
Exploring students' perspectives on challenges and strategies in interpretation

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Abstract

In the realm of interpretation training, understanding students' perspectives on the factors influencing their performance is crucial for devising effective solutions. This case study embarked on a comprehensive exploration of interpretation students' viewpoints, examining the challenges they face and the potential solutions they propose to enhance their interpretation abilities. Through the implementation of a meticulously designed online questionnaire, the study sought to uncover the significant obstacles encountered in interpretation from the students' standpoint, while simultaneously unravelling the underlying reasons behind these challenges and the prevailing teaching methods employed in interpretation courses. The responses obtained from 234 interpretation students enrolled in Saudi universities shed light on their profound appreciation for guidance and support, particularly in comprehending and proficiently employing translation strategies. The students also expressed a strong desire for feedback on their interpretation performance and an eagerness to acquire effective note-taking techniques. Recognizing the paramount importance of continuous improvement, the students acknowledge the significance of these aspects in elevating their overall interpretation abilities. Furthermore, the study identified simultaneous interpretation (SI) and English-Arabic language pairs as two major hurdles in the field of interpretation. Additionally, students expressed difficulties with speech speed and

specialised terminology. The research also underscored several pivotal factors that have the potential to enhance students' performance in interpretation. Notably, practising sight translation (ST) in specialised translation courses emerged as the most influential factor, closely followed by the provision of glossaries containing specialized terminology and the utilisation of equipped interpretation labs, which bridge the gap between the interpretation classroom and real-life practice. Other significant factors included conducting diagnostic tests, offering optional training courses, deepening the understanding of interpretation coping strategies, and providing feedback on interpretation. The study is hoped to present invaluable insights into the perspectives of interpretation students, providing practical implications for educators to design impactful teaching approaches and comprehensive support systems that foster the development of students' interpretation skills.

Keywords: interpreting, students' perspectives, interpreting training, interpretation challenges, Arabic and English pairs

1. Introduction

Interpretation, or language interpreting, facilitates verbal and nonverbal communication between speakers of various languages. This may be done in several modes and settings (Viezzi, 2013). For instance, simultaneous interpreting (SI) involves spoken translation from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) during delivery (Russo, 2010). In contrast, in consecutive interpreting (CI), the interpreter waits for the speaker to complete a specified number of phrases before rendering the statement into the TL from memory and special notes (Pöchhacker, 2016). Additionally, sight translation (ST) is a mode of SI that relates to the spoken rendering of a written text (Pöchhacker, 2016). As for the settings, it refers to the 'setting where the interpretation is provided' (Viezzi, 2013, p. 377), which may be courtroom, conference, healthcare, and media interpreting. When engaged in this practice, interpretation students may encounter numerous factors or challenges affecting their performance. These challenges encompass a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic factors (Chiaro & Nocella, 2004). Thus, it is vital to examine these factors from students' perspectives and explore the possible solutions that interpretation students

would suggest. The related literature has focused on quality assessment and error analysis to identify interpreting challenges in general (see Fraihat, 2015; Alhiyari, 2013; Al-Jarf, 2022a; 2022b) and often overlooked the students' perspectives and feedback on the challenges they encounter in interpretation, which can provide a more inclusive and realistic view to this matter. Thus, in this exploratory case study, we looked into the following research questions:

QR1: What are students' perspectives on the major factors affecting their performance in interpretation?

QR2: What solutions do they believe can contribute to enhancing their performance?

Understanding students' perspectives is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a student-centered approach to interpreting education, emphasizing the importance of addressing their needs and concerns. By considering their viewpoints, educators can tailor teaching methods and support mechanisms to enhance students' learning experiences. Secondly, students' perspectives offer a unique and firsthand account of the challenges they face in interpretation. This information can be invaluable for curriculum development, as it helps identify areas that require more attention and refinement. By aligning the curriculum with the students' perspectives, educators can create a more relevant and effective learning environment.

In the next section, the relevant literature on interpreting and the linguistic and non-linguistic factors affecting the interpretation performance are introduced. Following this, the methodology section presents the procedures, methods and participants for the collection of data. Afterwards, a comprehensive exposition of the study findings is provided, followed by a discussion on the implications of the results. In the conclusion, the paper presents recommendations and pedagogical implications.

