The use of mock conferences as means of practical instruction in simultaneous interpreting training, with specific reference to Model United Nations conferences

by

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Declaration of originality

I, Armand E.G. Goutondji, understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.

I hereby declare that the work on which this mini-dissertation is based, is my own original work and that neither the whole work nor part of it has been, is being, or shall be submitted for another degree at this or any other university, institution for tertiary education or professional examining body.

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Abstract

Conference interpreting in general and simultaneous interpreting in particular are practice-based activities. In training future interpreters, conference interpreter trainers rely heavily on practical exercises that enable students to apply the skills they previously learnt and acquired in class in interpreting situations. For various reasons, the latter, however, may not be as realistic as a simulated conference, thereby preventing students from fully experiencing the atmosphere of real-life conference interpreting. This study begins with the hypothesis that mock conferences such as Model United Nations (MUN) conferences are effective in the training of postgraduate student interpreters in simultaneous interpreting. To examine this hypothesis, and present an alternative view if possible, the researcher observes postgraduate students in the MA Applied Language Studies (option: Translation and Interpreting) at the University of Pretoria performing in the simultaneous interpreting mode during a Model United Nations conference organised by the University's United Nations Association. Using a setting such as this, which simulates United Nations General Assembly or Security Council conferences, the researcher observes the students' performances and the delegates' reactions and analyses trainees' perceptions regarding the opportunity to use their skills set in a more realistic environment.

Keywords: conference interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, conference interpreter training, contextual training, mock conference, student interpreter, aptitude, conference interpreting research, social constructivism

List of acronyms

AIIC: Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (International Association of Conference Interpreters)

CI: Consecutive Interpreting

ESIT: École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs

ISIT: Institut de Management et de Communication Interculturels

MUN: Model United Nations

SI: Simultaneous Interpreting

SSLMIT: Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori

T&I: Translation and Interpreting

UNA-SA (Pretoria): United Nations Association of South Africa's Pretoria Chapter

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"La langue qui fourche fait plus de mal que le pied qui trébuche" –
Beninese proverb

1.1. Introduction

Conference interpreting is performed in two main modes: simultaneous interpreting (SI), which refers to the process by which an interpreter listens to a speech (or any other verbal communication) in one language, while at (almost) the same time interpreting it into another language; hence the term *simultaneous*. Consecutive interpreting (CI) on the other hand, refers to the process by which an interpreter listens to a speaker and takes notes of the speech at the same time. Once the speaker is finished, the interpreter then renders the speech consecutively in another language based on his/her notes (AIIC, 2004).

As a practice-based profession, conference interpreting (especially in simultaneous mode), requires extensive training for student interpreters to achieve an acceptable level of readiness, whether for a final exam in the training programme or for a real conference. Such training is usually provided by means of intensive practical exercises in the classroom. One such exercise is simultaneous interpreting practice during mock conferences.

With this context in mind, the present study examines the relevance and the usefulness of mock conferences in the training of student interpreters by testing how effective a mock conference, such as a Model United Nations (MUN) conference, is as a component of conference interpreter training programmes at postgraduate level (particularly at MA level). This objective is achieved by assessing the performance of student interpreters when they are evolving in an out-of-the-classroom environment and focuses on two main variables: the evaluation of student interpreters' performance by conference delegates who are users of interpreting services, but most importantly the student interpreters' evaluation of their own performances.

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1.1.1. Background to the study

Interpreting is considered to be one of the most important tools in enabling communication between speakers of different languages and its importance is very likely to increase owing to the continuous growth in globalisation and interconnectedness. Ensuring that interpreters – who are entrusted with bridging the various cultural and linguistic gaps – perform optimally, requires a considerable amount of effort, which is best provided during their training.

From the early beginnings, when conference interpreters acquired experience on the job, to nowadays when an increasing number of translation and interpreting (T&I) schools have responded to the demand for qualified interpreters by international organisations, the practice of conference interpreting has evolved (Renfer, 1992:175), and so has the training of conference interpreters. In exploring the latter, Renfer (1992:175) notes, however, that "compared to other disciplines, the training of translators and interpreters [had only started being] integrated into systematic and formalized curricula [in the early 1990s]". These developments have opened up new fields of research in the academic discipline of Interpreting Studies, focusing on issues such as the quality of the training, the content of curricula, the ethical aspects of the profession, etc. The present study seeks to follow this trend by analysing how exposure to a practical opportunity to interpret, as represented by simultaneous interpreting practice during mock conferences, might assist in the training of candidates (referred to as student interpreters or trainees) enrolled for a conference interpreter training programme. In doing so, the study focuses exclusively on simultaneous interpreting (SI) from English (as a source language) into French and other target languages. This means that student interpreters are required to interpret and are assessed only in one direction: English into French/other languages.

As Renfer (1992:183) notes, "the main advantage of interpreting training […] is the practical aspect of the program". By *practical* he refers to contact sessions with lecturers, that is, sessions that focus exclusively on practical interpreting exercises (such as practical interpreting in class, shadowing, sight translation, mock conferences and mute booth practice), and do not include research or self-practice. This remains the basis for any programme that aims to produce professionals ready for the job market. The importance of this issue lies in the fact that, as opposed to the in-house training of interpreters, where trainees may acquire proficiency in a specific

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field, university programmes endeavour to sensitize students "in terms of the background knowledge and the general cultural requirements of their future profession" (Renfer, 1992:179). The ultimate objective of university programmes then, as Kurz (2002:66) points out, is to produce interpreters who can adapt easily to the changing requirements of their professions, especially when working as freelancers. Given however the few opportunities for on-the-job training (such as vacancies or internships) offered by national and regional organisations that make use of conference interpreting on a regular basis, it is important to ask: how will interpreters provide quality interpreting services if during their training they did not have enough practice? In attempting to answer the question, this study uses the training of interpreters at the University of Pretoria as a case in point for various reasons.

Although the curriculum is being revised, in its most recent format, the MA Applied Language Studies (option: Translation and Interpreting) offered by the University of Pretoria is a postgraduate programme that offers translation and interpreting courses in parallel, with an emphasis on translation courses in the early stages of the programme. Thus, the latter offers modules such as Human Language Technology in Translation, Advanced Professional Translation and Introduction to Interpreting, followed by intensive modules offering practical exercises in Consecutive Interpreting and Simultaneous Interpreting. The programme also includes a research component in the form of a mini-dissertation whose aim is to enhance the students' theoretical knowledge and equip them with the basic research capabilities they might need later in the discipline of Interpreting Studies. The programme, which is constantly evolving in order to adapt to the market, aims to train practicing translators and interpreters, as well as student translators and student interpreters with various language combinations, including South Africa's 11 official languages, as well as Arabic, French, German and other languages.

Pursuant to the abovementioned, the issue that arises is to know whether the conventional method of practical in-class exercise is sufficient to achieve the desired objective of the training, or whether students might benefit from additional practice in the form of mock conferences. To address that issue, this study proposes to enable student interpreters to perform during an MUN conference organised by an entity of the University of Pretoria, the United Nations Association of South Africa's Pretoria Chapter, henceforth referred to as UNA-SA (Pretoria). The use of an MUN conference allows a better assessment of student interpreters as the said conference

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provides the closest sense of reality to an international diplomatic conference in terms of topic, procedures, register of language, etc.

1.1.2. Rationale

Although conference interpreter training has been researched, practical exercises and their use in conference interpreter training have not, however, been the focus of major research. In Western academia for example, peer-reviewed journals (such as *Interpreting*, *Meta, Target* and *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*) feature numerous articles on conference interpreting written by prominent researchers. While those articles focus mostly on issues such as theoretical approaches to conference interpreting or the professional aspect of T&I practice, searches in the abovementioned journals, as well as in other journals (such as *Translation and Interpreting*, the *International Journal of Translation* and the *Journal of Interpretation Research*) yielded few results on topics such as T&I curricula and the training of future interpreters. The South African academic context on the other hand, although similar, presents a different characteristic: as a result of the fairly recent development of conference interpreting practice following the first use of conference interpreting (using local African languages) during the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 (Raditlhalo, 2009:2 and Wallmach, 2002:5), and the ensuing development of research in conference interpreting, there are only few publications by South African academics on the topics mentioned above. It can thus be inferred that the available literature on such topics, as opposed to general research in Interpreting Studies, is not extensive. In assessing the role and importance of practical exercises in conference interpreter training, the present study would therefore add to the existing literature on conference interpreter training. Three additional elements further highlight the relevance of this study:
- firstly, by including the variable of *live training* such as that provided by an MUN conference, the study seeks to provide student interpreters with an opportunity to use and apply the skills previously acquired in class, in an environment that is as realistic as possible;
- secondly, and in agreement with Kurz's (2002:66) view that critical feedback from trainees is important, this study intends to give student interpreters an opportunity to evaluate their own performance and report on it while

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subjecting themselves to a critical appraisal that they can use for improvement. Indeed, although studies which examine the perceptions of interpreting by users of interpreters at conferences have been conducted (cf. Moser 1995 and Kurz 2001), little research exists on the perceptions of conference interpreting by student interpreters;

- lastly, critical feedback from trainees, coupled with the feedback obtained from conference delegates who have also agreed to participate in the study, may form the basis for further research on the structure and content of curricula in interpreting programmes.

1.2. Research framework
1.2.1. Research problem and questions

The research problem that constitutes the foundation of the study is the perceived insufficiency of practical simultaneous interpreting exercises in the training of conference interpreters. This problem is best formulated as one overarching research question: is SI practice during mock conferences such as Model UN conferences an effective exercise for the training of conference interpreters, and, if so, to what extent? This question could be reformulated as the following, more specific questions:

- what is the role of mock conferences in the training of conference interpreters?
- can an MUN conference be considered a helpful exercise in simultaneous interpreting practice?
- after practising simultaneous interpreting during an MUN conference, how do student interpreters evaluate their performance?
- how do conference delegates evaluate the student interpreters' performance?
- according to student interpreters, how helpful is the training (without SI practice at a mock conference) in terms of preparing them for the job market?
- does the fact that the use of mock conferences is not guided by lecturers diminish its value as a teaching tool?

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1.2.2. Research objective

The primary objective of this study is to examine the usefulness of mock conferences, such as an MUN conference, as an additional practical exercise in simultaneous interpreting as part of conference interpreter training. This evaluation is carried out by assessing the performance of student interpreters, particularly as regards their target language skills, their content knowledge, the challenges they encounter, delegates' perceptions of the interpreting service, etc.

The second objective of the study is to provide a trainee-centred perspective on such an exercise and its perceived usefulness in preparing them (the trainees) for the job market. This objective is achieved by using the students' self-evaluation, as well as evaluation by the conference delegates who used the interpreting services.

The overall result is to undertake a qualitative and objective assessment of the role played by MUN conferences in the training of conference interpreters in SI. Such an assessment could lead to the inclusion of SI during MUN conferences in the existing training programmes at the University of Pretoria and/or at other institutions that offer interpreter training in South Africa.

1.2.3. Conceptual framework

The study is underpinned by the following theories:
- Kiraly's (2000) *social constructivism*, which advocates the integration of a more reflexive approach to conference interpreter training. By enabling student interpreters to reflect and make inputs on the training they receive, conference interpreter trainers empower the students and enable the latter to develop their professional selves. This development also depends on the students' will to improve as they are most likely to progress once they have identified some of their weaknesses and are willing to work on those. This progress in turn will result in increased levels of motivation for the students (Kurz, 2002:68);
- identifying the cognitive challenges student interpreters face in SI is therefore also important and Gile's (1992:191) *effort models of interpreting* will constitute the framework to do so. Following their performance of SI during the MUN conference, student interpreters have the opportunity to reflect on

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the specific challenges (*problem triggers*) they faced during the exercise, how these challenges impacted their performance and what coping mechanisms they used to address such challenges.

1.3. Hypothesis

The hypothesis proposed is that MUN conferences are ideal contextualised settings for the training of student interpreters for SI. The perceived reasons are twofold: firstly, as the conferences are a simulation of real international conferences, they present a platform for student interpreters to use the skills they would have learned in class, in an environment that is different from the classroom. Secondly, through the exercises, student interpreters are able to test themselves and their skills under conditions that closely resemble the students' future working environments. As a result, student interpreters can evaluate their own performance, thereby playing an active role in determining the importance of such exercises in their training.

1.4. Literature review

From an academic perspective, the analysis of simultaneous interpreting as a situational exercise has not been a major focus of attention in Interpreting Studies (Diriker, 2004:13). Instead, research has bypassed aspects such as "the presence and performance of simultaneous interpreters in relation to the socio-cultural, communicative, and ideological contexts" in favour of "cognitive, psycho- and neuro-linguistic factors" (Diriker, 2004:7). While such research in Interpreting Studies acknowledges SI as a process that involves much more than simply listening to a speaker in one language and transmitting the message in another language, few scholars have gone further to develop approaches that explore in detail this complex task which Diriker (2004:15) describes as "an interlingual communicative task involving the speaker, the interpreter and the target culture receiver in their situational context". Recent research in simultaneous interpreting has, however, begun to emphasise the context in which conference interpreters operate.

1.4.1. Approaches to simultaneous interpreting training in conference interpreter training

According to Pöchhacker (2004:178), "first-generation teachers of interpreting, themselves accomplished professionals, established a lasting tradition of training by apprenticeship; that is, transfer of know-how and professional knowledge from master to student, mainly exercises modelled on real-life tasks". This opinion is shared by other researchers who even go further: in observing translator training in various environments, Rosas (2004) quotes Kiraly (2000) who notes that the prevailing pedagogical trend is *transmissionist*, in other words, it is focused on *transmitting* knowledge without taking into account the needs and characteristics of both clients and trainees. While Kiraly's observation deals with translator training, its framework could also apply to interpreter training, considering that:

- it is only [since the 1990s] that interpreter training courses were integrated into systematic and formalised curricula [in most countries] (Renfer 1992:175); and that,

- owing to ever-changing characteristics of the market, specialisation is no longer important as trainees face the need to be adaptable, especially in the freelance setting (Kurz, 2002:66).

Based on the abovementioned, Kiraly (2000) points to the need to re-evaluate training programmes by using a *social constructivist* approach, according to which people have to create or construct meanings and knowledge by participating in an interpersonal, intersubjective interaction. This means that student interpreters cannot simply be expected to practise without reflecting and expressing themselves on the relevance of their training. Taking into account their input enables them in turn to be empowered and develop their *professional selves* so as to raise their awareness of their responsibility as active participants in a complex communicative process (Rosas, 2004).

The communicative process that is interpreting indeed proves its complexity right from the onset of the learning process. As Gile (1995:191) shows, students learning SI find it hard to cope with a number of difficulties that impact on their performance. Those difficulties are ignited by *problem triggers* such as speech segments with low redundancy (proper names), low-density segments (pauses, language-specific constructions), syntactic differences between languages, and note-

taking (Gile, 1999:158). To illustrate his argument, Gile (1992:191) proposes his *effort models of interpreting*, which allow students to reflect on their own performance and therefore play an active role in their own learning. The *effort models* are based on the concept of *processing capacity* and on the idea that "some mental operations in interpreting require much Processing Capacity" (Gile, 1992:191). Those mental operations (Listening, Memory, Production and Coordination), also known as *efforts*, play an important role in the SI process: because the latter is very demanding "problems occur if the Processing Capacity allocated [to the operations] at a particular point in time is not sufficient" (Gile, 1992:191). This premise, termed the *tightrope hypothesis*, simply means that not only are the operations difficult to perform, but they become even more so when the demand for those operations exceeds the capacity to offer them. While used to test the *effort models*, the *tightrope hypothesis* also provides a view into the psyche of conference interpreters as professional language practitioners who are constantly under pressure to meet the expectations of users of interpreting services (cf. Moser, 1995). Acknowledging the complexity of SI is only the beginning however; providing an in-depth analysis of conference interpreter training requires one to determine the role of the abovementioned concepts in relation to such training.

The available literature on conference interpreter training and curricula tends to focus on issues such as the level, structure, content and duration of T&I training programmes (Pöchhacker, 2004:178), although recently much more emphasis has been placed on other issues: Zannirato (2013), for example, reflects on issues of aptitude and affect in the processes of interpreter selection and training, whereas Russo (2011) and Pöchhacker (2011) analyse aptitude testing in and evaluation of candidates to interpreter training. To illustrate, Russo (2011) discusses issues pertaining to interpreter selection in T&I schools by focusing on qualities that indicate an aptitude in prospective interpreters, how such qualities can be measured, as well as the types of aptitude tests that can be designed to measure such qualities. In view of the above argument, indeed, while a pedagogical approach to conference interpreter training contributes a great deal to understanding the profession, as Pöchhacker (2004:180) states, "the relative effectiveness of various curricular arrangements is difficult to assess, since many aspects of implementation are not manifested in the 'official curriculum'. As emphasized by Sawyer (2001), researchers need access to the hidden curriculum, that is, the curriculum as experienced by the

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individual student and teacher." Analysing simultaneous interpreter training thus requires one to focus on those elements included in the *hidden curriculum*: actors involved along the interpreting continuum (trainers, interpreters and users of interpreting services), as well as intangible variables such as the context of the training and other issues affecting the profession such as *norms*.

1.4.2. Norms in interpreting

According to Duflou (2007:1), the notion of norms was first mentioned in Translation Studies by Toury (1978) before researchers such as Shlesinger (1989) started applying it to Interpreting Studies. As defined by Toury (1999:14), norms in Translation Studies refer to a shared set of general values or ideas (as to what is conventionally right and wrong, adequate and inadequate) applied in professional life depending on the situation. According to him, these norms, which are acquired and internalized by translators over time, enable them to fulfil their role as professionals within a social environment in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference (Toury, 1995:53). Applying the notion of norms to interpreting, Schjoldager (1995:67) states that: "as a behavioural activity, interpreting must also be governed by norms [because] naturally, interpreters, too, need norms to help them [interpreters] select appropriate solutions to the problems they meet". However, while quoting Hermans (1991:167), Schjoldager (1995:67) explains that interpreter norms may depend on three main elements: the source speech (as well as its context and purpose), acquisition during training in T&I schools or developed through professional experience, or the different types of speeches that the interpreter has heard in similar contexts. Thus, Shlesinger (1989 & 1999) notes that "in order to study norms in interpreting one needs to place interpreting within a 'system' [and] given the interactional nature of interpreting, the system must […] be conceptualised at the level of the interpreting event or setting" (Marzocchi, 2005:89). Unfortunately, while those norms are important, analysing them proves to be a challenge due to, for example, the lack of accessible interpreting performance and the reluctance of professional interpreters to have their performance recorded (Shlesinger 1989:113). These observations highlight both the importance of a contextualised approach to conference interpreter training and the relevance of norms: depending on the circumstances and the environment they find themselves in, interpreters adopt

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various normatively-sound approaches in order to perform adequately. It can thus be inferred that the earlier interpreters get the opportunity to acquire those norms within a contextualised training environment, the more beneficial it would be to them.

