission of some parts of the speech or the use of incoherent terms in Italian. Some comments also recommended translating meanings rather than words ("In view of the topics discussed, it is necessary to gain deeper knowledge of the field instead of just translating words; the meaning of the speech should be understood").

With regard to specific words or terms, some comments highlight terms with a similar meaning but different value in both languages ("Be careful with some terms which have a similar meaning but a different value in both languages, such as *cliente* –'client'– or *mutua* –'mutual insurance company'–"), a misunderstanding about the verb *contener* (as used in social contexts, meaning 'to hold back') and the excessive repetition of the filler word *appunto* ('indeed') incorrectly used.

It could also be useful to analyse the profession of the comments' authors (if provided) to determine whether this variable is relevant. At some events, for instance, local police officers made no comments, but it is interesting to note that they did include comments at events not exclusively targeted at them (namely the course in community interpreting awareness). This may also be due to the fact that these people had previous experience with the interpreting service, as it was the second year they participated in a mediation course.

In general, educational psychologists, priests, educators, researchers, teachers, social assistants and intercultural mediators (not always from the Spanish-speaking linguistic and cultural area) provided the most positive comments and awarded the highest marks. On the contrary, some social workers and operators, as well as people defining themselves as freelancers, seemed to be more critical and even gave low marks. In some cases of negative marks or comments, neither the origin nor the profession was specified. Students from other degrees (mainly social work) ranged between empathy, with very positive marks, and some harsh and critical comments. At the moment, no significant data has been obtained from this comment breakdown by declared profession.

As a general rule, comments seem to be consistent with the marks given throughout the questionnaires.

6. Reflection on specific elements

Loss of concentration due to language and interpretation problems, highlighted in one of the questionnaires (see previous section), is an issue we would like to delve into. We are aware that in most cases, many native Italian speakers can infer what is being said in Spanish and that listening to everything again in Italian can become annoying. When we are present at the beginning of the event and introduce the trainee interpreters, we inform the audience of the interpreting technique to be used, admitting that it takes longer and can get boring. At the same time, however, we remind them that this double listening process, as well as many of the techniques used by the interpreters, may be highly beneficial if applied in their daily work. After all, almost all of them, including police officers, work or study in social environments and have to interact with other people. The relevance of this kind of awareness raising will be stressed again in the next section.

In our study, we take into consideration elements that, despite not belonging directly to our corpus, should not be discarded if our work is to become, rather than just a product, a process within a framework with two

core objectives: first, improving the quality of interpretation teaching; second, constantly raising awareness of the key role of interpreting among users of interpreting services, thus making our clients understand how complex interpreting is. This awareness is fundamental.

We now present some comments by listeners after their first experience with interpreting.

In a particular case, a police officer participated, as an observer, in a different edition of the mediation course he had taken two years before (the course was exactly the same in format and length). In the meantime, though, the police officer had also attended the awareness course in community mediation and had listened to the CI performed by trainees back then. In his observer report on this course he analysed the language and the interpreters. An example of his comments is included below:

After an initial (and expected) period of perplexity in which we questioned the method and usefulness of the topics discussed, reacting in a critical, almost closed-minded manner (a reaction perhaps fueled by the teacher's language and the use of interpreters), there is a shift in attitude. [...] Once the first moments of novelty and bewilderment at a foreign language are left behind, it turns into a stimulus [...].

Another example is the set of reflections from the course targeted at assistants working with the homeless. This served as a basis for the case study mentioned above (Errico & Morelli 2012).

One of the authors of this work was a trainer at the final session of the 2012 course¹¹. During the lesson she raised the subject of mediation, presenting interlinguistic interpretation as an example of this and insisting on the importance of language and mediation technique related aspects in any job involving interaction. Namely, the trainer referred to the interpreting service that had been provided in previous lessons. During the break, several attendees approached her to give her more feedback on a specific day, being particularly positive towards the interpreters' work and praising this opportunity for the students. They then had a fuller picture of what interpreting meant, also drawing on their experience with interpreting throughout the year as well as on what had just been said about the interpreting processes in language.