2. Literature review

Pöchhacker (2009) defined interpretation as a form of translation in which the first and final rendition into the TL is produced based on a one-time

presentation of an utterance in a SL. The literature on interpreting studies has concentrated on training as early as the 1940s, and university-level training facilities were established in response to the need for qualified interpreters (Pöchhacker 2009). In the 1940s, international conference interpreting expanded, with an increase in the demand for university interpreter training (Pöchhacker 2009). Hence, professional interpreters like Otto Kade worked to establish an academic branch for interpretation in the 1960s. In 1974, Seleskovitch established the Paris III/Sorbonne Nouvelle's 'traductologie' PhD programme for interpreters. Seleskovitch pioneered a university-level conference interpreter training at the École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) in Paris. Subsequently, the Paris School paradigm dominated interpreting research and conference interpreter training throughout the 1980s. The work published by Seleskovitch and Lederer in the 1980s on the ESIT teaching style continues to be a prominent work (Pöchhacker, 2009). The academic focus on interpreting highlights the importance of such kind of training to address the factors that interpretation students might encounter. After exploring the relevant literature, some of these factors are presented in the sections below:

2.1. Linguistic factors affecting interpretation performance

Several studies presented a selection of linguistic challenges impacting the students' performance in interpretation. Lin et al. (2013) highlighted the impact of non-native accents on interpretation performance and suggested that students should be trained to analyse speech to extract the meaning from the context rather than the words. Barghout et al. (2015) and Changshuan (2010) found that interpreters struggle with increasing speech speeds and opt to omission to tackle such an issue. Another issue is the use of specialised terms or expressions that an interpreter might not know owing to lack of technical experience (Dawrant & Setton, 2016). Moreover, the structural differences between two languages (e.g., word order) cause a significant challenge to interpretation students, which leads to interpreters lagging behind speakers, resulting in more omissions during interpreting (Al-Rubai'i, 2004; Al Zahran, 2021). Shamuratova (2022) noted that numbers, proper names, idioms, and culturally specific terms

might be difficult to interpret in some languages and suggests note-taking to help tackle issues related to numbers interpreting and transcoding as the best technique for proper names and decoding for idioms and cultural items. From another perspective, the interpretation language direction appeared to be a critical factor affecting students' interpretations (Al-Jarf, 2022b; Lin et al., 2018).

2.2. Non-linguistic factors affecting interpretation

There are multiple non-linguistic factors that might affect students' performance in interpretation. The vast cognitive load on interpreters is the most critical one as they constantly analyse and resynthesise speech and its meaning (Jones, 2014; Russo, 2010). Additionally, SI interpreters use microphones, headphones, and multi-channel equipment to deliver a real-time speech from the soundproof booth with a lag of just a few seconds, which makes it cognitively very demanding (Dawrant & Setton, 2016). Lin et al. (2018) found that working memory (WM) capabilities are more important than language skills in fluent interpretation output. Takeda (2010) found that most of the students participating in his study were concerned about interpreting strategies and the lack of clear or systematic teaching on how to resolve interpreting challenges. Lastly, Chiaro (2004) found that the most significant non-linguistic factors affecting interpretation performance are concentration, absence of stress, and preparation of documents. In conclusion, the complex nature of interpretation poses several challenges, especially for Arab interpreters; however, research addressing these issues is scarce and this study aims to bridge such gap.

This study aims to explore students' perspectives on the factors influencing their interpretation performance. Its significance lies in its focus on interpretation students' perspectives, acknowledging their valuable feedback, and providing a more inclusive and realistic view of the factors affecting their performance in interpretation. The findings of this research can improve educational practices, curriculum development, and support systems to better meet the needs of interpretation students and enhance their overall interpretation abilities.

3. Materials and methods

The study follows an exploratory case study approach, utilizing an online questionnaire to gather data from interpretation students and employing analytical methods to explore their perspectives on factors affecting their performance in interpretation and potential solutions. A description of data collection instruments, participants and procedures is presented in the following subsections.

3.1. Online questionnaire

To answer the RQs, a questionnaire was designed and piloted to explore the significant challenges faced in interpretation from the perspective of interpretation students. It also sought to discover the possible reasons behind these challenges and the teaching methods usually employed in interpretation courses. The online questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and it comprised a section on demographic information followed by three main questions (a multiple-choice grid and checkbox questions), with a total of 46 items. The first question seeks to collect information on what occurs in interpretation classes (e.g., teaching methods and teachers' feedback). The second question gathers information about the challenges that students encounter in interpreting. The final section explores the respondents' perspectives on improving their interpretation skills (Appendix A).