1.4.3. Conference interpreting: the interpreters' perspectives

In her analysis of users' expectations of quality conference interpreting, Kurz (1989, 1993, 2001:394) demonstrates the importance of consulting conference interpreting users when measuring the quality of interpreting services. Kurz (2001:405) concludes that customers determine quality by comparing the service they expected to receive to the one they actually received and "because needs and expectations vary by customer and situation, service quality is a highly subjective matter".

After Kurz's article, however, in another landmark study titled *Survey on Users' Expectations of Conference Interpreting* commissioned by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), Moser (1995:4) indicated that the aim of the survey was to assess the quality of conference interpreting services based on "the judgements, needs and expectations of users of that service". To achieve such an objective, the researchers had to hypothesise that expectations of interpreting services would vary according to different user groups. The survey, which took place between autumn 1993 and spring 1994, involved more than 200 short individual interviews conducted by 94 interpreters at 84 different types of meetings around the world (Moser, 1995:5). The respondents to the survey were all conference delegates who were both active speakers and passive listeners.

Although the survey addressed one issue of conference interpreting, namely quality, it unfortunately fell short of including impressions from those at the first end of the interpreting continuum: the interpreters themselves. In fact, very few studies apart from Bühler (1986) and Zwischenberger & Pöchhacker (2010) have attempted to study conference interpreting from the interpreters' perspective. This lends credence to Pöchhacker's (1992:217) assertion that "the key to the analysis of translatorial text processing in simultaneous interpreting is the fact that it is the interpreter's perspective on the chain of mutual assessment within the interaction network which ultimately shapes the end result in interpreting". Applied to interpreter training, this assertion means that the student interpreter is the most important component in the interpreting chain, whether at its early beginning (such as in a university classroom)

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or during a real assignment. The present study uses this argument as a starting point by switching from the user-centred perspective of Moser (1995:1) to a combined user/service provider-centred perspective as proposed by the researcher. With this background in mind, what, then, could be some of the strategies used by T&I schools to train student interpreters while including the latter's perspective on the training?

1.4.4. Use of mock conferences in simultaneous interpreting training

Given the continuous expansion of international cooperation in various fields and the increase in technical subjects tackled by conference interpreters, "interpreting training programmes must give due consideration to the diversity and multiplicity of international meetings and to their technical and terminological difficulties" (Kurz, 2002:66). This means in essence, that student interpreters should undergo training that prepares them for real-life experiences (Kurz, 2002:67).

As a case in point, whereas most interpreting schools provide training that does not include many authentic situations, there are some schools (such as the University of Vienna, the Institut de Management et de Communication Interculturels, the SSLMIT of the University of Bologna and the SSLMIT of the University of Trieste) that consider *live training* and performance-recording for self- and peer-assessment to be an integral part of their curriculum. As a case in point, since 1997 for example, student interpreters at the University of Trieste have been regularly performing (in interpreting) during the Latin American Film Festival of Trieste which lasts approximately ten days (Russo 2000, 2005). Another example is the University of Vienna in Austria and the École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) in France, which give their student interpreters the opportunity to practise in authentic meetings at various regional and international organisations, such as during United Nations conferences at the Vienna International Centre (ESIT, s.a. and Kurz, 2002:67). Other institutions, such as the University of Geneva, offer training by recreating a conference environment for their students to practise in (Université de Genève, s.a.). Offering training by practice in a real environment and requesting feedback from students seems to be a major characteristic of these pioneering schools. This explains perhaps why Kurz (2002:66), who also teaches at the University of Vienna, is of the opinion that the feedback of trainees can thus be invaluable when assessing the effectiveness of training programmes.

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While it is true that all institutions offering conference interpreter training do not have the same means (financial or otherwise) to implement extensive training programmes, such as those at the University of Vienna or ESIT, the observation above demonstrates the importance of a training environment that is as close as possible to reality. Such an environment can only foster a true dedication to and interest in the profession within student interpreters. After all, Diriker (2004:25) states that "in the broader socio-cultural, ideological and interactional contexts which grant Simultaneous Interpreters the status of experts in possession of certain skills […] conference interpreters, like all other professionals, operate with a 'professional identity' which shapes and is shaped by the way a variety of actors and institutions inside and outside SI see and describe the profession (al)".

1.5. Methodology
1.5.1. Research design

The present study qualifies as a qualitative study. According to Ritchie & Lewis (2003:2), who use the definition proposed by Denzin & Lincoln (2000:3), qualitative research is the use of "an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." Furthermore, quoting Sherman & Webb (1988:7), Hughes (s.a) identifies qualitative research as having "the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it".

Based on the abovementioned, the present research was carried out during the rendering of interpreting services by MA-level students. The study used as setting, the Interfaculty Model United Nations conference that took place in October 2013 at the University of Pretoria. The conference was well-suited for the investigation as it discussed an issue of international relevance.

As with any empirical study, the issues of validity and reliability are important. To ensure the study's validity, the researcher uses *triangulation*, which refers to "the use of different methods and sources to check the integrity of, or extend, inferences drawn from the data" (Ritchie, 2003:43). Thus, the study combines various qualitative research instruments, namely questionnaires and observation, within the framework of the *action research* method described and used by De Kock & Blaauw (2008:89) in

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their study of interpreting turns within an educational interpreting environment at the North-West University. According to O'Brien (1998), *action research* aims to "contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to further the goals of social science simultaneously. Thus, there is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction". Action research therefore focuses on "turning the people involved into researchers, too – people learn best, and more willingly apply what they have learned, when they do it themselves. It also has a social dimension [as] the research takes place in real-world situations, and aims to solve real problems" (O'Brien, 1998).

1.5.2. Research instruments

As regards the research instruments, the study used questionnaires that were administered collectively, meaning that they were distributed to the study participants (student interpreters and conference delegates) during the conference.

The reasons for using questionnaires as research instruments were because firstly, they would ensure a high response rate owing to the expected high number of participants attending the conference. Secondly, because the study was to take place in one location and during a determined number of hours, it would be inexpensive and quick. Thirdly, as opposed to other research instruments such as interviews, group discussions or surveys, questionnaires could ensure a better anonymity of the respondents and confidentiality of the data the respondents provide. Furthermore, compared to other research instruments and in relation to the type of study undertaken, questionnaires could ensure the integrity of the study (its validity and reliability) because they presented the fewest disadvantages. Those disadvantages were mainly self-selecting bias from student interpreters and the lack of opportunity to clarify issues when answering close-ended questions. For these reasons, both open-ended and close-ended questions were included in order to reduce bias and ensure the reliability of the data recorded, as open-ended questions were to enable respondents to expand on their answers. The overall objective for choosing this method was to enable both student interpreters and conference delegates to provide first-hand input regarding the interpreting services rendered by student interpreters.

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After the conference, the questionnaires were collected, the data gathered and analysed, and the results compiled in a report that formed the basis of the study.

As a study involving human subjects, the need to obtain the consent of the participants was fulfilled by distributing consent forms before the conference and asking participants to complete them.

1.5.3. Logistical arrangements

Permission to conduct the study was obtained beforehand from UNA-SA (Pretoria), who confirmed the precise date, time, venue and topic of the conference.

Regarding the equipment, permission was requested from the University of Pretoria's Department of Modern European Languages to use its mobile interpretation system (also known as the *bidule*), which consists of two 3-channel transmitters with two earpiece microphones and 20 headphones. The audio-visual recording was to be done using a camcorder and the software Audacity, all supplied by the researcher.

1.5.4. Data collection method and techniques
i. Study participants

The study was to involve about 50 participants divided in the following three categories:
- about ten student interpreters who would provide simultaneous interpreting during the conference but also evaluate their own performance after the conference;
- about thirty conference delegates who would evaluate the student interpreters' performance during the conference. As they would be at the receiving end of the communication channel (since they would be listening to the interpretation), they were to be more objective than the student interpreters in their analysis;
- three lecturers involved in teaching T&I at postgraduate level: they would not be part of the sample population, but would assist in providing guidance and advice to the researcher before, during and after the study.

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ii. Sampling

Because the student population enrolled for T&I courses is not too large, and due to the type of the research, the study made use of *non-probability sampling*, which refers to the deliberate selection of units (in this case student interpreters) "to reflect particular features of or groups within the sampled population. The sample is not intended to be statistically representative: the chances of selection for each element are unknown but, instead, the characteristics of the population are used as the basis of selection" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:78).

For the purpose of this research and based on the above definition, the study made use of a criterion-based approach to non-probability sampling, also referred to as *purposive sampling*. Here, "the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:78). This means that the most important was the characteristics of the sample population (student interpreters) rather than their number. Based on Ritchie (2003:87) these characteristics or criteria were:

- firstly, the student interpreters would have to be enrolled for a postgraduate course in T&I and would have to have acquired some experience in simultaneous interpreting either in class (after a few hours' practice) or professionally. Such experience would be indicated by the student interpreters but would have no direct effect on their participation in the study. Thus the student interpreters would preferably be postgraduate students (MA-level) studying conference interpreting at the University of Pretoria;

- secondly, lecturers in the T&I course and conference delegates would also be selected because their views and experiences would bring contrasting or complementary insights to the enquiry. The lecturers, for example, would be able to provide some feedback to the student interpreters in terms of the way the latter could improve their skills.

iii. Time dimension

As mentioned previously, the study took place in October 2013 during the UNA-SA's MUN Interfaculty competition. The conference was expected to last five hours, and

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was divided into different sections during which both prepared and unprepared speeches were made by delegates.

After the conference, the data collected was analysed and the report written on the results of the findings was submitted to the researcher's supervisor for review. The months following the submission of the report were devoted to the writing of the dissertation proper.

iv.   Data collection and analysis

Before the conference, participants were given the questionnaires (to be completed either during or after the conference). The researcher explained the study, its purpose and all related issues in order to ensure maximum understanding and participation. The study participants were then shown how to use the interpreting equipment in order to ensure optimal quality.

During the conference, the student interpreters were required to perform SI as best as they could, using the skills they had previously acquired in class. The conference was recorded in audio and video in both the source language and the target language used by the conference delegates and the student interpreters. Video-recording offered a point of reference for the researcher's observations. Transcription of the speeches was not necessary as they were expected to be made available beforehand by the UNA-SA.

Analysis of the data began with the conversion of the answers to the questionnaires into comprehensible and usable data. This data was categorised according to theme: grammar, terminology, accent, errors, cohesion, diction (fluency of delivery), style, etc. according to the questions asked (i.e. each question represented one category) and analysed accordingly. To provide clarity on the data collected through closed-ended questions, graphs and other statistical methods were used. On the other hand, open-ended questions were used to sustain arguments in the final analysis.

The second stage of the analysis was the report-writing on the findings of the study. The report consists of both the presentation of the data analysed and the conclusions of the analysis.

1.6. Outline of the structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1: Interpreting, interpreter training and research: an introduction

This introductory chapter presents the study in terms of background, rationale, research methodology, etc., while analysing the available literature on the topic.

Chapter 2: A critical appraisal of research in conference interpreter training

As an extension of the literature review in Chapter 1 and in order to strengthen the study's theoretical framework, this chapter analyses the literature on the topic in terms of current research trends, training curricula and approaches, as well as the impact of norms in conference interpreting practice.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter presents the way the study is conducted in terms of methodology, data collection and analysis, logistics, ethical considerations, etc.

Chapter 4: Analysing simultaneous interpreting practice during an MUN conference: findings and recommendations

This chapter presents the results of the study and includes a discussion thereof.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter gives an overview of the study in terms of the way it was conducted and the challenges encountered. As concluding chapter, it emphasises the contribution of the study to conference interpreting research and makes recommendations for future research on the topic.

Appendices and list of sources

This section is a reference to the various documents used during the course of the study (consent forms, questionnaires), as well as to the sources mentioned.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the importance of conference interpreter training by looking at the current research undertaken in the field and the opportunities such research presents. This analysis of the existing literature enabled us to formulate the aims and rationale of the study based on the hypothesis that MUN conferences are useful in the training of student interpreters for simultaneous interpreting. Following these discussions a presentation was made regarding the methodology of the study and how the latter was to be conducted in terms of design, data collection, participation, etc. The following chapters explore all elements discussed in this chapter in a more in-depth manner.

Chapter 2: A critical appraisal of research in conference interpreter training

2.1. Introduction and background

Originally associated with international gatherings at the highest level (such as the Nuremberg Trials), professional conference interpreting has evolved throughout the years and now covers almost all fields of multilingual and intercultural communications (Pöchhacker 2004:16) ranging from large diplomatic meetings to more technical workshops on agriculture, environment, energy, etc. Moreover, as with many other professions, conference interpreting has also become a subject of research in academia. The result has been the development of Interpreting Studies as an academic discipline, concerned with all aspects pertaining to interpreting whether in theory or practice; evidence of this is found in the growth of specialised thematic research areas such as conference interpreter training, as well as the numerous articles, books and journals available on a wide range of topics. While this indicates an academic discipline evolving well alongside the profession, compared to other disciplines, it is only in the past few years that Interpreting Studies has become this dynamic. This assertion is exemplified by Gile's (1994:149-151) description of the development of the discipline (particularly in the western world) from the early fifties where conference interpreter training was "based on personal experience and did not claim any scientific validity" to what he calls the *Renaissance* (rebirth) period in empirical research on interpreting following the conference on the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching interpretation organised in November 1986 by the Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori of the Università degli Studi di Trieste. As argued by Gile (1994:151), that conference marked the beginning of a new period characterised by increasing calls for cooperation with scholars from other disciplines, for more empirical studies, increasing communication between interpreting researchers, and an open-minded attitude on the part of *practisearchers* (conference interpreters involved in research and teaching). While Gile argued that the opening up of the discipline may be the result of the abovementioned developments, it could also be argued that this may also be due to the increased trend in globalisation and interconnectedness observed since the late 1990s. The

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result of this development of Interpreting Studies is therefore seen in the newer topics explored, which, as opposed to the more "classical" topics such as quality and psychological processes involved in the performance of interpreting, now include training, ethics, aptitude, performance assessment, reflections on the role of the simultaneous interpreter, and even expertise and professionalization, as Sunnari & Hild (2010:33) note.

Despite this considerable progress with academization, Pöchhacker (2004:42) notes, however, that Interpreting Studies still has a modest research output internationally. The same could be said of South Africa where, apart from a few publications (cf. Blaauw 2006 and 2008, Combrink & Blaauw 1997, Moeketsi & Wallmach 2005, Olivier & Lotriet 2006, Verhoef 2009, and Wallmach 2000 and 2004), there are not many other publications by South African academics on conference interpreter training within South Africa.

2.2. Current trends in conference interpreting research: the case for conference interpreter training

Traditionally, research into simultaneous interpreting in conference contexts has tended to focus on cognitive and psycholinguistic aspects (cf. Gerver 1975 & 1976, Gile 1995, Setton 1999, 2002 & 2005), whereas consecutive/liaison interpreting research has focused more on the role of the interpreter and the environments in which liaison interpreters operate (cf. Roy 2000 and Wadensjö 1992). Gile (2006:9) for example, identifies some of the major topics in the literature on conference interpreting, as topics related to cognition, neurolinguistics, quality, methodology, interdisciplinarity and training issues such as curriculum, aptitude, assessment and teaching methods (Takeda, 2010:32). According to Gile (2006:9), quality in interpreting is probably the topic on which the largest amount of empirical research has been carried out, with studies such as Bühler (1986), Altman (1990), Moser (1995), Kurz (1989, 1993, 2001), Chiaro & Nocella (2004) and Zwischenberger & Pöchhacker (2010) illustrating Gile's argument. Training on the other hand has been the subject of increasing research, owing partly to the increasing number of interpreter training programmes in higher education (Takeda, 2010:32), as well as the professionalization of community interpreters. In South Africa for example, Wallmach (forthcoming) and Moeketsi & Wallmach (2005) relate the country's first

experience with simultaneous interpreting (using local African languages) for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the ensuing need for interpreter training, particularly as it relates to court interpreting. Gile (2006:9) goes on to note however that one of the reasons "training issues have been the most numerous in the literature throughout the development [of conference interpreting research]" is because "training is the one topic which is relevant to all interpreter trainers, that is, virtually all authors in the CIR [conference interpreting research] community". Consequently, more recent research in simultaneous interpreting, possibly under the influence of liaison interpreting research, as mentioned earlier, has begun to emphasise the context in which conference interpreters operate and how that influences the training such professionals receive (or should receive) as student interpreters.

2.2.1. Theory and context in Conference Interpreter Training

The importance of context in conference interpreter training stems from the above observation about the identified insufficient amount of research into simultaneous interpreting as *situated action* made by Diriker (2004:1). Thus, in a different approach to conference interpreting research, Diriker considers both the profession and practitioners as intimately linked and dependent upon socio-cultural factors. Indeed, the conference interpreter, as much as he/she is a highly skilled linguist, cannot be expected to simply act as a transmitter of words, otherwise the result would be the *garbage in, garbage out* feeling the same interpreter would have about his/her performance (see Moeketsi & Wallmach, 2005:1). Diriker (2004:17) takes this argument for simultaneous interpreting as a situational exercise further when exploring the representation and self-representation of interpreters in terms of expectations, performance and ethics. She observes then that there is somewhat of a discrepancy between what interpreters themselves consider ethical performance in terms of impartiality and fidelity to a speaker's message, and what they actually do (Diriker, 2004:25-49). But even more is that, based on the results of a study conducted during an actual event (an international philosophy colloquium taking place in Istanbul in May 2000) and involving conference organisers, participants and conference interpreters, there is a diversity of viewpoints regarding the presence and performance of the interpreters (Diriker (2004:63-80).