Lastly, we present the case of an educator and two social workers who had previously attended an event at which CI was performed by trainees. When they were organising a workshop on "How to improve my neighbourhood and

11. The topic of the lecture was "Community Mediation and Territories", with the co-presence of Danilo De Luise, from the Foundation which ran the course (see www.iberistica.unige.it for further information on the project).

people's interactions within it" with neighbours from a certain area, structured according to the system explained (a Spanish-speaking trainer-moderator interpreted by trainee students), the educator and the social workers thought, at first, that they would rather not use an interpreter. That would allow them to reduce excessive voice overlapping and optimise the scarce time available, as most interactions would be between the neighbours from the area and the trainer had a very high passive knowledge of Italian. Nevertheless, at the end of the course they highlighted how important the presence of the interpreter had been and said that having only one interpreter was better (the length of the workshops made this possible).

7. Future development prospects

In our opinion, this study, of which only the general results are presented here, leaves an open door to further progress and development, thus widening its scope and the range of issues to be explored.

In the second part of this research, we think it is important to introduce the concept of audience expectations and previous experience with interpreting, namely CI, to help understand the corpus data in further detail and increase systematisation.

Another potentially fruitful study in the future could be the contrast between trainees' and audience comments at the same events to observe differences and similarities. If video recordings were available, it would also be possible to more thoroughly re-examine excerpts from the event, focusing on specific variables or parameters.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to undertake a detailed analysis of respondents' self-assessment of their command of Spanish to determine its weight and influence on their opinions, if any.

We are also thinking of devising and pilot testing a questionnaire similar to the one in the annex. It would be administered at the conferences we organise and in which CI is performed by trainees, only in lectures of up to one hour and a half.

Last but not least, we aim to set up an interpreting technique workshop targeted at the professional profiles involved in this study. The reason for this was already introduced in the previous section. Besides, the experience could turn into a discussion group to further delve into audience expectations and perceptions.

8. Conclusions

Our experience has also allowed us to detect substantial gaps, both in the development of many courses we have worked in and in client-related training. In the specific case of interpreting quality, for instance, we consider it more important to lead training students towards a continuous self-assessment, according to a set of macroparameters (similar to the ones presented in the questionnaire, although the breakdown would not be so detailed), rather than rating and judging them ourselves. It is fundamental to us that they have the chance to test their abilities in a real challenge and in a real-life (even if protected) working environment, faced with the judgement and assessment of others. This necessarily implies being exposed to those who do not know, or rather, to those who often do know about the topic discussed but not about interpreting or languages. Presenting and sharing their comments in a work like this is, from our perspective, a way of proving several things. In the first place, the capital importance of combining a variety of tools and methodologies for research and data retrieval when needed for analysis purposes. In the second place, turning students into the true protagonists of the interpreting service they provide and seeking users' participation in a mutual responsibility-taking approach. In the third place, performing a job which never becomes a product but is part of a constant process in which we attempt, depending on the situation and objectives, to involve all key elements, whether teaching, professional or research-related, which cannot be isolated in our research-participative action approach.

Finally, we would like to assume that, fortunately, it is impossible for data to encompass everything in our endeavour to order, categorise and systematise the quite unpredictable world of interpreting services, subject to a myriad of subjectivities and variables.

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Appendix: the questionnaire

We are conducting a survey on consecutive interpreting quality. Please answer the following questions. Thank you.