To ensure the validity of this instrument, a pilot study and two statistical measures were applied to measure the questionnaire's face-, criterion-, and structure validity. Face validity refers to how non-experts, such as respondents, perceive the clarity and relevance of the content (Taherdoost, 2016). The pilot study is thus crucial in ensuring the face validity of this instrument; besides, potential problems with the questionnaire can be identified and corrected. Thus, 15 translation students were asked in early January of the academic year (2022-2023) to complete the questionnaire to identify any difficulties or misunderstandings they may encounter in answering the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also evaluated and revised by two academic instructors with 8-10 years of experience in teaching interpretation courses. All students' and instructors' recommendations were considered, and the questionnaire was modified accordingly.

In addition, two statistical measures were applied to ensure the questionnaire's criterion- and structure validity. The first test is the criterion-related validity test (Pearson test), which measures the correlation coefficient between each item in the field and the whole field. It was found that the correlation coefficients are significant at $\alpha = 0.01$ or $\alpha = 0.05$; hence, the questionnaire's items are consistent and valid to measure what they were set for (Table 1).

Table 1: The correlation coefficient between each item in the field and the whole field

Item No.	Coefficient correlation	of P-Value	Item No.	Coefficient correlation	of P-Value
First dimension			Second dimension		
1	.591**	0.001	1	.502**	0.005
2	.534**	0.003	2	.591**	0.001
3	.476**	0.009	3	.397*	0.030
4	.576**	0.001	4	.592**	0.001
5	.586**	0.001	5	.494**	0.006
6	.523**	0.004	6	.682**	0.000
7	.562**	0.002	7	.727**	0.000
8	.530**	0.003	8	.718**	0.000
9	.498**	0.006	9	.437*	0.016
10	.496**	0.006	10	.774**	0.000
11	.637**	0.000	11	.776**	0.000
12	.596**	0.001	12	.818**	0.000
13	.623**	0.000	13	.754**	0.000
			14	.651**	0.000
			15	.763**	0.000
			16	.464**	0.000
			17	.499**	0.000
			18	.616**	0.000
			19	.685**	0.000

* Correlation is significant at a 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

The second test is related to the questionnaire's structural validity, which indicates the extent to which the scores on a scale adequately reflect the dimensionality of the construct, attribute, or factor being measured (Mokkink et al., 2010). Thus, structure validity (using Pearson test) to test the validity of the questionnaire structure was performed by testing the validity of each field and the validity of the whole questionnaire. This provides a measure of the correlation coefficient between one dimension and all the dimensions of the questionnaire at the same Likert-scale level. Accordingly, significance values were found to be less than 0.01, implying

that the correlation coefficients of all the fields are significant at $\alpha = 0.01$, and therefore, the questionnaire's dimensions are valid to measure what it was set for, to achieve the study's primary aim (Table 2).

Table 2: Structure validity of the questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability		
No.	Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
1	First Dimension	0.827
2	Second Dimension	0.837
	All Dimensions	0.862

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to check the questionnaire's reliability. The values of Cronbach's alpha for all domains = 0.862, greater than 0.70, which indicates excellent reliability of the entire questionnaire (Table 3). Thereby, the questionnaire was found to be valid, reliable, and ready to be administered among the targeted sample.

Table 3: The questionnaire's reliability

No.	Dimension	Pearson correlation coefficient	p-value
1	First dimension	.510**	0.006
2	Second dimension	.895**	0.000

A. Procedures

Approval to conduct the study and access the sample was obtained from the Standing Committee for Scientific Research Ethics at King Saud University at the beginning of the semester (2022-2023). This was followed by distributing the questionnaire online through various social media platforms during March and April 2023, eliciting responses from 234 undergraduates in Saudi Arabia.

3.2. Respondents

Based on the collected response count, the respondents were 234 Saudi undergraduates, and their demographics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Questionnaire respondents

Section	Item	Percentage
Gender	Male	41.9%
	Female	58.1%
Academic years completed	1-2 years	12.5%
	3-4 years	75.4%

Interpretation courses completed	5 years	12.1%
	None	0.4%
	Less than two courses	46.5%
	Three courses	1.6%
	More than three courses	51.5%
Performing interpretation tasks outside the university	Yes	29.2%
	No	70.8%

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Questionnaire analysis

As mentioned earlier the questionnaire involves demographic information about the respondents (Table 4) followed by three multiple-answer questions to understand students' perspectives on the instructional strategies employed in interpretation classes, the interpretation challenges, and the prospects of improving students' interpretation skills. The quantitative data of the questionnaire's responses were extracted from Google Forms and analysed statistically and are presented in charts to be qualitatively analysed in the following subsections.