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The conclusion that can be drawn from such observations is therefore that whatever the case may be, there is a difference in terms of perception of what conference interpreting is seen as, and what it should be; a similar account of perception is given by Wallmach (2002) and Moeketsi & Wallmach (2005) with regard to court interpreting in South Africa. Considering that conference interpreting at actual events is the end-result of a learning journey, training on the other hand should be considered the beginning of such a journey. How then does context relate to conference interpreter training and vice versa?

As mentioned earlier, in analysing translator training, Kiraly (2000) notes that the training given to translators is based on a *transmissionist* approach. This means, in other words, that the relationship between trainer and trainee is one similar to master and apprentice, whereby the trainer *transmits* his/her knowledge to the trainee without the latter having so much of an opportunity to reflect on the impact and importance such training has on their performance. Pöchhacker (2004:178), in turn, while analysing conference interpreter training, corroborated Kiraly's observation by also noting that conference interpreter training, at least at the beginning of the discipline, was done on the basis of apprenticeship. In light of these observations however, one recalls another observation by Kurz (2002:66), who argues that owing to an ever-increasing market, students today need to be adaptable, especially if working as freelancers. What could be the appropriate response to such an argument? Kiraly's (2000) opinion is that, although the *transmissionist* approach might be common, there is a need to re-evaluate the training curricula and their underlying theoretical approaches. Pöchhacker (1992:213) therefore posits that, the theoretical foundations to T&I should not solely rest on Seleskovitch's and Lederer's *théorie du sens* or Vermeer's *skopostheorie*. These theories assert the following: Seleskovitch argues that "interpreters and translators use their knowledge of languages as well as extralinguistic knowledge to extract the meaning or sense from the Source Text [and that] this is followed by a deverbalization stage in which the translator forgets the linguistic form in which the 'sense' was conveyed in the Source Text, and then by the third and final stage, namely reformulation in the target language from the sense" (Gile, 1995:252). On the other hand, the *skopostheorie* (also known as the *functional approach to translation*), which was developed in the late 1970s by Hans Vermeer (1978), is based on the premise that given that human interaction is determined by its purpose, it is not the source text (ST) that determines

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the translation process (in terms of methods and strategies) but rather the prospective function or *skopos* of the target text (TT) as determined by the client's needs. [Consequently], "the skopos is largely constrained by the target text user (reader/listener) and his/her situation and cultural background" (Shäffner, 2001:236).

Just as Seleskovitch's *théorie du sens*, Vermeer's *Skopostheorie* and a transmissionist approach to training should not be viewed as the only foundations for T&I whether in theory or in practice (Pöchhacker 1992:213), Pöchhacker (1992:217) argues that, on the contrary, additional variables involved in T&I in general and in simultaneous interpreting in particular, require the latter to be considered as "a social act involving the production of functional target texts in a specific situation of transcultural interaction". It is this specific situation that Kiraly (2000) takes into account in proposing that the training of translators (and interpreters) should rest on the adoption of *social constructivism*.

Social constructivism is a theory developed by Vygotsky (1978) according to which learning as a cognitive function, begins as a product of social interactions and is not simply assimilated but rather a collaborative process (The American International School-Riyadh, 2012). More simply, a constructivist approach to training focuses on the student rather than the teacher. In the constructivist classroom, "the students are urged to be actively involved in their own process of learning [and] both teacher and students think of knowledge as a dynamic, ever-changing view of the world we live in and the ability to successfully stretch and explore that view - not as inert factoids to be memorized" (University College Dublin, s.a.).

Kiraly's social constructivism and Gile's practical application of it (as discussed below) therefore show that student interpreters cannot simply act as passive recipients of knowledge from trainers. Rather, they need to practise what they are taught while also self-reflecting on their training and its relevance. Trainers should then take the students' input into account in order for the latter to "be empowered and develop their *professional selves* so as to raise their awareness of their responsibility as active participants in a complex communicative process" (Rosas, 2004). While this observation was made only at that time, Gile (1992:191) had already anticipated and seen the need to factor in student's participation in their own training by proposing his *effort models* and *tightrope hypothesis*, which aim at enabling students to play an active role in their own learning by reflecting on their own cognitive performance. Through these *effort models*, Gile (1992:191) points that

some mental operations (or *efforts*) in interpreting (listening, memorising, production and coordination) require a great deal of processing capacity and when such capacity is insufficient, it creates problems (thus the *tightrope hypothesis*). Thus, as can be seen, the importance of context in conference interpreter training is, however, only but one of many issues explored in conference interpreting research.

2.2.2. Conference interpreter training and norms

When Toury (1978) first coined the concept of norms in Translation Studies, he defined them as a set of general values or ideas shared by a group (as to what is conventionally right and wrong, adequate and inadequate) and applied by the latter in professional life depending on the situation. Toury argued that these norms, which translators acquire and internalize over time and in various phases (Toury 1978, 1995:248-254 and 1999:26-27), are the basis for defining *translatorship*. Such norm acquisition is in turn what enables translators to play the social role allotted to them as professionals by a community (Toury, 1995:53). In the same vein, and even before Diriker (2004:15), who emphasized the importance of situational context in interpreting, Sjoldager (1995:67) stated that: "as a behavioural activity, interpreting must also be governed by norms. Naturally, interpreters, too, need norms to help them [interpreters] select appropriate solutions to the problems they meet".

In the literature, those norms are categorised as *initial norms* (which govern the translator's overall strategy, whether in terms of adequacy or acceptability), *preliminary norms* (which concern the existence of a translation '"policy" along with its actual nature and those questions related to the "directness" of the translation) and *operational norms* (which are decisions made during the translation process) (Toury 1978:53). Chesterman (1993 & 1997) later subdivided the last category into *professional norms* and *expectancy norms*, with professional norms being of more relevance in this study.

Professional norms are mostly developed by professional practitioners, or *norm authorities* as Duflou (2007:2) refers to them. In contrast to (although not in opposition to) what is taught in T&I schools, professional norms can be seen as tried-and-tested measures that enable professional conference interpreters to perform optimally both inside and outside the interpreting booth. In Viaggio's words (1997:18), they constitute "the actual practice of competent [interpreters] and are accepted as

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being the guidelines that such [interpreters] tend to follow". Inside the booth for example, such norms may range from general issues such as booth manners and interpreting turns, to performance issues such as coping mechanisms, lag time or diction/flow. An appropriate illustration of such elements is in Wallmach (2002:10-11) who, in discussing professional ethics in interpreting and actual interpreting practice, explains that "every professional association sets up standards for its practitioners in order both to safeguard the welfare of its clients and to ensure that the professional activities of its members are of a high standard and that the profession has a high status in the eyes of society. Professionals thus formulate codes of ethics which provide guidelines according to which they should act". She explains further, while quoting Schweda Nicholson & Martinsen (1995:264), that the four most important among those guidelines are related to accuracy and completeness, neutrality and impartiality, secrecy and confidentiality, and lastly, accountability. Outside the booth (in other words, in the general profession), as the worldwide umbrella organisation for professional conference interpreters, the AIIC is often considered the ultimate repository for professional norms. As exemplified by its regulations such as the *Professional Standards*, the *Code of Professional Ethics*, and the *Guidelines for consultant interpreters*, not only do such regulations positively impact the performance of conference interpreters, but when discussed during training (as is the case at the Institut de Traducteurs, Interprètes et de Relations Internationales, cf. 2.2.3.i), they enable student interpreters to develop an awareness of conference interpreting as both a high-skills and regulated profession. This can only be the case, however, when such regulations address a wide range of issues concerning ethics (qualifications, confidentiality, working conditions), and professionalism (contract negotiation, remuneration, teamwork, etc.) (AIIC, 2002).

The problem arises however when, when confronted with reality, a gap appears between what should be and what actually is, or when "the individual requirements of the task at hand often do not correspond with the ethical rules interpreters are required to follow" (Wallmach, 2002:11). This reality concerns many aspects of interpreting practice, especially those referred to above.

The relevance of norms particularly as they relate to conference interpreter training can therefore not be emphasised enough: if indeed the ultimate goal of conference interpreter training is to produce quality conference interpreters who can, in turn, produce quality interpreting and behave professionally *vis-à-vis* the client and

the end-user, then the elements required to achieve such a goal should also be emphasized during the training. This is an argument presented by Viaggio (1997:18), who argues that interpreter training should include an interaction between "[interpreting] theory, [interpreting] practice and use and its reflection through ever evolving norms". Marzocchi (2005:89) demonstrates the practicality of Viaggio's argument further by referring to Shlesinger (1989 and 1999) in saying that "in order to study norms in interpreting one needs to place interpreting within a 'system' [and] given the interactional nature of interpreting, the system must […] be conceptualised at the level of the interpreting event or setting".

A challenge arises however when, discussing norms as they relate to conference interpreter training also implies analysing them within a conference interpreter training context, as is the case in the present study. Indeed, analysing norms proves to be a challenge due for example to the lack of accessible interpreting performances and the reluctance of professional interpreters to have their performance recorded or evaluated for various reasons (Shlesinger 1989:113), or even due to difficulties presented by a context such as the South African legislative context where interpreted languages are of limited diffusion and/or without developed technical register (Wallmach, 2000:198 and Moeketsi & Wallmach, 2005:2). While this applies more to professional interpreters, this challenge also applies in the present case, as there are few recordings of student interpreters' performances who participated in the present study. The lack of recordings of student interpreters, perhaps apart from those made for personal self-assessment purposes as in the University of Vienna (cf. 2.2.3.i), renders the study of norms by student interpreters a very difficult task. This does not mean that such a task is impossible, for a study specifically designed with that objective can be undertaken. Alternatively, as in the present case, a simple assessment of student interpreters' performance (especially a self-assessment) already contributes highly to playing a positive role in the development of student interpreters' professional selves as indicated by Rosas (2004) and in the spirit of Kiraly's (2000) social constructivism.

2.2.3. Conference interpreter training and practice

In discussing the importance of context in conference interpreter training, it was argued that, in the same way that Interpreting Studies as an academic discipline has

evolved, so have the focus points of conference interpreter training, especially in light of the new, emerging needs and demands of the interpreting market. Thus, those needs and demands (types of meetings, peculiarities of geographical regions, modes of interpreting, number of foreign languages, AIIC norms and regulations, professionalism, certification), coupled with academic issues such as contextual training, pedagogy (number of students, number of hours) and infrastructure (De Laet, 2010:252-253), have compelled T&I institutions to adjust their offering in order to remain relevant, by choosing suitable training tracks for example (cf. 2.2.3.i).

In applying context to simultaneous interpreting, conference interpreter trainers resort to a range of methods while training their students. These methods usually reflect the importance some components have over other components in a school's training programme. Thus, while one school may emphasize detecting the best candidates prior to their enrolment in a T&I course for example, another school may focus on how to use candidates' potential in order to turn them into good future student interpreters. Takeda, (2010:38) argues, however, that all in all "student input is a valuable resource to help teachers reflect on their practice and modify it, if necessary, for continuous improvement". The question now is: how are such variables (student interpreter input and training approaches) applied in practice?

i. Generalist versus specialist training: an overview of training curricula

In discussing translator and interpreter training, Renfer (1992:175) identifies four main models of T&I curricula:

- the *two-tier system*, in which T&I courses are offered in consecutive stages (i.e. candidates first have to undergo translator training before enrolling for interpreter training);
- the *parallel system*, in which T&I courses run parallel and are followed by two separate final examinations;
- the *Y-model*, in which the original curriculum is the same for students, until the point where courses become separate according to students' specialisation (translation or interpreting); and
- *postgraduate interpreter training*, (in T&I schools) or intensive *on-the-job training* (in international organisations).

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The following are illustrations of Renfer's (1992:175) models of T&I curricula:

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        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │     INTERPRETING EXAMINATION     │
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                        ↑
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │     INTERPRETING CURRICULUM      │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
                        ↑
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │          ADMISSION TEST          │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
                        ↑
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │     TRANSLATION EXAMINATION      │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
                        ↑
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │      TRANSLATION CURRICULUM      │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
                        ↑
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │       ENTRANCE EXAMINATION       │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
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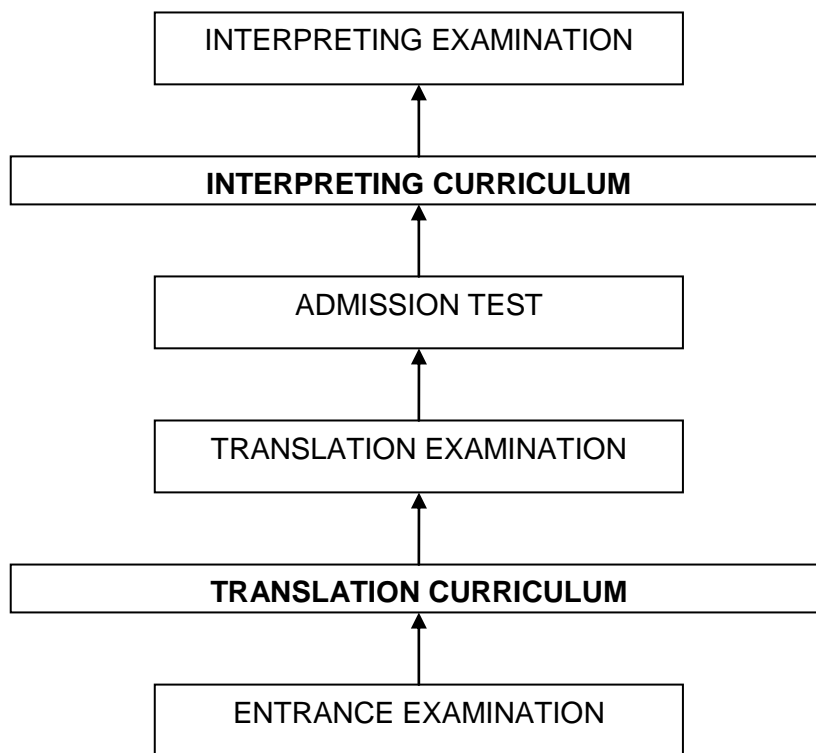
Figure 1: The two-tier approach to translator and interpreter training

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┌──────────────────────────────┬──────────────────────────────┐
│   TRANSLATION EXAMINATION     │    INTERPRETING EXAMINATION   │
└──────────────────────────────┴──────────────────────────────┘
              ↑                                ↑
┌──────────────────────────────┬──────────────────────────────┐
│   TRANSLATION CURRICULUM      │    INTERPRETING CURRICULUM    │
└──────────────────────────────┴──────────────────────────────┘
              ↑                                ↑
         ┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐
         │           ENTRANCE EXAMINATION           │
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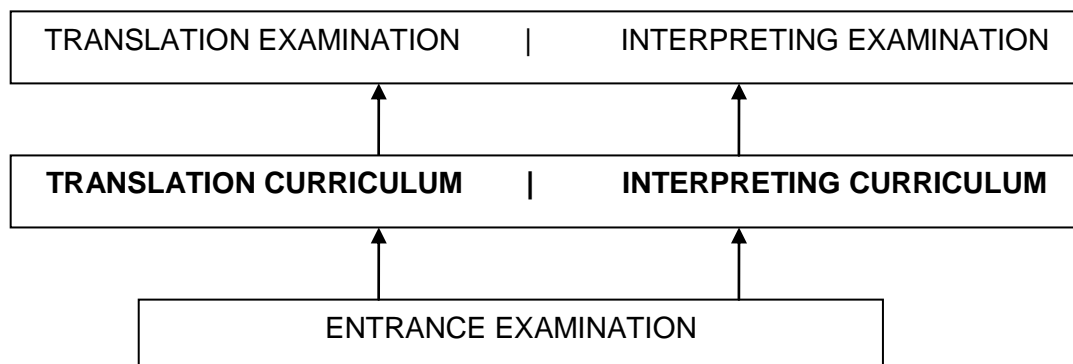
Figure 2: The parallel approach to translator and interpreter training

TRANSLATION EXAMINATION	|	INTERPRETING EXAMINATION

↑ ↑

TRANSLATION CURRICULUM	|	**INTERPRETING CURRICULUM**

↑ ↑

INTERMEDIATE EXAMINATION

↑

COMMON TRUNK

LANGUAGE SKILLS
BACKGROUND LECTURES
TRANSLATION THEORY
PRACTICAL TEXTWORK

↑

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION
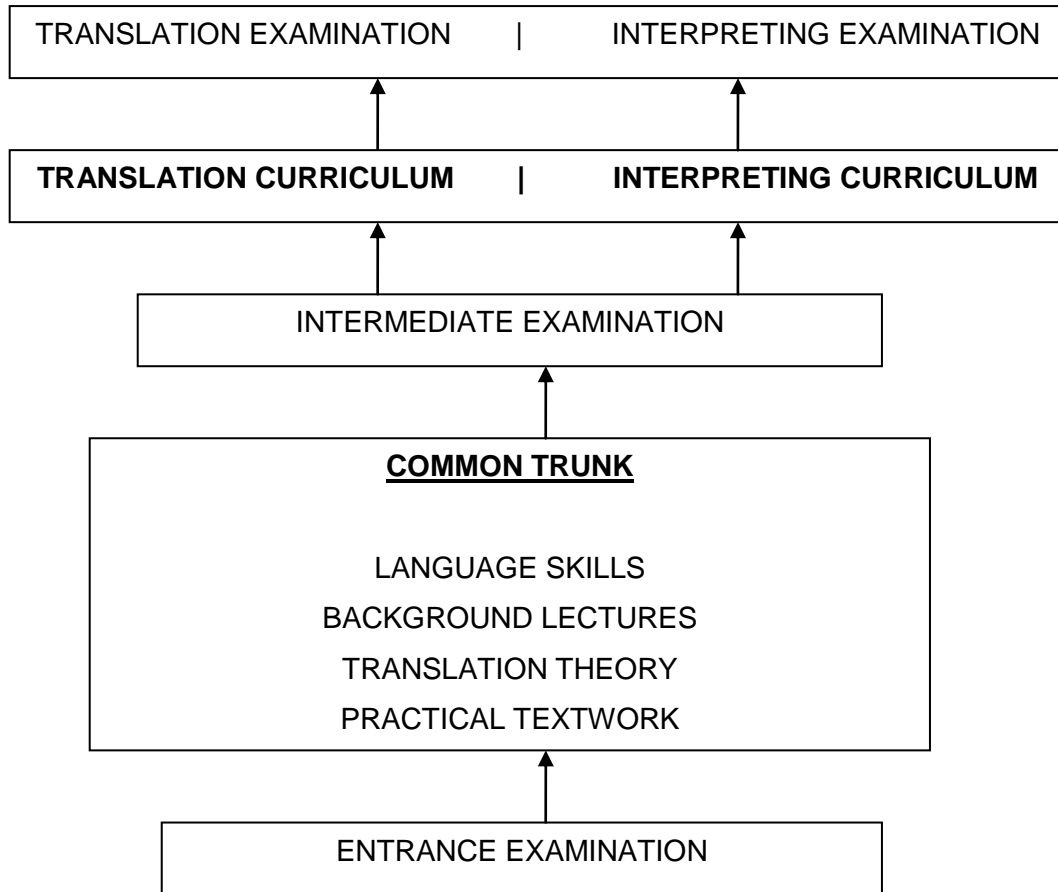
Figure 3: The 'Y-model' of translator and interpreter training