Elena Errico *Università di Sassari* – Mara Morelli *Università di Genova*

- 1) On a 1 (deficient) to 10 (excellent) scale, please rate the following parameters regarding the interpreters' **voice**:

Volume	
Speed	
Intonation	
Pronunciation	
Accent	

- 2) How would you rate the interpreters' overall **voice quality** on a 1 (highly unpleasant) to 10 (highly pleasant) scale?
- 3) If you had to describe the interpreters' **attitude**, you would say they convey (several options can be marked):

Distance		Anxiety		Enthusiasm	
Interest		Joy		Discouragement	
Empathy		Disinterest'		Nervousness	
Fear		Insecurity		Sadness	

- 4) On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the interpreters' **global attitude** towards the interpretation they are performing? (1: highly negative; 10: highly positive).
- 5) Please rate the following parameters on a 1 (inadequate) to 10 (adequate) scale. If no assessment can be provided, please do not fill in the box.

Gesture control (looks, visual contact, posture, etc.)		Terminology	
Speech fluency		Content	
Speech logical cohesion		Appropriate style (scientific, colloquial, etc.)	
Faithfulness to the original			

- 6) a) Did the speakers' voices overlap sometimes? Yes No
 b) If so, did the interpreters intervene to re-establish the turns to speak? Yes No
- 7) a) Were there any cultural misunderstandings? Yes No
 b) If so, did the interpreters intervene to solve them? Yes No
- 8) On a 1 to 10 scale, please indicate how **professional** you considered the interpreters to be:
 (1: completely unprofessional; 10: highly professional) _____
- 9) On a 1 to 10 scale, please indicate how **reliable** you considered the interpreters to be:
 (1: completely unreliable; 10: highly reliable) _____
- 10) On a 1 to 10 scale, please indicate the **global quality** of the interpreters' performance:
 (1: very low; 10: excellent) _____

Profession:

Nationality:

Age:

Command of Spanish: none, basic, good, excellent, native

Command of English: none, basic, good, excellent, native

Command of Italian: none, basic, good, excellent, native

Additional comments and suggestions

BIONOTES / NOTAS BIOGRÁFICAS

ELENA ERRICO holds an MA in Interpreting from the University of Bologna (Forlì campus) and a Ph.D. in Comparative Languages and Cultures from the University of Modena. From 1998 to 2012 she was a freelance conference interpreter and technical translator. She is currently researcher in Spanish and Translation Studies at the University of Sassari. Her research interests cover interpreter training and contact linguistics between English and Spanish.

ELENA ERRICO se licencia en Interpretación de Conferencias por la Universidad de Bolonia (campus de Forlì) en 1998 y se doctora en Lenguas y Culturas Comparadas por la Universidad de Módena en 2008. Ha sido intérprete de conferencias y traductora técnica *freelance* y ahora es investigadora a tiempo completo de Lengua Española y Traducción en la Universidad de Sassari. Sus líneas de investigación abarcan temas de didáctica de la interpretación y lingüística del contacto entre inglés y español.

Intérprete de conferencias, profesional libre del sector de 1991 a 2003. Desde 1991 MARA MORELLI ha sido profesora contratada e invitada en diferentes universidades e instituciones italianas y extranjeras en temas relacionados con la interpretación, la traducción y la mediación. Doctora de investigación en Traducción e Interpretación (Universidad de Granada) con una tesis sobre la resolución de la ambigüedad en la interpretación simultánea español-italiano. Actualmente es investigadora en el Departamento de Lenguas y Culturas Modernas de la Universidad de Génova. Sus líneas de investigación abarcan la interpretación, la mediación, en especial con un trabajo de campo sobre lenguas, comunicación, interpretación y mediación comunitaria.

MARA MORELLI worked as a freelance conference interpreter from 1991 until 2003. She has lectured in various subjects related to interpreting, translation and mediation in many universities in Italy and abroad. She holds a Ph.D. in Translation and Interpreting from the University of Granada, where she presented a dissertation on a study of ambiguity in simultaneous interpreting from Spanish into Italian. At the moment she is a researcher at the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures (University of Genoa). She is currently carrying out research in both domains of interpreting and mediation, in particular with a field project on language, communication, interpretation and community mediation.