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┌─────────────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  SCHOOL FOR INTERPRETING     │      │      INTERNATIONAL          │
│          (sic)               │      │      ORGANISATION           │
└─────────────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────────────┘

┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  INTERPRETING EXAMINATION    |    END-OF-TRAINING PROGRAM          │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                 ▲
┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  INTERPRETING CURRICULUM      |    ON-THE-JOB TRAINING             │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                 ▲
        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │              ADMISSION TEST                   │
        └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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        │            UNIVERSITY DEGREE                  │
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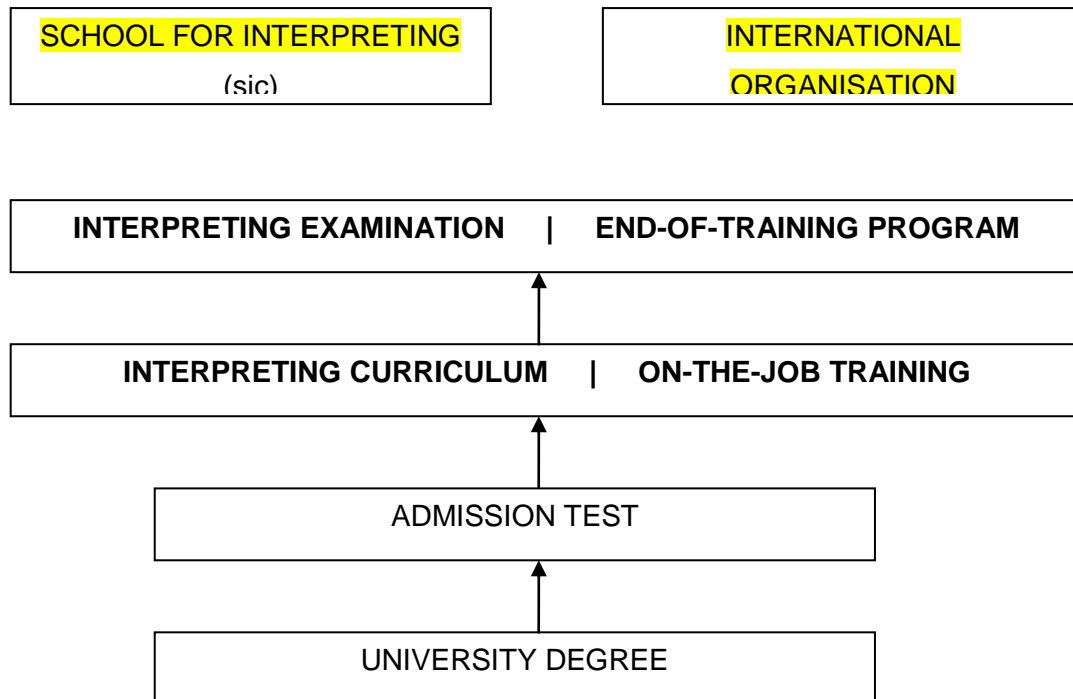
Figure 4: Postgraduate interpreter training (in schools for interpreting or international organisations)

Each model presents different characteristics, as well as advantages and disadvantages depending on the objective pursued by the institution implementing it. However, a common feature that appears in all curricula, irrespective of the model, is the component on practical exercises at some point in the training. To illustrate, below is a description of postgraduate programmes in conference interpreting at various universities around the world, starting in Europe, which is home to the highest number of T&I institutions in the world.

Conference interpreter training in Europe

Heidelberg's University's School of Translation and Interpreting in Germany has been a leading institution in the training of conference interpreters for more than 60 years (University of Heidelberg, 2009) and it currently offers a two-year MA in Conference Interpreting in English, French, Italian, Russian and Spanish, and more recently, Japanese (University of Heidelberg, 2012). Other universities have a similar offering.

Describing the conference interpreting training programme at the University of Vienna, Kurz (2002:67) makes two critical points:

- the academic year consists of two semesters of fourteen weeks each, which means that the biggest language sections (English and French) offer a total of almost 400 hours of interpreting training per year;

- advanced student interpreters at the university occasionally work in a *dummy booth* during UN conferences at the Vienna International Centre. These practice sessions are invaluable as trainees experience a full-day mock conference instead of a two-hour class, during which they practise and are instructed to record such performances and bring the tapes into class for evaluation and critique.

Similarly, in France, the École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) also offers a two-year MA in Conference Interpreting presented through lectures and workshops. The programme focuses on the basics of interpreting in the first year, followed by a professionalization phase (in the second year), during which students undertake an internship in a real conference. During the internship, they practise simultaneous interpreting in mute booths and have to write a report in which they self-reflect on their experience (École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs, s.a., 2012 & 2013).

Still in France, the Masters in Conference Interpreting at the Institut de Management et de Communication Interculturels (ISIT) is a full-time programme spread over two academic years divided into two semesters (consisting of 13 weeks each) (ISIT, 2009). One difference in this programme is that student interpreters have the opportunity to hone their skills through an internship in a company right from the first year. This *on-site* experience (the internship) continues in the second year except that it is doubled by simultaneous interpreting practice in mock conferences, which now take place in an international organisation (Institut de management et de communication interculturels, s.a.).

The Institut de Traducteurs, Interprètes et de Relations Internationales (ITIRI) in Strasbourg is one of the other major T&I institutions in France that offers a two-year Masters in Conference Interpreting in English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Russian and Spanish. The course spans two years during which the first year is dedicated to acquiring the basics of interpreting by means of exercises in reformulation, sight translation, conference organising, note-taking,

consecutive interpreting, liaison interpreting, whispered interpreting, research methodology and translation (ITIRI, 2014). In the second year, especially during the first semester, students perfect their skills in consecutive interpreting with speeches lasting up to seven minutes, as well as in sight translation and simultaneous interpreting. During the second semester, students master their skills in simultaneous interpreting through practice during mock conferences (in interpreting booths at the school) or real conferences (in mute booths at the European Council) (ITIRI, 2014). The MA course at ITIRI offers two other interesting components especially in the second semester:

- first, observation and mute booth practice during which students shadow seasoned interpreters in their daily work, while participating in conferences at various European Union institutions (European Parliament, European Council, European Court of Human Rights) in order to have a better situational experience of interpreters' life (ITIRI, 2014);

- secondly, seminars are offered in deontology and sophrology by professional interpreters, as well as potential clients. During the seminars in deontology, students are introduced to issues such as working conditions of interpreters, remuneration, professional insertion, as well as the AIIC and its work. The module on sophrology on the other hand focuses on educating the students regarding stress management since interpreting is a stress-inducing profession.

In Italy, the two-year MA in Interpreting offered by the University of Bologna is aimed at training students to acquire excellent interpreting skills for conferences in the EU and in the non-institutional market. The degree includes activities aimed at improving skills in Italian and in other languages, acquiring the interpreting techniques which are specific to a chosen sector, acquiring techniques and skills for documentation, writing, editing and revision of texts, as well as analysis of speeches (Università di Bologna, s.a.). Apart from modules on interpreting methods and techniques, Theory of Interpreting, Technique of Interpreting in the students' language combinations and Techniques of Oral Presentation offered in the first year, the programme offers modules in conference interpreting in both directions of a student's language combination, as well as a module in Intercultural Communication (Università di Bologna, s.a.). In addition, and similarly to other European universities, the programme provides for a "100-hour curricular internship to be carried out during

the first or the second year at companies, translation agencies, event organizing bodies, etc., in Italy or abroad" (Università di Bologna, s.a.). Furthermore, "each year, lectures, seminars and workshops are given by lecturers, scholars and professionals coming from Italy and abroad. All these initiatives are hosted by the School of Languages and Literatures, Translation and Interpreting at Forlì and by the Department for Translation and Interpreting. [In addition] since 1992, every year students and lecturers stage an end-of-year theatre performance in the various languages taught: Bulgarian, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak and Spanish. While not part of the standard didactic offer, this theatrical activity has gained importance for its potential in fostering students' linguistic skills and cultural awareness" (Università di Bologna, s.a.).

Lastly, another valuable programme in interpreting was the MA in Conference Interpreting offered by the University of Westminster in the United Kingdom. Established in 1963 (Hof, 2011), the course was offered both part-time (two years) and full-time (one year) and the university was the first school to train interpreters with Irish and Maltese in their language combinations (Hof, 2011). The course offered Chinese, English, French, Italian, Polish and Spanish as languages and included core modules in consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, Public Service Interpreting, and an interpreting project of 12-15 000 words, as well as a thesis of 12-15 000 words (University of Westminster, s.a.). There were also optional modules to complement the core modules: one on EU procedures and perspectives, one on UN procedures and perspectives and another one on intercultural communication. Even though the University of Westminster was "a founding member and the original coordinating institution of the EMCI (European Master's in Conference Interpreting) consortium [a group of 18 universities that cooperate in the postgraduate training of conference interpreters through student and teacher exchanges, resource sharing, videoconferences, and liaison with the EU institutions]" (Hof, 2011), its interpreting training programme which was valued by the "EMCI, AIIC, the EU and the UN in various ways for the quality of its graduates" was closed due to the inability to subsidise the course, following financial deficits generated by the course as a result of the intense amount of resources it required (Hof, 2011).

Conference interpreter training in North America

The Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) in the United States has been offering a Masters-level T&I programme since 1968. The programme, which sees an annual intake of about 100 new students, offers specialisations in Conference Interpreting, T&I, Translation, and Translation and Localisation Management, with eight different languages: Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish (Takeda, 2010:39). The programme is an example of a Y-model of T&I training as it offers all students the same basic training in T&I in the first year, followed by specialised training in the second year according to the students' specialisation. Similarly to the European programmes, students enrolled in conference interpreting at MIIS "regularly [practise] in multilingual conference settings" in order to become "market-ready professionals upon graduation" (Takeda, 2010:39).

Conference interpreter training in the Middle East

In Lebanon, St. Joseph University in Beirut is the only university in the country that offers programmes in interpreting at postgraduate level: a professional MA in interpreting, a research MA in interpreting and a PhD in interpreting, also with Arabic, English and French as languages. Other universities (such as Notre Dame University, Holy Spirit University of Kashik and the University of Balamand) only offer a BA and a diploma in interpreting (Schmit, 2012).

Conference interpreter training in Africa

On the African continent, apart from institutions such as the University of Buea's Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters in Cameroon, which has been offering a programme in translation for more than 20 years, a number of universities (such as the University of Ghana, the Universidade Pedagogica de Mozambique and the University of Nairobi in Kenya) have recently started offering courses in conference interpreting thanks to a partnership with international organisations such as the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the African Development Bank, called the Africa Project (United Nations, s.a.). Thus, the

University of Buea for example now offers a two-year MA in Interpreting, whose aims are to train professional interpreters for the public and the private sectors, and for the international market, as well as to promote research in Interpreting Studies. (University of Buea, s.a.). Thanks to the abovementioned partnership, the University of Ghana also offers a full-time MA in Conference Interpreting over two years (University of Ghana Legon, s.a). In another region of the continent, the University of Khartoum in Sudan also offers an MA, however it is only offered in the discipline of translation with English, Arabic and French (Harris, 1997 and Schmit, 2012).

Nevertheless, some of the oldest and most established courses in interpreting on the continent are the ones offered by the University of the Free State and the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. In the first case, as opposed to an MA focusing specifically on Interpreting, the University of the Free State offers an MA in Language Practice with specialisation in Translation or Interpreting. The MA specialising in Interpreting is offered in either a structured way (coursework and mini-dissertation) or through a dissertation over a two-year period (University of the Free State, 2013:119). In the first year, the course comprises one module in the field of linguistics and one module in research methodology (University of the Free State, 2013:120), as well as specialisation modules such as Interpreting theory, Consecutive and Simultaneous Interpreting, Theoretical approaches in Language Management and the Textual and Linguistic aspects of Translation (University of the Free State, 2013:121). The second year is a specialisation year with modules such as Conference Interpreting, Language Practice: Technical and Literary Translation and Developments in translation theory, as well as a mini-dissertation in the chosen field of specialisation (University of the Free State, 2013:121).

In the case of the University of the Witwatersrand (also referred to as Wits), the institution offers various postgraduate T&I programmes, among which, a Postgraduate Diploma in Interpreting and a BA (Honours) in Interpreting, a coursework MA in Translation (Interpreting option), a Master's degree by dissertation only, and a PhD in Interpreting. The programme is offered in various language combinations, including South African languages (Afrikaans, South African Sign Language and local African official languages) and European languages (including French, German, Portuguese and Spanish), as well as Arabic and Mandarin. As a very good example of Renfer's (1992:175) two-tier T&I system, in the first year of the MA programme in Interpreting, students undertake translation modules alongside the

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conference interpreting modules. The latter being very practical, they are taught as intensive short courses by AIIC trainers, and are credit-bearing towards the BA (Honours) or MA in Interpreting. Still in the first year, long consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting are covered, as well as Interpreting Studies. In the second year of the MA, students focus on simultaneous interpreting practical training, professional language enhancement and advanced interpreting methodology, while completing a mini-dissertation. In addition to such in-class training, and as is done in most European T&I institutions, Wits students have the opportunity to gain some practical work experience by working for WITSTranslate, the University's professional translation and interpreting agency, when clients request the services of student interpreters rather than professionals.

Lastly, the MA Applied Language Studies (option: Translation and Interpreting) offered by the University of Pretoria, is a postgraduate programme that offers T&I courses in parallel, with an emphasis on translation courses in the early stages of the programme. Thus, the programme offers the modules Human Language Technology in Translation, Advanced Professional Translation and Introduction to Interpreting followed by intensive modules in Consecutive Interpreting and Simultaneous Interpreting. The programme also includes a mini-dissertation whose aim is to enhance the students' theoretical knowledge while equipping them with the basic research capabilities they might need later in the discipline of Interpreting Studies. Similarly to the University of the Witwatersrand, the course is offered to students with various language combinations, including South Africa's eleven official languages, as well as Arabic, French, German and other languages.

Also worth mentioning is the North-West University whose distinguishing feature is to offer classroom interpreting services in three languages (Afrikaans, English and Setswana) to accommodate students with different language needs. The services, which were previously rendered by graduates and lecturers, are now rendered by professional interpreters (as part of their training in the educational interpreting service) in certain modules offered by the university, and are offered to other universities in South Africa (North-West University, 2013). In terms of academics, the North-West University offers a BA (Honours) in T&I, an MA in Applied Language Studies and an MA in Language Practice (dissertation) (North-West University, 2013).

ii.   Training approaches: are interpreters born or made?

While the existence of various T&I curricula with different components is a testimony to the evolution of conference interpreter training, producing quality interpreters is ultimately the focus point of such training. One contentious discussion point in the interpreting community is however, the extent to which conference interpreters are born or made (Russo & Pippa, 2004:409-410). It is however acknowledged that candidates for conference interpreter training programmes should have a wide general knowledge and interests, a profound knowledge of their active and passive languages and cultures, the ability to grasp the original meaning quickly and to convey the essential meaning of what is being said, the ability to project information with confidence and with a good voice, and, finally, the ability to work as a member of a team (Gerver et al. 1984 and Lambert 1992). Those characteristics, albeit necessary, are not sufficient for the actual practice of interpreting which requires some flexibility both linguistically and otherwise. Thus, Moser-Mercer (2008:8) argues that the *routine expertise* (the ability to solve familiar problem) which training programmes tend to focus on, requires a change into an *adaptive expertise* (the ability to adapt) (Tipton, 2003:45). According to her, "adaptive experts are considered able to perform tasks efficiently [and] at a higher level" but this can be done mainly through "learning environments that foster metacognitive learning [hence self- and peer-assessment]" (Moser-Mercer, 2008:8 & 14 in Tipton, 2003:45-46). Such observation has led T&I institutions to adapt their training programmes in order to fulfil their goals of training quality interpreters.

Adapting the training programmes refers to the use of various methods by conference interpreter trainers, which, apart from the usual training based on improving linguistic skills before moving on to specialised training (cf. 2.2.3), now include other methods that have been explored and documented by *practisearchers* as Gile (1994:151) refers to:

-   as far as training is concerned, Viaggio (1997:15) reckons that the interpreter, as mediator, must be a *language virtuoso*, must be flexible in using various language registers and must be able "to write or speak as a lawyer, as a diplomat, as a technical expert - even as a refugee". He therefore argues that training should aim at building the future practitioner's knowledge in such

areas as language, culture, encyclopaedic knowledge, communication and translation theory (Viaggio, 1997:14-15);

- Russo (2011) on the other hand discusses issues pertaining to interpreter selection in T&I schools. She focuses on qualities that indicate an aptitude in prospective interpreters, how such qualities can be measured, as well as the types of aptitude tests that can be designed to measure such qualities. Thus, in an earlier study on aptitude for interpreting, Russo & Pippa (2004) discussed the development of an aptitude test by having students from the Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori (SSLMIT) of Trieste perform an exercise of simultaneous paraphrasing. The results of the study were that "the linguistic and cognitive abilities considered as predictors of interpreting skills have a direct and positive incidence on students' subsequent academic results (school efficiency)" (Russo & Pippa, 2004:422) and that "the model and the criteria suggested to evaluate interpreting aptitude by means of paraphrasing can offer a reliable operational tool to assess interpreting candidates' chances of success/failure from the linguistic and cognitive viewpoint" (Russo & Pippa, 2004:424);

- while also focusing on aptitude testing, Arjona-Tseng (1994:69-86) goes a step further by suggesting a different approach altogether: in her study of a psychometric approach used for the selection of T&I students at the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation Studies in Taiwan, Arjona-Tseng (1994:69) argues that "the literature on existing Translation and Interpreting screening examinations generally focuses on descriptions of test structures and the types of mistakes the examinees make" but that it is important to have a "literature that addresses rater-training issues, decision-making rules, reliability and validity issues, scaling, scoring, and test-equating procedures". Her argument is that, by having a number of procedures that ensure all constructs used in the selection tests are valid, a psychometrically-based approach to student selection enables conference interpreter trainers to evaluate whether they are indeed "achieving [the] stated objective of identifying trainable students" (Arjona-Tseng, 1994:83-84). The importance of aptitude testing in T&I is thus two-fold: first, it must be based on sound, professional practice and must be designed so that "subsequent analyses and test data interpretations can provide reliable information about results"

(Arjona-Tseng, 1994:84); this, in turn will enable trainers to identify suitable candidates for T&I programmes (Arjona-Tseng, 1994:85);

- the *social constructivist* approach has been advocated by Kiraly (2000) and prescribes a training that shifts the focus from trainer to trainee by including the latter's input on their training so as to make them more aware of their role in the communication process that is interpreting;

- the last approach to conference interpreter training seems to be increasingly advocated following the new, emerging needs brought about by a globalised world. This approach focuses on the use of mock conferences during conference interpreter training as a means of supplementing the existing practical exercises in a training programme. Indeed, De Laet (2010:253), much like the researcher, argues that while many western T&I institutions (particularly the European universities whose countries are signatories to the Bologna Accords which aim to harmonise education across European countries) offer components such as internships in companies or opportunities to practise in dummy booths in international organisations as part of their courses, this experience in real conference environments is unfortunately insufficient. De Laet (2010:251 & 253) makes the case for implementing mock conferences in interpreting programmes by arguing that "interpreting practice for students in real professional environment is often insufficient […] Mock conferences in the final semester of the curriculum might help the interpreter trainee to acquire enough self-confidence and personal autonomy, sufficient skilfulness and expertise [as, in such a conference] all disciplines of interpreting skills as well as all techniques can be combined". For the scholar, the importance and effectiveness of mock conferences in an interpreting programme revolves around various issues:

  o *frequency*: to simulate a professional life successfully, mock conferences (of different types and with different speakers) should be organised every week during the final semester of a training programme (De Laet, 2010:254);

  o *content assembling*: "the architecture of a mock conference has to be the result of trainers' teamwork. In the end, teachers are responsible for the choice of the conference topic and all related documents that will be used". To that end, "priority elements should be authenticity

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and coherence, but other pedagogical reflections have to be taken into consideration: gender discourse, duration of speech/exercise, duration of pauses, speech rate, use of illustrations and PowerPoint, audio and/or video clips, virtual names of speakers, special effects" (De Laet, 2010:255);

- o *students' preparation*: students need to be informed preferably a week in advance so as to be able to prepare thoroughly (De Laet, 2010:256);

- o *analysis of the conference programme*; and

- o *briefing and knowledge/memory training*: "the briefing has to provide useful elements that help students organise their preparation, and store and share content and knowledge". In addition, the lack of memory training does not consolidate knowledge gathering through reading. It is thus important to encourage students to find mind maps, pictures, graphics so as to remedy this shortcoming (De Laet, 2010:257).

In conclusion, while it appears that different strategies and methods can be used for conference interpreter training, the end result is that whatever the strategy used, students will have to have undergone training that prepared them for real-life professional conference interpreting. All training methods, including aptitude testing, strive to achieve that objective, although their emphasis is upstream of the training value chain (selection of candidates). On the other hand, thanks to its advocacy of trainee-centred training, the social constructivist approach to conference interpreter training focuses more on the training downstream (the actual training). In that regard, the use of mock conferences remains the most convincing method for conference interpreter training.

2.3. Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, research in conference interpreting presents multiple opportunities particularly as regards conference interpreter training. While analysing the available literature on such training, the discussion therefore focused on specific elements such as an analysis of various training models used in South Africa and in other countries or institutions, norms, approaches to training, etc., while

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making the case for a contextualised approach to the training of interpreters, the practical application of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the research methodology used for the study. Various elements are discussed, namely, the research design, the research instruments, the data collection process used, as well as the ethical aspects of the study.

3.2. Research design

The research design is defined as "the overall strategy [chosen] to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way", thereby, ensuring the research problem will be effectively addressed (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). It is, in other words, the blueprint for the collection, the measurement and analysis of data, as determined by the research problem (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). According to Burns & Grove (2001:223), the research design enables the researcher "to plan and implement the study in a way that will help them obtain the intended results, thus increasing the chances of obtaining information that could be associated with the real situation".

In the present study, the researcher made use of a qualitative research design to test the effectiveness of mock conferences in the training of conference interpreters at postgraduate level. This was achieved by using an MUN Interfaculty conference as a case study to provide the framework for the collection of the data.

3.2.1. Qualitative research

Qualitative research aims to understand experience from the perspectives of the study population it involves, that is, as nearly as possible as the study participants feel it or live it (Sherman & Webb, 1988:7 and Mack, N. et al., 2005:1). In doing so, qualitative researchers make use of natural settings to conduct their study (Ritchie & Lewis 2003:2). Thus, this study made student interpreters perform SI during an MUN conference and analysed their performance based on the same student interpreters'

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self-evaluation as well as the delegates' (who were users of simultaneous interpreting) evaluation of the student interpreters.

3.2.2. Characteristics of qualitative research

The following are some of the major characteristics of qualitative research according to Patton (2002:40-41):

- a *naturalistic enquiry*: real-world situations are studied as they unfold naturally without any controlled interference (Patton, 2002:40);
- *purposeful sampling*: the sample units are chosen because they present certain informative characteristics. Their selection, therefore, has a purpose: to enable a better and insightful understanding of the various aspects of the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002:40);
- as opposed to mere facts and figures, the qualitative data that is obtained is very *textual* (audiotapes, videotapes, field notes, maps, diagrams) and is full of information, descriptions, personal perspectives and experiences (Mack, N. et al., 2005:3);
- *personal experience and engagement*: as one of the analytical objectives of such a research is to describe individual experiences (Patton, 2002:40), the researcher's experiences, insights and direct contact with the study population are part of the enquiry and play a major role in understanding the phenomenon;
- *context sensitivity*: the findings of the study are highly linked to the context in which the study took place: the time, place and/or social environment (Patton, 2002:41);
- *voice, perspective and reflexivity*: in qualitative research, "complete objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity undermining credibility, the researcher's focus becomes balance — understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness" (Patton, 2002: 41).

3.3. Research setting

By setting, one refers to the environment in which both the study is conducted and the data is collected (Fern, 2001:49). In the present case, the choice of the setting was important to ensure that the data collected was reliable. The data was collected during the Model United Nations Interfaculty Conference that took place at the University of Pretoria in October 2013. Additional data that stemmed from discussions with the student interpreters and the lecturers was collected directly before, during and after the conference.

3.4. Research population and sample

In a study such as the present one, data is obtained from a group of persons which present particular characteristics or which meet specific requirements/criteria of interest to the researcher (Koerber, 2008). This small group is referred to as the *sample* because it is a subgroup of the research population which is defined by Polit & Hungler (1999:43, 232) as "the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the entire group of persons that is of interest to the researcher and to whom the research results can be generalised".

3.4.1. Population

The study population for the study included postgraduate students enrolled for their MA Applied Language Studies (option: Translation and Interpreting) at the University of Pretoria, delegates who participated in the MUN conference, and lecturers in T&I.

3.4.2. Sample

The study participants were selected by means of a purposeful sampling method because they needed to have certain features and characteristics determined by the researcher (cf. 1.5.4, Koerber 2008 and Learning Domain, s.a:11). In the case of student interpreters, the criteria for choosing them were based on Ritchie & Lewis (2003:78) according to whom "the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and

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understanding off the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study". Thus, the student interpreters had to be enrolled for a postgraduate degree in T&I at the University of Pretoria and they had to have had at least a few hours' experience in simultaneous interpreting acquired either in class or professionally.

In the case of delegates, they simply needed to be active participants during the MUN conference and make use of the simultaneous interpreting services offered by the student interpreters.

i.   Characteristics of non-probability purposive sampling

The following characteristics of non-probability purposive sampling determined its choice as a sampling method:

- it has two main purposes: "the first is to ensure that all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered. The second is to ensure that, within each of the key criteria, some diversity is included so that the impact of the characteristic concerned can be explored" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:79);
- study participants needed to have certain features to be included in the sample;
- only a limited number of relevant groups are available.

3.5. Data collection

The objective of this study was to test whether an MUN conference was useful in the training of student interpreters in SI. To achieve this objective, the researcher needed to obtain data which Polit & Hungler (1999:267) define as "information obtained during the course of an investigation or study". In accordance with this definition, as well as the qualitative nature of the study, to obtain the data needed to verify the hypothesis, the researcher approached the UNA-SA (Pretoria) to allow postgraduate student interpreters at the University of Pretoria to perform SI during one of the UNA-SA's MUN conferences. All study participants indicated their willingness to participate by signing an information letter about the study, a consent form and a questionnaire. Following the study, which took place during the MUN Interfaculty conference and in which seven delegates and three student interpreters participated, the researcher proceeded to analyse the data collected.

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3.5.1. Research instruments

By data collection instrument, one refers to the device(s) used to collect data (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Two data collection instruments were used in the course of the study, namely questionnaires and observation:

- according to Polit & Hungler (1997:466), a questionnaire is "a method of gathering information from respondents about attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and feelings". In this case, questionnaires were used to gather information from both conference delegates and student interpreters. Delegates' questionnaires were designed to gather information about delegates' knowledge of interpreting and interpreter training and their evaluation of the student interpreters' performance. Student interpreters' questionnaires, on the other hand, were designed to gather information about the latter's status in professional conference interpreting (language combinations, experience), their opinion about interpreter training and their self-evaluation of their respective performances;

- observation on the other hand refers to "the technique of obtaining data through direct contact with a person or group of persons. Since the main focus of qualitative research is naturalism, the researcher has to observe person or persons in their natural state as undisturbed as possible" (Learning Domain, s.a:3). In this study, participant observation was used by the researcher to obtain an "outsider's" perspective on student interpreters' performance and compare the results thereof with those from the questionnaires. The observation notes taken by the researcher were used to either validate or refute the data obtained via the questionnaires and to provide additional information that the questionnaires were unable to gather.

i.   Characteristics of questionnaires

According to Brink & Wood (1998:293-298), questionnaires present the following characteristics:

- as opposed to interviews, which require more time and expenses from the researcher, questionnaires are faster and less expensive;

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- the anonymity of respondents is better ensured as questionnaires do not require the respondents to indicate their contact details and personal particulars;
- questionnaires allow a wide range of data to be collected within a short period of time because the questions are the same for all respondents.

ii. Development of the questionnaires

In the literature review, it was indicated that a number of factors shaped simultaneous interpreter training at T&I institutions around the world: as simultaneous interpreting is a profession based on practice, ultimate performance can only be achieved when the individual (the student interpreter in this case) has been required to perform a number of exercises during which he/she applies the various SI skills they are taught in class. In addition, SI being also the result of human and social interaction, taking into account trainees' perspective on their own training can help achieve the ultimate goal of producing professional conference interpreters. This, however, is not as effective as putting the trainee in a setting that closely resembles the real environment; thus a training approach which takes into account the context of simultaneous interpreting is of the utmost importance.

In light of this, the questionnaires were developed with the objective to record data that could allow various variables (such as norms and context) to be measured. Two types of questionnaires were designed to accommodate the various study participants: one for conference delegates and one for student interpreters. The questionnaires were designed in such a way that there would be a correlation between the answers provided by conference delegates about student interpreters' performance and the student interpreters' answers about their own performance. As a result, the questionnaires included questions on the respondents' linguistic and professional background, their knowledge of and opinion on simultaneous interpreting and conference interpreter training in general, and the evaluation of the student interpreters' performance during the MUN conference. To make the questionnaires more satisfactory, the research supervisor suggested adding questions on the student's view about the impact a lecturer's presence could have on their performance, as well as the degree to which they applied norms during their performance.

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The questionnaires were developed mainly by the researcher, who is a conference interpreter and a student in the MA programme, with suggestions and feedback from the research supervisor, who is a lecturer in conference interpreting, as well as a professional interpreter. As regards the other research instruments, the observation was done by the researcher and all notes were personal. The feedback from lecturers was made through an open discussion with each lecturer involved.

iii.   Structure of the questionnaires

There were two different questionnaires administered: one for conference delegates and one for student interpreters. The questionnaire for conference delegates comprised 12 questions in total, both open-ended and closed-ended to determine delegates' perceptions of SI in general and the SI provided by student interpreters in particular. It was structured as follows:
- questions 1 and 2 focused on the delegates' linguistic background;
- questions 3, 4 and 5 focused on delegates' knowledge and perception of conference interpreting in general;
- questions 6 to 11 focused on the delegates' evaluation of the student interpreters' performance,
- question 12 was completely open-ended and requested delegates' additional comments on the study;

The questionnaire for student interpreters comprised 19 questions both open and closed-ended. It was structured as follows:
- questions 1, 2, 6 and 7 focused on the student interpreters' linguistic background and languages during the conference;
- questions 3, 4, 5 and 8 focused on the student interpreters' experience in conference interpreting in class or professionally;
- questions 9 to 18 focused on the student interpreters' self-evaluation;
- question 19 was completely open-ended and requested the student interpreters to make any additional comments on the study.

3.5.2. Reliability of the research instruments

By reliability, one refers to "the consistency of a measure. That is, the tendency to obtain the same results if the measure was to be repeated by using the same subjects under the same conditions" (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005:78). This means that a study is deemed reliable when it yields the same results when replicated using the same characteristics: same method, setting, etc. To ensure the reliability of the present study, the questionnaires that were originally developed by the researcher, were re-developed following suggestions from the researcher's supervisor and programme manager. The modifications implemented were predominantly based on Gile's *effort models* as well as Arjona-Tseng's (1994:71-78) *psychometric approach* to the selection of translation and interpreting students. The objectives were to obtain more data on delegates' knowledge of conference interpreting, as well as more precise information on the knowledge of and reflection on Gile's *effort models* on the student interpreters' performance.

3.5.3. Validity of the research instruments

In addition to reliability, qualitative research emphasises the validity (both internal and external) of a study, that is, whether the data collected is "plausible, credible and reliable, and can be defended when challenged" (Learning Domain, s.a:15-16).

i. External validity

"External validity is defined as the extent to which the findings of a study may be generalised to another setting or another group of people" (Learning Domain, s.a:16). In the present case, the study can indeed be conducted with another population sample (such as consecutive interpreters) and in another setting (such as a technical workshop). In terms of replicability, the study can *a priori* be replicated, provided the same methodology is used to select the setting and the study participants. Nevertheless, the findings of the study, although based on valid data, and albeit the study itself meeting certain conditions such as applicability, context dependence and replicability (Learning Domain, s.a:16), cannot be directly generalised to another setting or another group of respondents especially because of the small sample used.

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To illustrate this argument, Hale & Napier (2013:167-168) explain that "in experimental research, external validity can be increased with appropriate sampling procedures […], ideally using a random sample so that each member of the population being studied has an equal and independent chance of being selected. In reality though with Interpreting research, this is not always possible or practical, so non-random sampling is more likely to be used by calling for volunteers to participate in a study. Even if using non-random sampling, the goal would be to have a sufficiently large enough sample so that true differences between the control group and the experimental groups could be more probable. Small sample sizes mean that the results could be questionable, as differences between groups could be coincidental". In order to increase the possibility of generalisation, as well as the external validity of the study, the research design would therefore need to emphasise the non-probability sampling method through an increased number of respondents.

ii.   Internal validity

The internal validity of the study was ensured by adopting the following strategies identified by Learning Domain (s.a:17):
- triangulation (both questionnaires and observation were used);
- a long period of time (the conference lasted four hours);
- reflexivity: in order to reduce the likelihood of bias from the researcher, the latter audio- and video-recorded the performance of the student interpreters;
- audit trail: the researcher kept detailed and accurate records of the work undertaken during the course of the study. These included a bibliography of sources consulted, copies of questionnaires, as well as audio and video files of the recordings.

iii.   Triangulation

According to Golafshani (2003:603) who cites Patton (2001:247), "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches". The overall objective for doing so is to maximise the validity and reliability of the study. There are three types of triangulation: methods triangulation, investigator

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triangulation and theory triangulation. This study used the methods triangulation, which involved using both questionnaires filled in by study participants and observation by the researcher. The various sets of data obtained from the two research instruments were compared during the data analysis process.

3.6. Background on the conference

3.6.1. Logistics (date, time, venue)

The setting used for the study was the Model United Nations Interfaculty Conference organized by the Pretoria Chapter of the United Nations Association of South Africa (UNA-SA Pretoria). The conference took place on 19 October 2013 from 08:00 to 12:00 in Room 2-64 of the University of Pretoria's Postgraduate Centre.

3.6.2. Other (topic, format, number of participants)

The conference, whose topic was *Roma: Demanding Equality and Human Rights*, was modelled on the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. It was divided into six parts: one plenary session for the opening speeches, two sessions of formal caucusing, one session of informal caucusing, one plenary session for the reading of and the voting on the draft resolution and one plenary session for the closing speeches.

In total, 15 participants took part in the study, with 13 participants present at the conference, and two added later. The participants were as follows: seven delegates, three student interpreters (two active and one who acted as observer/conference delegate), three lecturers (one present at the conference) and two conference delegate-observers. Two other participants (the chairperson and co-chairperson) were present at the conference but did not take part in the study. All participants filled in both consent forms and questionnaires.

3.6.3. Documentation

Prior to the conference the researcher established and maintained communication with the UNA-SA (Pretoria) in order to discuss the logistics involved in making the study a success. This entailed obtaining information to be used by delegates during

the conference. This information was considered the preparation documentation for the student interpreters and consisted in the topic pack of the conference, which included a background to the issue to be discussed. The preparation documentation was sent to the student interpreters three (3) days before the conference.

There were no additional documents available as speeches were only finalised (opening speeches) or even written (closing speeches) on the day of the conference. In addition, the resolution document (final document of the conference) was available in electronic format only after being finalised a few minutes before the end of the conference; it was thus not available to the student interpreters.

3.6.4. Speeches

The exercise consisted of performing simultaneous interpreting of both prepared and unprepared speeches of various lengths. Prepared speeches were those written on paper and made by delegates during the opening and closing sessions of the conference. They lasted up to a maximum of two minutes (during the first session of the conference) and a maximum of one and a half minutes (during the last session of the conference). Unprepared speeches were speeches of a maximum length of one minute made during the formal caucusing sessions. They were made by delegates in an "impromptu" style (i.e. they were made without preparation, a pre-determined structure or in response to a previous speaker/statement).

As the speeches were prepared mostly during the conference, they were not transcribed. However, the interpreted versions of the speeches (in the student interpreters' target languages) were recorded in audio files. Unfortunately the audio recording equipment was basic (only a Dictaphone) and thus there was no possibility to have a dual-track recording.

The student interpreters performed simultaneous interpreting during four (4) sessions of the conference: the two sessions of formal caucusing, the plenary session for the reading of and the voting on the draft resolution and the plenary session for the closing speeches. They did not interpret the opening speeches of the plenary session as they used the session to prepare for the remaining of the proceedings; neither did they interpret during the informal caucus session as the latter involved direct negotiations among delegates.

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3.6.5. Languages

The working language of the conference was English and the simultaneous interpreting was done from English (source language) into two languages: Arabic and French (target languages). Other languages were understood and/or spoken by both delegates and student interpreters but were not used in the proceedings.

The following table shows all languages present at the conference, as well as the number of speakers of those languages (in brackets).

	A Language (mother tongue)	B Language	Other
Student Interpreters	Afrikaans (1) Arabic (1) English (1)	French (1)	-
Conference Delegates (including conference delegate-observers and student interpreter-observer)	Afrikaans (1) Amharic (1) English (3) Portuguese (1) Shona (1) Swahili (1) Urdu (1)	-	Afrikaans (2) English (7) French (2) German (2) Shona (1) Sotho (1)

Table 1.1: Languages present at the MUN Interfaculty Conference 2013

3.7. Background on student interpreters
3.7.1. Number

Despite a good pool of student interpreters enrolled for the MA Applied Language Studies (option: Translation and Interpreting) at the University of Pretoria, only three student interpreters took part in the conference (among whom, two performed SI). The other student interpreters were unavailable due to various personal reasons. The student interpreters who participated in the conference are as follows:
- Student Interpreter 1 is a final-year MA student;

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- Student Interpreter 2 and 3 are both first-year MA students, however, at the suggestion of the lecturer in conference interpreting, Student Interpreter 3 participated as a conference delegate because she did not have experience in simultaneous interpreting.

3.7.2. Language combinations

Student Interpreter's 1 language combination is Afrikaans (A), English (A) and French (B).
Student Interpreter's 2 language combination is Arabic (A) and English (B).

3.7.3. Experience

The student interpreters had various degrees of experience prior to the study. To *Question 5* (*How much professional experience do you have in SI?*) Student Interpreter 1 answered "about 4 years" and Student Interpreter 2 answered "10 years". Prior to that question, however, they were asked how much in-class experience they had in simultaneous interpreting, to which Student Interpreter 1 answered "56 hours" and Student Interpreter 2 answered "none yet". Furthermore, in terms of the period of enrolment in the University of Pretoria' programme, Student Interpreter 1 indicated three years while Student Interpreter 2 indicated one year.

One additional piece of information required from the student interpreters was their experience in relay interpreting. As indicated on their questionnaires, only one of the student interpreters had undertaken relay interpreting before the study but none of them had ever been a *pivot* (interpreters from which relay interpreting is done).

3.8. Background on lecturers

The lecturer in conference interpreting indicated that she had been a professional conference interpreter since 1994 and is currently a member of AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence) with German and English as her A languages (active languages into which she can interpret) and Afrikaans and French as her C languages (passive languages from which she can interpret). In addition to her professional experience, she taught conference interpreting between 1995 and

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1999 at the University of the Witwatersrand and has been teaching since 2012 at the University of Pretoria.

The second lecturer involved in the study is a professional translator and editor with Afrikaans, Dutch and English in her language combination. She is the current Programme Manager of the MA Applied Language Studies (option: Translation and Interpreting) at the University of Pretoria.

The third lecturer involved in the study is the researcher's supervisor, a professional conference interpreter and researcher currently managing the BA (Honours) and MA interpreting courses at the University of the Witwatersrand. She did not take part in the conference itself but provided guidelines to the researcher in preparation for the conference and throughout the study.

3.9. Equipment

For the SI needs, permission was requested from and granted by the University of Pretoria's Department of Modern European Languages to use the *bidule* (mobile interpreting equipment). Due to its low battery level on the day of the conference, the equipment was left to charge during the first session of the conference but it functioned perfectly throughout the rest of the study.

The setup was the following: each speaker was required to wear one of the earpiece microphones set on one channel (Channel 2) while the student interpreter wore a headphone set on the same channel as the speaker's microphone (Channel 2). While receiving the speaker's message, the student interpreter spoke in his own microphone set on one channel (Channel 1), his message being transmitted to the other conference delegates' headphones set on the same channel (Channel 1).

In terms of recording equipment, one Nikon D3100 camera was used to videotape the proceedings while an Olympus Dictaphone was used to record the student interpreters.

3.10.   Data reporting and analysis

The process of data analysis and reporting evolved in two stages:
- firstly, the basic information pertaining to the conference was recorded and presented in the present chapter. This information included the date of the

conference, the venue, the topic, the number of delegates, the number of student interpreters, their language combinations, their experience, the languages spoken, the length of speeches, etc. In addition to that information, answers provided by all study participants in their respective questionnaires, followed by an analysis thereof, were published in a final report which constitutes the basis for the following chapter;

- following the abovementioned, the different sets of data gathered were compared to one another and analysed using the *constant comparative analysis* method developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967). As Thorne (2000:69) explains, this method involves "taking one piece of data […] and comparing it with all others that may be similar or different in order to develop conceptualisations of the possible relations between various pieces of data". In the present case, three sets of data were obtained from the study: answers to the questionnaires by student interpreters, answers by the conference delegates, lecturers and observers, and observation notes by the researcher. By comparing those sets of data with one another, not only was the researcher able to provide a more balanced and unbiased analysis of the findings but was also able to attain the research objectives by asking analytical questions like: why is this different from that? How are these two related? (Thorne, 2000:69). The objective was to find similarities or differences by counterbalancing the possible self-bias of the student interpreters, as well as to possibly provide additional perspectives that might not have been thought of by conference delegates during their evaluation of the student interpreters.

3.11. Ethical considerations

Due to the use of human beings as study participants, the study was subject to certain ethical considerations as far as the rights of those individuals, as well as those of the University of Pretoria were concerned.

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3.11.1. Permissions to conduct the study

Prior to the study, the researcher requested various permissions to conduct the study from all stakeholders involved. Thus, permission was sought and obtained from the University's Department of Modern European Languages to use the *bidule*. Permission was also requested and granted from the UNA-SA (Pretoria) to use the MUN Interfaculty conference as a study setting. In addition, the researcher also informed all study participants about the study and requested their permission to partake in the study by means of consent forms that they signed.

3.11.2. Principles of research ethics

The study observed universally-accepted principles of research ethics (as set out in the 1979 Belmont Report on ethical principles and guidelines for research involving human subjects), as well as those developed specifically in the University of Pretoria's *Code of Ethics for Research*. The principles are discussed below.

i.   Respect for persons

"Respect for persons requires a commitment from the researcher to respect the dignity of all research participants, that is, their autonomy and where the latter may be diminished, to ensure that their vulnerability is not exploited" (Mack, N. et al., 2005). This principle requires from the researcher the assurance that research participants' right to privacy is respected through their willing participation in the study, as well as the confidentiality of their answers (University of Pretoria, s.a).

Participants' willing participation was obtained through a two-step process:
- firstly, the researcher fully disclosed all elements of the study by informing all participants about the study, its nature, as well as the participants' right to partake in it, to refuse to do so or to withdraw from it;
- following that, the participants were provided with consent forms (containing the same information previously given by the researcher) in order to give their individual consent. Each participant filled in a consent form at the beginning of the study before filling in their questionnaires. The consent forms were attached to the questionnaires, in order to ensure that no form went missing

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and that each respondent who had filled in a questionnaire had effectively given their consent. However, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were maintained as no names were mentioned in the final report and the participants were referred to by labels such as *Student Interpreter 1*.

ii. Beneficence

The principle of beneficence requires that the researcher attempt to maximise the benefits that accrue to research participants (Mack, N. et al., 2005) but also protect the latter against "foreseeable physical, psychological or social harm or suffering that may be experienced in the course, or as a result, of research" (University of Pretoria, s.a: 24). In the present case, the researcher did not foresee any harm that could arise from the study; on the contrary, as he explained before the study, the latter would provide research participants with an opportunity to see what SI was and how it was performed in a natural and professional environment. Consequently, during the course of the study, delegates completing the questionnaires and being observed did not report having experienced any physical or psychological harm, nor did student interpreters. However, the latter experienced some slight discomfort at the thought of being observed and evaluated by delegates.

To prevent any difficulty, the researcher included his contact details (telephone number and email address) in the consent form should the study participants have wished to contact him in order to obtain more information about the study. In addition, the researcher explained that the results of the study would be available to any participant should they wish to obtain them.

3.12. Conclusion

The above chapter discussed amongst other things the various elements included in the study's research methodology such as the research design, the study population, the research instruments and the data collection process used. In discussing such elements, the objective is to set the scene for an in-depth discussion of the results of the study in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Analysing simultaneous interpreting practice during an MUN conference: findings and recommendations

4.1. Introduction

In the previous pages, it was observed that analysing the practice of simultaneous interpreting during a mock conference was a suitable way to evaluate the usefulness of such a training method. Although well-argued, such discussion required a more practical implementation as part of empirical research, in order to determine the validity and reliability of the study. This chapter is a report on the study undertaken to examine the relevance of the assumption expressed above.

4.2. Results of the study
4.2.1. Feedback from student interpreters

Following the stage set by the first set of answers aimed at obtaining information from the student interpreters about their language combinations and experience (cf. 3.7.2 and 3.7.3), this section focuses on the second part of the student interpreters' questionnaires (template available in Annexure B). The questions asked were formulated in such a way as to first obtain information about the students' preparation for the conference (*Questions 9, 10* and *11*) followed by their evaluation of the conference. The following is a summary of the answers given by the respondents:

- *Question 9: Did you prepare for the conference?* Student Interpreter 1 indicated not having prepared for the conference due to a "lack of time in [his] personal schedule". Student Interpreter 2 on the other hand misunderstood the question as asking him about his usual preparation for a conference. He thus indicated that he usually prepares by doing some quick research about the topic and finding out about the keywords, terminology and acronyms;
- to *Question 10 (Did you receive the preparation documents before the conference? If yes, how long before?)*, Student Interpreter 1 indicated that he received the preparation documents three days prior to the conference. Once

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again, Student Interpreter 2 misunderstood the question by answering that it differed according to the organisers;

- *Question 11: What do you think is the most important aspect of a successful interpretation assignment?* To this question, both student interpreters indicated that they agreed more or less with the options they were given, however, they strongly agreed that fluency in the languages of the conference, voice clarity and a continuous response in the ear of the listener were of the utmost importance;

- to *Question 12,* both student interpreters agreed on three things: that the preparation documents and the practical exercises undertaken in class helped in preparing for the conference, and that the conference was appropriate as a live interpreting exercise. However, they also disagreed on some elements such as the fact that delegates made proper use of the interpreting services and adapted their speaking patterns to accommodate the interpreters;

- *Question 13: What kind of challenges do you think you faced during the conference?* To this question, both student interpreters indicated that they struggled with "the accent" and the "speed of the speaker". Student Interpreter 2 also indicated that stress and portraying the emotions of the speaker were a challenge, whereas Student interpreter 1 only added that the content of the discussions was difficult.

The above questions were closed-ended questions to be answered by selecting the statements student interpreters mostly agreed or disagreed with. Other questions were open-ended questions asked to gain more insight into the student interpreters' minds and enable them to provide more explanations regarding their answers:

- to *Question 14* about how they overcame the challenges they faced during the exercise, Student Interpreter 1 indicated that he had a problem with the speed of the speakers at the beginning of the conference but as the latter continued, he became more at ease with the speeches as "their pace became more bearable". Student Interpreter 2 misunderstood the question again and said that he prepares for conferences in advance amongst other things;

- to the question of knowing whether the student interpreters thought the conference was helpful in assessing their skills (*Question 15*), the researcher noted that although all student interpreters were of the view that the

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conference was helpful, there was a small difference in the way they considered it helpful. Where Student interpreter 2 saw the exercise as a means to enhance one's skills, Student interpreter 1 saw it as a reminder that interpreting needs daily practice. In his discussions with the researcher afterwards, he indicated for example that after the study, he practised daily by performing simultaneous interpreting and recording himself for self-assessment. It is also interesting to see that when asked if input from their lecturer during the conference would have been helpful (*Question 16*) the student interpreters held contradictory views: Student interpreter 2 simply said yes, whereas Student interpreter 1 disagreed and defended his opinion by saying that the study was an opportunity to apply his skills learnt in class. Input from his lecturer would thus not have given him the opportunity to see what he could really do;

- finally, to incorporate Gile's (1999) *effort models* and De Laet's (2010) approach to conference interpreter training in the evaluation, the student interpreters were asked in *Question 17* what role they thought variables such as listening, memory, production, coordination, teamwork and aptitude played in their performance. It appears that they did not deem the question important as the answers were very vague: Student Interpreter 1 for example only indicated that it was sometimes hard to hear the speakers. Student Interpreter 2 on the other hand indicated that all variables play a significant role in the quality of interpreting.

Based on such perspectives and their respective performances, the student interpreters were then asked to allocate themselves a mark (in terms of percentage). Interestingly, both student interpreters gave themselves an average of 60%.

In the last part of the questionnaires, the student interpreters were given the opportunity to make additional comments regarding the study. The insight gained in this part was very useful as the comments were directly linked to the topic of the overall study. The summary of the responses from the student interpreters is presented in Table 1.2.

4.2.2. Feedback from conference delegates

The second set of feedback was the answers obtained from conference delegates. Their questionnaire contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions aimed at recording delegates' perspectives on conference interpreting in general, as well as the student interpreters' simultaneous interpreting performance in particular.

The first two questions (*Question 1* and *2*) asked to conference delegates were aimed at determining the latter's linguistic background, and the results show a great diversity: although the working language of the conference was English and all delegates spoke and understood it, only three among them had English as their mother tongue. More interestingly was that, in addition to having other mother tongues as diverse as Afrikaans, Amharic, Portuguese, Shona, Swahili and Urdu, delegates indicated that they were able to speak fluently additional languages such as French, German and Sotho.

The questions that followed were aimed at obtaining delegates' understanding of conference interpreting in general. To that end, they were asked to indicate the first thing that came to mind when they thought about conference interpreting (*Question 3*). The answers were very diverse and interesting and included for example: "increased level of listening and linguistic skills", "confusion", and "United Nations and the Nicole Kidman movie". More interestingly, for the following question which asked how long they thought it should take a student interpreter to become a fully-fledged professional (*Question 4*), the majority of delegates (five) were of the opinion that more than two years were necessary; only three of them (including the student interpreter-observer) thought it could take between one and two years.

In *Question 5*, the delegates were requested to express their opinion on what they perceived as the most important aspect of a successful interpretation assignment. Most delegates indicated that they considered "fluency in the languages of the conference", "use of appropriate terminology" and "use of appropriate language register" as being the most important aspects of a successful interpretation assignment. Second to that, were "clarity of the voice", "time for preparation", "documents for preparation" and "experience in the profession".

The questions that followed (*Questions 6* to *11*) were aimed at obtaining delegates' assessment of the student-interpreters' during the MUN conference. Thus,

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starting with the challenges faced by the student interpreters (*Question 7*), delegates indicated that they thought the speed of the speaker and the accent constituted major challenges; this was followed by the content of the discussions and portraying the emotions of the speaker. As a follow-up to *Question 7*, delegates were requested to make recommendations in *Question 11* in order for the student interpreters to improve their performance. The recommendations included mostly practice, and for Student Interpreter 2 to work on speaking in a lower tone. Following that, delegates were asked if the conference was helpful in assessing the student interpreters' skills (*Question 8*) and their opinions were diverse on that matter: one delegate agreed and said that it provided the student interpreters with a good opportunity to practise, while another delegate said that it gave "a platform for addressing mistakes and [ways] of improvement". One of the clearest answers by a conference delegate was that such a conference "gave the interpreters a proper training environment with regards to the type of challenges they'll face in the working world". In *Question 9*, delegates were asked if additional input from a lecturer in conference interpreting (during the conference) would have been helpful for the student interpreters and many of the delegates agreed that such an input would have been helpful indeed.

To conclude, delegates were requested to give their overall assessment of each student interpreter's performance (*Questions 6* and *10*). The marks given (in terms of percentage) ranged from 70% to 100% for Student Interpreter 1 and from 60% to 100% for Student Interpreter 2. Such marks were based on the previous assessment in *Question 6* where delegates were asked to indicate how they thought the student interpreters had performed during the conference.

It must be noted that the above responses were drawn only from conference delegates. Even though the student interpreter-observer and the conference delegates-observers responded to the same questionnaires, their feedback is only given in detail in the following paragraph. The summary of responses from conference delegates is presented in Table 1.3.

4.2.3. Feedback from lecturers and observers

The third group of participants used for the study was made up of three (3) lecturers, one (1) student interpreter who did not perform SI during the conference, as well as two (2) conference delegates who were present but did not actively take part in the

conference. This group of participants was included in order to provide guidelines and an additional perspective to the researcher and the questions they were asked were based on questionnaires for both conference delegates and student interpreters. The lecturers were made up of:

- the researcher's supervisor (she was not present during the conference);
- a lecturer in conference interpreting at the University of Pretoria, who is a professional conference interpreter and a member of AIIC; and
- the Programme Manager of the MA course in interpreting at the University of Pretoria, who is a professional translator/editor and a lecturer in translation at the said university. She was the only lecturer present during the conference.

The other lecturers only saw the audio- and video-recording of the conference. As the lecturer in interpreting was unavailable during the conference, she was given the audio- and video-recordings of the conference so as to have a better idea as to how it went. She then had a discussion with the researcher to give her feedback. The following is a summary of the feedback obtained from this group of respondents (including the other delegates-observers and the student interpreter who acted as observer, but excluding the research supervisor and the Programme Manager). It is also presented in Table 1.3.

The first question the respondents were asked was how long they thought it should take a student interpreter to become a fully-fledged professional (*Question 4*), to which they had different answers:

- the student interpreter-observer and one delegate-observer responded by saying between one and two years, whereas another delegate-observer responded by saying more than two years;
- the lecturer also answered "within two years at postgraduate level". During the discussion, she pointed out however, that different circumstances can lead to different results as training differs according to schools and due to various factors: thus, the ESIT (École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs) in Paris, which has a long history of training conference interpreters, demands nothing less than an excellent performance from its trainees. These high standards lead to about 80% of the students enrolled for the MA programme repeating modules, only to graduate after three to four years from what is initially a two-year programme.

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In order to better contextualise and illustrate her answer, the lecturer was requested to identify some shortcomings and difficulties she experienced while teaching students currently at the University of Pretoria. She pointed out that, while the University's course is still in its infancy, it is currently being restructured for both the BA (Honours) and MA programmes. A few challenges, however, are that:

- the scope of training is limited to a generalist offering in that it does not offer specialised training in specific fields such as law, international relations and economics, for example;

- students enrolling for the programme and who were previously at undergraduate level, although having acceptable linguistic knowledge, have little general knowledge, in addition to minimal competence in interpreting-related skills (such as memory, paraphrasing, reformulation, etc.).

Discussing the MUN conference itself, the lecturer indicated that she did acknowledge the need for student interpreters to have opportunities to practise in a mock conference as it would provide them with additional experience. She indicated further that the setup of the MUN Interfaculty conference was ideal and the conference itself was useful. She opined however, that the subjects being observed (the interpreters) were not really a representative sample of student interpreters as they had more experience than typical student interpreters. As a result, they did "relatively well" and better than could be expected from student interpreters. Despite this overall agreement, the lecturer identified a number of shortcomings that negatively affected the study:

- with regard to the equipment, she indicated that, although it was the only option available, the *bidule* is not an appropriate tool for such a setting but more for other uses such as for business delegations that need to be mobile. For a mock conference, the *bidule* did not help in conveying the feeling of realism and professionalism of a real conference;

- to the question of knowing whether the conference was helpful in assessing the student interpreters' skills (*Question 8*), the student interpreter-observer and one delegate-observer answered positively, saying that it was a good practical exercise for the student interpreters and that it was helpful as the latter are expected to utilise all the skills at their disposal. The lecturer on the other hand replied that the conference was useful for training but not for

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assessment purposes, as she felt that the environment was "harsh" for student interpreters to perform well in, for the reasons indicated below;

- regarding the student interpreters' performance, the lecturer indicated that generally, it was relatively good, considering the circumstances. She indicated that it could have been better had it not been the speech pattern of delegates and the quality of the speeches themselves. Indeed, when asked what kind of challenges she thought the student interpreters faced during the conference (*Question 7*), she indicated that they might have had difficulties with the terminology "here and there" but mostly with the speed of the speaker and portraying the emotions of the latter. For example, she said that delegates were nervous when speaking and as a result, did not speak clearly and slowly enough. This made it extremely difficult for student interpreters to follow especially given that most speeches were written and then read at a fast pace. As to portraying the emotions, the lecturer said that this was an even more difficult task as delegates already displayed a lack of interest and involvement in the proceedings and the subject matter. These observations are different from the ones made by the other respondents: while evaluating Student Interpreter 2 (Arabic), they agreed that the main challenges he faced were the speed and the accent of the speaker, whereas Student Interpreter 1 (French) had difficulties mostly with the content of the discussions.

Following this assessment of the conference, the lecturer was asked if she thought additional input from her or another lecturer in conference interpreting (during the conference) would have been helpful for the student interpreters (*Question 9*). She expressed doubts and explained that, in terms of input, she could have only provided student interpreters with tips on coping tactics but it would not have been of great help in any case due to the reasons identified above. This opinion was shared by the student interpreter-observer who expressed a strong opposition to input by a lecturer. In her opinion, a lecturer's presence may put additional pressure on a student but even more importantly, "the student is supposed to have acquired the necessary skills prior to the conference", rendering the input by a lecturer unnecessary *during* the mock conference. Once again that opinion differed from the other respondents in that, one delegate-observer stated that "a chance to evaluate the student interpreter's skills would be more beneficial with an experienced lecturer present".

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Similarly to student interpreters and conference delegates, this group of participants was also asked to give their assessment of the student interpreters' performance. In their evaluation of Student Interpreter 1, all respondents indicated that the interpreter appeared professional and used the appropriate grammar, language register, that his voice did not display stress and that he had a good speaking flow. On the other hand, only two respondents evaluated Student Interpreter 2 but they also agreed that he appeared professional, used the appropriate grammar, language register, that his voice did not display stress and that he also had a good speaking flow.

To conclude the enquiry, the student interpreter and delegate-observers were asked to rate the student interpreters' performance in terms of percentage. Student Interpreter 1 was the highest rated by the delegate-observers who gave him 68% and 75%. Student Interpreter 2 on the other hand was only marked by one delegate-observer who gave him 65%. The student interpreter-observer was harsher in her assessment of her colleagues and gave them both an average of 50%.

In light of the abovementioned, the respondents were asked to make recommendations for the student interpreters to improve their performance or for future reference. Regarding performance enhancement, one observer recommended Student Interpreter 1 to improve his reaction time to the speed of the speaker while a second observer recommended Student Interpreter 2 to attend more MUN conferences for practice purposes. The lecturer on the other hand, had more to say and made some recommendations for the future:

- regarding the conference, she highly recommended to train delegates participating in future conferences, in public speaking and speech-reading, prior to organising such conferences especially if they require the presence of student interpreters;

- regarding the programme at the University of Pretoria, she advocated the setting up of an admission exam for the MA in Interpreting so as to test candidates' language proficiency prior to their starting the course. The programme itself will then be devoted to enabling student interpreters to learn and acquire the necessary skills for conference interpreting;

In conclusion, the lecturer stated that an MUN conference is a useful tool in the training of student interpreters, and as a result, the experience of practising simultaneous interpreting during a mock conference benefits student interpreters.

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She suggested remaining in touch with the researcher so as to continue the experience in the future in a language laboratory, or in another more appropriate venue for example.

4.3. Interpreting interpreters: discussion of the findings

Generally speaking, the MUN Interfaculty conference proved to be a success both in terms of logistics and the conduct of the study. Despite some shortcomings, the final outcome exceeded the expectations, thanks to the interaction between student interpreters, conference delegates, observers, lecturers and the researcher, as well as the feedback given by all respondents. In order to discuss the study further, however, the feedback obtained needs to be analysed and discussed in comparison to the researcher's observations.

Starting with a general appreciation of the study, as indicated above for example, besides the flat battery of the *bidule* at the beginning of the conference, there was no problem with regard to the equipment: all delegates had individual headsets, which they did not need to share. The result was that the evaluation of the student interpreters was more substantive as the delegates had time to listen carefully to the student interpreters' performance. This observation is in contrast to the one made by the lecturer in conference interpreting who was critical of the *bidule* as she found it inappropriate for the type of conference. Nevertheless, she agreed that, given the circumstances, there was no alternative in terms of equipment.

In terms of proceedings, as illustrated by the table below, the conference took place according to a specific pattern which was followed by the student interpreters (in their performance), as well as the researcher (in the observations).

Presentation of the study by the researcher	No interpreting
Opening speeches	No interpreting
Formal caucus 1	Simultaneous interpreting: English into French
Informal caucus	No interpreting
Formal caucus 2	Simultaneous interpreting:

	English into French
	English into Arabic
Reading of working document	Simultaneous interpreting:
	English into French
Closing speeches	Simultaneous interpreting:
	English into French
Recess	Discussion with Student Interpreter 1 and lecturer in translation (Programme Manager)

Table 1.4: MUN Interfaculty pattern of interpretation

The table shows that the student interpreters started performing simultaneous interpreting only from the Formal Caucus 1 and continued during all sessions until the end of the conference (except during the Informal Caucus). It also shows that most of the simultaneous interpreting practice was from English into French, the reason being that Student Interpreter 2 (Arabic) was only available to take part in the exercise during a short period of time. Besides that situation however, this pattern shows that there are a number of opportunities to practise simultaneous interpreting during an MUN conference, and those are not limited to the formal caucuses, which in reality are small interventions by delegates on the topic and thus very similar to roundtable discussions. The other parts of the conference (such as the reading of the working document and the opening and closing speeches) present a very good opportunity for interpreting, especially in terms of terminology. During such sessions, delegates use terminology specific to International Relations and Diplomacy, which, if not prepared in advance, can be a challenge for student interpreters, as will be discussed later. Examples of such terminology are given in Table 1.6 below.

The opportunities presented by the abovementioned pattern of interpretation can only be fully beneficial to student interpreters if a good number of them can take part in the exercise. Unfortunately, this was not the case, as evidenced by the number of student interpreters present at the study. Participation is therefore a major factor in ensuring the success of such an exercise, but also in measuring its usefulness. Consequently, and as regards the same matter, the study faced difficulties, which had an impact on other areas of observation, but which

unfortunately cannot be easily resolved. On one hand, as indicated in the previous pages, the number of students enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a postgraduate degree in conference interpreting is not substantial; in addition to that, in the present case, even though a number of students were contacted well ahead of the conference, few of them eventually participated, due to personal reasons. On the other hand, the number of French-speaking and Arabic-speaking delegates at the conference was low, as apart from the researcher and a few delegates, no other participant spoke French and/or Arabic. Indeed, although most delegates understood and/or spoke more than two languages, there were not enough delegates who understood or spoke French, much less French-speakers. This affected the study as the results were based on a large population but on a smaller sample of respondents who spoke the target language (French). As a result, their evaluation of the student interpreter was based mostly on the latter's non-linguistic performance. This issue was even more critical for the Arabic interpreter, as no delegate present spoke Arabic. The delegates therefore also evaluated him based mostly on his non-linguistic skills. The somewhat lower assessment the delegates made of his performance, compared to the French interpreter (Student Interpreter 1), illustrates the observation.

Conference delegates were not, however, the only ones to have been affected by the issue of language. Student interpreters were also affected although in different ways, as the researcher's observations point out: the language of the conference was English and the interpretation was done from English into French mostly. This created two problems, however: firstly, the quality of the interpretation was affected in various ways, mostly in terms of the terminology, grammar and language register, due to the fact that French was Student Interpreter 1's B language and he had limited experience in simultaneous interpreting. Nonetheless, following the researcher's observations, the errors made by Student Interpreter 1 were not limited to the abovementioned but also included other types of errors.

As regards Student Interpreter 2, given that his evaluation was mostly non-linguistic, the observations cannot refer to errors but more to professionalism challenges: the main challenge noted was that, as a number of delegates pointed out, he was loud in his performance (although this was no longer a problem later on as he lowered his voice during the formal caucus) and his diction was not quite fluid. However, he coped relatively well with the speed of speakers and that was noticeable in his interpretation, which finished almost at the same time as the

delegates' speeches. The tables below are summaries of the errors and challenges observed by the researcher:

Type of error
loud voice

Table 1.5: Summary of Student Interpreter 2's challenges as observed by the researcher

Example of error (original phrase, *student's interpretation* **correct interpretation)**	Type of error and explanation
the European nations *les nations européens* **les nations européennes**	*grammar*: use of masculine adjective instead of feminine adjective
the problem *le problématique* **la problématique**	*grammar*: use of a masculine article for the noun instead of a feminine article
the United States are very happy *les Etats-Unis est très content (the United States is very happy)* **les Etats-Unis sont très contents**	*grammar*: absence of agreement between the noun and the verb
a comprehensive solution *un solution compréhensif* **une solution compréhensive** **une solution complète**	*grammar and vocabulary*: use of a masculine article for the noun instead of a feminine article / different synonyms could be used for "comprehensive"
thank you delegate *merci le délégué* **merci / merci au délégué**	*language style*: literal translation due to the lack of more appropriate expressions or insufficient knowledge of protocol terminology

in a concrete way *dans une façon concrète* **de facon concrète**	*language style*: literal translation
the establishment of *l'autorité de* **la mise en place de**	*faux sens*: misunderstanding of "establishment" as "authority", "official" instead of "the setting up of"
the Roma people *le peuple romain* **le peuple Rom**	*terminology*: inaccurate translation of "Roma" (the Roma people) into "romains" (the people of Rome)
are not discriminated against *ne sont pas discriminés* **ne font pas l'objet de discrimination**	*language style*: literal translation of the phrase "discriminated against"
you have the floor *vous avez le droit de vous présenter* **vous avez la parole**	*language style*: inaccurate translation due to the lack of more appropriate expressions or insufficient knowledge of protocol terminology
report back *un reportage* **compte-rendu**	*terminology*: inaccurate translation due to the lack of more appropriate expressions
closing speeches *discours de conclusion / discours concluants* **discours de clôture**	*terminology*: inaccurate translation of a consecrated term due to insufficient knowledge of diplomatic protocol terminology
the Obama administration *le gouvernement d'Obama* **l'administration Obama**	*terminology*: inaccurate translation of an accepted term (although "gouvernement" is correct, the word

	"administration" is typically used in French when referring to the US executive)
short-term solution *solution de terme court* **solution à court-terme**	*terminology*: inaccurate translation of a consecrated term
adjudicating panel *le panneau* **le jury**	*terminology*: inaccurate translation of a consecrated term/false friend due to the lack of more appropriate expressions
vote yes **vote oui --- > vote pour**	*consistency*: changes in terminology
closing speeches **discours de conclusion ---> discours concluants**	*consistency*: changes in terminology
10 seconds pause in the middle of the speech	Omissions and other types of error

Table 1.6: Summary of errors by Student Interpreter 1 as observed by the researcher

From the summary above (based on observation), as well as answers by the student interpreters, it can be inferred that the latter's performance suffered a great deal from a number of issues that could easily be addressed by the student interpreters without necessarily the help of a lecturer. Ensuring grammatical proficiency for example is not the focus of conference interpreting programmes, which presuppose a higher-than-average and already-acquired proficiency in the interpreter's working languages (cf. 2.2.3.ii). Answers to delegates' questionnaires seem to corroborate this argument: in rating how the student interpreters performed (*Question 6*), the use of appropriate grammar, terminology and language register

were the answers that received the least positive ratings followed by the stress and the speaking flow. Those two, however, are contingent upon two main factors: firstly, good preparation on the student interpreters' part through the reading of conference documents (which, it must be stressed, were sent to both student interpreters ahead of the conference); and secondly, regular practice, which can be provided in a classroom or in a mock conference. A mock conference seems to be the most appropriate environment for practice as it presents student interpreters with a range of challenges that they are expected to address without the help of a lecturer so as to make the experience as realistic as possible. Answers obtained from both the lecturer in conference interpreting and the student interpreters also seem to support that point of view. Thus, the lecturer, in her discussion with the researcher, also indicated for example that her input during the exercise would not have been of great help, although she was referring mostly to the interpreting technique of the student interpreters rather than their linguistic capabilities. On the other hand however, the student interpreters themselves seem to agree with the lecturer in their answer to Question 16 (*Do you think additional input from your lecturer – during the conference – would have been helpful?*) and seemed strongly against any "external help" during such an exercise. Student Interpreter 1 and the student interpreter-observer were against input from a lecturer, saying that the student is supposed to have already acquired the necessary skills prior to the conference and input from a lecturer would not have allowed them to see what they could do. This argument, according to the researcher, is especially important in light of challenges that the student interpreters could face and would have to resolve during an exercise in a contextual environment such as an MUN conference.

In the present study for example, according to delegates, some of the major challenges the student interpreters faced (*Question 7*) included the content of the discussions, the terminology, and the speed and accent of the speaker. Organising mock conferences to address those challenges is the best possible solution, as such conferences combine all skills and techniques of conference interpreting and thus help the trainee acquire sufficient skilfulness and expertise (De Laet, 2010). In addition, as indicated by the student interpreters in their questionnaires, and corroborated by the researcher's observations, the student interpreters were affected by the speaking pattern of some delegates, as a number of them spoke extremely fast, rendering the simultaneous interpretation even more difficult.

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What can be hypothesised from these observations is that, despite the fact that conference delegates usually value highly non-linguistic skills of interpreters, the ability for those conference delegates to understand the languages used in the interpretation can play a major role in their assessment of conference interpreters' performance. This is well in line with the delegates' opinion that terminology and language register are the most important aspects of a successful interpretation assignment (cf. 4.2.2). In opposition to that argument is the fact that student interpreters, on the other hand, did not consider fluency in the languages of the conference as the only aspect of a successful interpretation assignment, but rather together with the clarity of the interpreter's voice and a continuous response in the ear of the listener. If one considers Moser's (1995:7-9 & 28) finding that the quality of the interpreter's voice is as important as the latter's linguistic skills (an opinion also given by a conference delegate), it appears therefore that not only do different users of interpreting indeed have different expectations or perceptions of conference interpreting (Moser, 1995:4 and Kurz, 1993), but even interpreters themselves (and by extension, student interpreters) have different opinions of conference interpreting than users of such services.

These observations bring back to the fold the issue of norms in conference interpreting training as discussed in Chapter 2 (cf. 2.2.2). In this regard, the expectancy norms which, in other words, refer to the expectations of conference delegates as regards conference interpreting, were also explored in some of the questions asked to conference delegates (*Questions 3*, *4* and *5*). Following the responses given, it was noted that there was a difference between how such delegates perceived conference interpreting and what it actually was: from the training of student interpreters to the most important aspects of a successful interpretation assignment, conference delegates held views that were somewhat different from those of student interpreters. These differences in opinion not only illustrate the differences in expectations, but also highlight the role conference interpreter training programmes can play in aligning such expectations with reality. Thus, to respond to the need for professional and competent language practitioners that has been created by increasingly complex meetings, T&I schools are constantly devising strategies to improve their curricula in order to produce the best all-round and highly-skilled interpreters (Kurz, 2002:65 and Renfer, 1992:175). As one of those strategies, practical simultaneous interpreting during a mock conference seems to be

the best method to achieve that objective. As a delegate noted, such an exercise provides student interpreters with the necessary platform to apply their skills and, while doing so, adapt and adopt the necessary techniques (and by extension, norms) required to improve their performance so as to reach a professional level. It is those norms that Chesterman (1993 & 1997) referred to as *professional norms*, and that Viaggio (1997) and Wallmach (2002) describe as the guidelines that interpreters tend to follow and according to which they should act in order for the profession to maintain its high standards.

Generally speaking, and as regards ethics, according to Schweda Nicholson & Martinsen (1995:26) cited by Wallmach (2002), those norms include amongst others accuracy, neutrality, confidentiality and accountability. Outside the realm of ethics, and in more practical terms, those norms include for example the *first person norm* according to which, "whatever the commonalities and differences between speaker and interpreter as to age, sex etc., a professional conference interpreter will assume the voice of the speaker when rendering his or her words in the target language, so that when the speaker uses the first person, the interpreter will do the same" (Duflou, forthcoming). Although such a norm is described by Duflou in the context of consecutive interpreting, it is extremely important for students to acquire as soon as possible, as usually, at the beginning of their training, they are confronted to the reality that "[conference] interpreters […] identify with the speaker by speaking in the first person" (European Union, 2001:6 in Duflou, forthcoming).

Notwithstanding the previous argument, the acquisition of professional norms by students is a process that often follows the development of *student norms* by student interpreters during their training (as noted by the research supervisor). Those student norms include for example a short lag time between the speaker and the student interpreter in an attempt to closely follow the speech, the use of excessive gestures while interpreting, the preparation of glossaries that include both technical terms and common words ahead of an interpreting exercise in an attempt to quell the fear of missing out on the common words.

The relationship between expectations and reality is therefore not simply seen in the context of a real conference such as in Moser's study, but also within other contexts. While the discussion on theory, norms and practice in the context of professional conference interpreting usually focuses on specific issues, it is equally important that such a discussion take place within the context of conference

interpreter training, especially as regards simultaneous interpreting, as the latter is usually the last mode of interpreting learnt by students after having been taught the consecutive mode (cf. 2.2.3). This will ensure that the professionalisation of student interpreters is as complete as possible, considering that the objective of conference interpreter training is to produce graduates who are immediately ready for the job market.

4.4. Recommendations

The issues mentioned above show that there is a constant margin for improvement. In light of that, the following recommendations can be made to ensure that such a margin is used to increase the reliability of forthcoming studies and the validity of the results of the present study:

- regarding the equipment, the *bidule* was a reliable tool which worked properly given the circumstances. Unfortunately, as pointed out by the lecturer in conference interpreting, it does not contribute to giving the study a full realistic experience. In addition to the issues discussed above, it has a limited number of microphones and headphones, which prevent it from being used in a bigger setting. To solve those issues, it is recommended that interpreting booths be used (together with the appropriate sound equipment). Although this might create additional financial costs, the positive effects outweigh the financial implications: the use of such equipment will simplify the audio recording, it will prevent interference between delegates' voices and student interpreters' voices, thus enabling student interpreters to interpret as clearly as they should under similar circumstances without the delegates misconstruing it as bad performance;

- with regard to the language, although a good number of delegates at MUN conferences understand French, and a number of student interpreters have English and French in their language combination, it is recommended that the pool of student interpreters be more diverse in terms of language combinations so as to include more student interpreters. Including more student interpreters would also solve the issue of participation discussed above. One of the proposed means to ensure such inclusion of student interpreters would be to cooperate with other academic institutions offering

conference interpreter training programmes such as the University of the Witwatersrand. The latter for example trains more student interpreters who have a higher variety of language combinations than students at the University of Pretoria. Involvement of more participants might however lead to delegates and student interpreters misunderstanding the questions asked or what is expected from them in the assessment (as could be seen with one student interpreter misunderstanding a few questions in his questionnaires). It is thus also recommended to increase the time allocated to presenting and explaining the study to participants prior to the study starting;

- thirdly, the researcher noticed that more information could be garnered from study participants than allowed by the questionnaires. Similarly to the discussions held with the lecturers, further research should include the use of additional data collection instruments such as interviews or group discussions. Such research instruments would enable more data to be collected and analysed, thereby leading to more precise study results.

When analysing the various sets of feedback, one of the main conclusions that can be drawn is that study participants often had conflicting views regarding certain matters, except the student interpreters and the lecturer in conference interpreting who seemed to share the same opinion on the same matters. This explains perhaps why the students interpreters' responses to and comments on the study reflected a more professional perspective than that of the conference delegates. For example Student Interpreter 1 indicated that it would be good to "treat the whole situation more professionally" (what he referred to as the "real deal"); an argument endorsed by Student interpreter 2 who indicated that interpreting booths were needed. What can be inferred from such observations is that previously-held assumptions about conference interpreting by users of conference interpreting services are not always justified, and the same applies to student interpreters' perceptions about conference interpreter training. The present study thus brought to light new findings:

- as Moser (1995) and Kurz (2001) posited, indeed different groups of users of conference interpreting services have different perceptions about the latter; in the present case, delegates at the MUN conference, who are originally university students, have different perceptions of conference interpreting compared to delegates who took part in Moser's survey;

- student interpreters welcome the idea of a mock conference for practice purposes and as a means to assess themselves. They would nevertheless be even more open to a mock conference that would better simulate a real international conference.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the study undertaken during the MUN Interfaculty conference. Following a presentation of the feedback of the different study participants (student interpreters, conference delegates, lecturers and observers), an analysis of such feedback was done, in order to discuss the findings and infer conclusions. From such an analysis and its conclusions, recommendations were formulated so as to take the study forward; those recommendations will form the basis of the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

Following the discussion in the previous pages, a number of conclusions were reached regarding the research problem explored in this study. Before presenting such conclusions however, the present chapter will present the study's main aspects in terms of its focus, its analysis and its limitations. As the last component of the study, and as its contribution to conference interpreting research, the chapter will then present the conclusions and recommendations reached after the study.

5.2. Defining the study

As was presented in this study, conference interpreting is built upon two main fields: *professional conference interpreting*, which focuses on such aspects of the practice of the profession as ethics, working conditions, remuneration, etc., and *conference interpreting research*, which focuses on conference interpreting as an academic discipline. Considering that those aspects are linked and cannot be disassociated, but choosing to focus more on professional conference interpreting, the researcher formulated several assumptions before undertaking the study:

- firstly, conference interpreting being primarily a practice-based activity, there needs to be many opportunities for practitioners to acquire, develop and maintain their skills;
- secondly, because of the highly specialised nature of the profession, only rigorous training programmes can produce highly skilled conference interpreters;
- thirdly, owing to the versatility of conferences nowadays, it is important for conference interpreter training programmes to include exercises that require trainees to apply the skills they previously learned in class, in the most realistic conference environments possible; mock conferences (conferences that are as similar as possible to real conferences) offer such environments.

These assumptions then led to hypothesise that, owing to the realism of mock conferences; the latter are a useful tool in the training of postgraduate-level student

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interpreters. Based on such assumptions, and considering that conference interpreting is primarily performed in the simultaneous mode, the research thus focused on the specific case of the use of a Model United Nations conference for the training in simultaneous interpreting of student interpreters at postgraduate level. In doing so, specific questions were asked:

- what is the role of mock conferences in the training of conference interpreters?

- can an MUN conference be considered a helpful exercise in simultaneous interpreting practice?

- after practising simultaneous interpreting during an MUN conference, how do student interpreters evaluate their performance?

- how do conference delegates evaluate the student interpreters' performance?

- according to student interpreters, how helpful is the training (without simultaneous interpreting practice at a mock conference) in terms of preparing them for the job market?

- does the fact that the use of mock conferences is not guided by lecturers diminish its value as a teaching tool?

5.3. Overview of the study

The issues mentioned above and formulated as research questions, constituted the framework of the study, which was presented, along with its various features, in Chapter 1 (research objectives, research questions, literature review, methodology, etc.). The basis of the study was the problem statement according to which, the amount of practical exercises given to student interpreters during their training was not sufficient. Thus, starting with the hypothesis that MUN conferences were useful in the training of student interpreters, the researcher proceeded to present the trends in conference interpreting research, particularly as they relate to conference interpreter training. It was noted that apart from the more common topics such as the cognitive and psychological aspects of simultaneous interpreting, ethics, quality and so on, conference interpreting research is now focusing more and more on issues related to training (cf. 2.2). The reasons for such interest in conference interpreter training are manifold and were discussed in Chapter 2. The most compelling explanation to this trend is, however, that of Kurz (2002:66-67) who argues that owing to the diversity

and multiplicity of international meetings, as well as to the technical and terminological difficulties brought about by an increase in globalisation and interconnectedness, interpreter training programmes need to be flexible so as to effectively prepare students for real-life interpreting.

To put the discussion in context, Chapter 2, as literature review, therefore discussed various postgraduate-level training programmes at various T&I institutions in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and North America, with an emphasis on their offerings as regards practical training in simultaneous interpreting. An overview of the aforementioned training programmes illustrates the extent to which some schools implement practical training in their curricula. At that stage, while observing that the training programmes emphasized more or less the practical exercises in a similar way (internships, practice in mute booths, exercises in class), it was also noted that the methods used to administer such training differed, with academics such as Kiraly (2000) advocating a social constructivist approach in the teaching, whereas Russo (2011), Zannirato (2013) and Arjona-Tseng (1994) advocate a more psychometric approach emphasizing the selection of suitable candidates prior to them enrolling in a training programme. Instead of discussing the merits of selecting individuals first or adjusting their training later, De Laet (2010:254-258) proposes, on the other hand, another method emphasising the use of mock conferences. This position was originally shared by this researcher and was thus used as an argument to defend the hypothesis presented.

While such analyses were mostly an overview of conference interpreter training in practice, they stemmed from an even earlier discussion on the role of context in conference interpreter training. That discussion presented the link between the theoretical foundations to T&I and T&I in practice. Here it was observed that the prevailing theories in T&I Studies such as the *skopostheorie* (Vermeer 1978, Reiss & Vermeer 1984 and Nord 1997) and the *théorie du sens* (Seleskovitch, 1975 and Lederer & Seleskovitch, 1981 & 1984), while very much appropriate, could not constitute the only theoretical foundations to T&I, considering that interpreting especially is a social act. This argument, developed by Pöchacker (1992:213), was repeated by Kiraly (2000) who, while criticising the *transmissionist* approach used by translator trainers (and by extension, interpreter trainers), advocated instead a *social constructivist* approach which focuses more on students rather than on trainers. With this renewed focus on students, the study explored how some theories such as Gile's

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(1995 & 1992) *effort models of interpreting* and *tightrope hypothesis* explained the difficulties student interpreters experienced when learning simultaneous interpreting. This discussion led to the realisation that the learning process in simultaneous interpreting, although difficult, is not impossible, following the acquisition of certain skills and the development of certain solutions which enable interpreters to perform more optimally than they normally would, when facing some difficulties. Those solutions, or *norms*, as they are referred to, were first developed by Toury (1978) in Translation Studies before being adapted to Interpreting Studies by Schlesinger (1989 & 1999) and Sjoldager (1995). As could be seen, norms, albeit difficult to perceive and observe, also influence the performance of conference interpreters from the beginning of their training, thus highlighting once again the importance of an analysis of conference interpreter training. The latter, however, is very broad and the discussion was therefore limited to the main curricula and methods used in conference interpreter training, before proceeding to defend the use of mock conferences in simultaneous interpreting training.

Following the literature review in Chapter 2, the researcher presented in Chapter 3 the study's research design and methodology in order to clarify how the study was conducted. The main objective of the study being to examine a phenomenon by using human participants in a real-life environment, the study qualified as a qualitative study (cf. 1.5.1); hence, the use of elements characteristic of a qualitative study such as the sampling method (purposive sampling) and the research instruments. As regards the latter, however, the researcher used triangulation by using both questionnaires and observation to collect the data and ensure its reliability and validity. These measures, however, would not have been efficient had the conference selected for the data collection been inappropriate. In this case, the researcher chose the MUN Interfaculty, for various reasons explained in the chapter. The conference proved successful in many respects, namely the involvement of the participants and the quality of data collected. Nevertheless, a few issues arose and were addressed together with the data analysis in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 was, in some ways, a report on the conference itself, in which the researcher presented the feedback obtained from the study participants and the observations he made as participant-observer. A discussion of such data and the implications thereof ensued, with various explanations and conclusions drawn, the latter being presented in the present chapter as a general conclusion of the study.

5.4. Limitations of the study

While the study fulfilled its stated objectives, it presents some limitations aside from the shortcomings identified earlier in Chapter 4 (cf. 4.2). If addressed correctly, such limitations could greatly strengthen the original hypothesis and improve the reliability and validity of future studies on the same topic:

- firstly, conference interpreting is a highly demanding profession and as a result, the intake of candidates in training programmes at postgraduate level is usually low regardless of the institution. This is the same situation at the University of Pretoria where the study took place and consequently the study suffered from a low participation rate from student interpreters, which in turn, resulted in a low amount of data available for analysis;

- secondly, while the study focuses on simultaneous interpreting, the latter is performed using specific technical equipment (booth, headset, microphones, transmitters, receivers, etc.) and with speakers who are used to interpreting services. In the present case, the unavailability of such equipment, and the difficulty presented by the public speaking skills of delegates, rendered the study more difficult logistically but in addition, as a student interpreter and one lecturer indicated, they prevented student interpreters from fully experiencing a realistic conference atmosphere;

- lastly, the study was conducted in a relatively short period of time and only once. As argued earlier, conference interpreting is a practice-based activity, which implies constant and regular practice; limiting such a study to only one occurrence is not enough to gather sufficient data on the performance of students as such performance is likely to evolve over time.

5.5. Recommendations

In light of the abovementioned shortcomings, a number of recommendations can be formulated so as to contribute to further research on the same topic, or on other topics:

- to begin with, as opposed to the pattern set in previous studies by Moser (1995) and Kurz (2001) which focused more on users of conference interpreting, the present case study, similarly to those such as Bühler (1986)

and Zwischenberger & Pöchacker (2010), focused more on conference interpreters themselves. If indeed user expectations of interpreting vary according to different user groups as argued by Kurz (1989, 1993) and Moser (1995:4), it would only be right to assume that conference interpreters themselves would also have a different perspective of their performance than users of conference interpreting services. Including future conference interpreters in studies about their profession would help not only to obtain a balanced view of conference interpreting as a profession but would also afford more legitimacy to such studies in the eyes of the practitioners;

- a second recommendation is that further research be undertaken on the topic of practical exercises in conference interpreter training, particularly as regards the use of mock conferences in simultaneous interpreting training. Such research should take place over time, in collaboration with departments responsible for T&I training at institutions and/or other entities that could make use of student interpreters. But most importantly, studies undertaken with that purpose, should afford student interpreters the opportunity to give feedback which can be incorporated in the training. One reason for that, amongst others, is that if, as Kurz (2002:68) argues, student interpreters are motivated because they feel that they are progressing thanks to the amount of practice they get outside a sheltered environment such as a classroom, not only are those students among the most reliable to evaluate their own level of readiness for professional interpreting, but in addition, such practice does indeed play a major role in enhancing the students' preparedness for the job market. The result is that such feedback from students, together with feedback obtained from conference delegates, may contribute to further research in curricula development in conference interpreter training;

- lastly, in focusing on student interpreters and their training, other research initiatives could also be developed: thus, there could be more research undertaken for example on norms of student interpreters, seeing as the latter, although prone to adapt by seeing and repeating, also develop their own methods of learning in a quest to perform better.

5.6. Contribution to conference interpreting research

As Dawrant & Gile (2001) note, research in conference interpreter training is expected "to contribute to the profession in several ways. One is to offer information which will allow us to gain better insight into interpreting and its environment and develop better working methods and training methods. Yet another is to support our professional claims and demands by showing that they are justified. But this is where problems may arise, when findings are inconclusive or suggest that our claims as professionals are *not* justified". Thus, while presenting the background to research in conference interpreting, it was noted for example that:

- it was undertaken mostly by practising interpreters, and consequently, was mostly theoretical (cf. Gile 1994); however, as a result of various changes, there has been a resurgent interest in such research;
- conference interpreting research often overlooks the input conference interpreters can make during studies; associating the latter with such studies would therefore be a step towards bridging the gap between academics and practitioners.

Combining this argument with Pöchacker's (1992:217) assertion that "the interpreter's perspective on the chain of mutual assessment […] ultimately shapes the end result in interpreting", the present study therefore deliberately had a student interpreter-centred perspective. Consequently, it sought to also contribute to conference interpreting research but in a way that would include primarily practitioners' point of view on the subject matter.

In solving the identified research problem, the study demonstrated how conference interpreting research presents multiple opportunities, particularly as regards the use of a contextualised approach to conference interpreter training and the inclusion of student interpreters' perspectives on such training. Indeed, the few research initiatives that have been undertaken in that field have not taken into account non-researchers' point of view, in other words, how both interpreters and non-interpreters perceive the practice of simultaneous interpreting within a mock conference environment for training purposes. However, as much as conference interpreting research is interested in training, the latter is a wide subject matter in itself. Indeed, when speaking about conference interpreter training, is the focus on training in consecutive interpreting or simultaneous interpreting? Are the areas of

interest focusing on ethics, norms, trends, or more on the various training approaches and methods? And lastly, is the perspective of interpreters (trainees in this case) taken into consideration? Such points are important to reflect on because discussing conference interpreter training requires one to acknowledge the importance of training as the foundation for a career as demanding as conference interpreting; this, in turn, means acknowledging that conference interpreters are the result of rigorous academic programmes that mould previous candidates into professional practitioners. The best illustration for this argument is Ertl & Pöllabauer (2010:166) who, in discussing the training of medical interpreters, quote Johnson (1972 & 1993:23) as saying that training is one of the major factors playing a role in forming a profession. Indeed, in the present case, the training of future conference interpreters remains the basis for ensuring that future practitioners will abide by professional and ethical guidelines to deliver quality interpreting services. The second contribution of this study is therefore a presentation and an analysis of various T&I training models, both in South Africa and abroad. In doing so, the study attested to the importance of practical exercises in the training of student interpreters, the more so when such exercises are conducted in a real-life environment and when student interpreters give their input.

5.7. Conclusion

As indicated in Chapter 3, the validity and reliability of a study is dependent upon whether the latter can yield the same result when replicated. Based on the results of the qualitative study informed by these criteria, it can therefore be concluded that the present study's hypothesis is confirmed in that Model United Nations conferences are indeed ideal settings for the simultaneous interpreting training of student interpreters at postgraduate level.

Appendices

The following documents are attached:

- Appendix A: Consent form
- Appendix B: Research questionnaire for the student interpreters
- Appendix C: Research questionnaire for the conference delegates

List of sources

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