4.2. Instructional strategies in interpretation classes

The questionnaire included a question aimed at understanding the frequency of certain actions performed by interpretation instructors. Respondents were asked to indicate how often their instructors engage in specific activities by selecting one of the options: 'always, sometimes, often, rarely, or never'. This was aimed at identifying any instructional gaps that may have an impact on students' learning experience in interpretation classrooms and at gaining insights into the practices and frequency of various instructional approaches employed by the instructors. The responses are shown in Table 5.

Analysing the responses provided by the participants reveals that the instructional environment is generally effective. The majority of items were answered with 'always' or 'often', suggesting that the instructors equipped the students with the necessary tools for practising interpretation. This was particularly evident in areas such as teaching interpretation strategies and highlighting common errors in interpreting.

Table 5: Instructional strategies in interpretation classes

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Explain how to use translation strategies in interpretation (e.g., paraphrasing, addition, omission, compensation...)	131	22		5	3
Use the role-play technique to learn from my classmates' interpretations	78	108	25	5	11
Provide a glossary of terminologies included in the speech before the exam	76	106	20	11	9
Teach me how to take notes in interpretation	76	96	34	8	0
Provide feedback on my interpretation in class	82	98	29	3	2
Provide feedback on my interpretation after exam	58	92	27	14	17
Use equipped labs for interpretation courses	76	91	30	3	10
Conduct a diagnostic test in the first lecture to identify our needs	86	74	31	13	14
Point out the common mistakes we make in our interpretations	75	114	19	7	0
Point out the common and general mistakes in interpretation	97	77	23	6	2
Start with easy speeches to harder ones in class	79	91	29	9	4
Play the speech more than once in class	61	105	38	6	4
Play the speech more than once in exam	52	88	54	9	10

However, a significant number of respondents answered 'never' to certain items, indicating areas where improvements can be made. These items include 1) conducting a diagnostic test at the beginning of the semester to identify student needs, 2) providing feedback after exams, 3) supplying glossaries of necessary terminologies, and 4) using role-play to allow students to observe and learn from their peers' performance. Furthermore, it was found that most respondents reported that their instructors played

the speech more than once during class and exams, indicating that repeated exposure to the material led to better comprehension and practice.

4.3. Respondents' view of interpretation challenges

The respondents were asked to rate 19 items on a scale of 1 to 5 on what poses a challenge, with 1 representing the highest challenge. The responses were as follows:

Table 6: Interpretation challenges

Simultaneous interpretation	102	65	24	6	4
Consecutive interpretation	63	70	36	18	2
Sight interpretation	39	82	64	13	9
English to Arabic interpreting	35	83	71	14	11
Arabic to English interpreting	42	66	83	11	5
Speaker's accent	56	70	66	7	3
Speech speed	71	81	50	3	1
Lengthy speech	51	78	64	4	2
Sound clarity	46	65	63	11	7
Idioms	48	79	64	10	1
Metaphors	50	80	53	11	2
Phrasal verbs	38	72	64	6	4
Cultural references	37	71	72	10	2
Specialized terminologies	51	80	59	10	2
Sentence structure	36	79	65	17	6
Numbers	50	68	59	14	12
Proper names	49	57	67	18	10
Unfamiliar words	57	76	60	7	1
The use of technical equipment	50	81	58	10	14

Table 6 illustrates that 43.6% of the respondents view SI as the most challenging mode of interpretation. Other significant challenges were ranked lower than SI; for example, ST 35%, speech speed 34.6%, lengthy speeches 33.3%, technical terms 34.2%, sentence structure 33.8%, numbers 29%, unfamiliar words 32.5%, and using technical equipment while interpreting 34.6%. Additionally, the responses indicated that Arabic–English interpreting appears less challenging than English–Arabic interpreting. They also pointed out that some linguistic items (e.g., idioms, metaphors, and phrasal verbs) might pose a challenge to them. Lastly, proper names and cultural references were less challenging than the other items in this question.

4.4. Respondents' perspectives on the suggested solutions

The respondents were asked to select possible solutions to the reported challenges. The questionnaire proposed 13 solutions, and respondents could choose one or more. An option was provided to suggest any additional solutions. The results are as shown in Table 7.

Figure 7: Student's perspectives on the suggested solutions

Add more interpretation courses to the program	59
Learn more about interpretation coping strategies	96
Receive feedback on my interpretation	92
Evaluate my classmates' interpretations	71
Practice interpretation in specialized translation courses	106
Use equipped labs for interpretation training	102
Conduct optional training courses in the department for interpreting	97
Provide glossaries of specialized terminology	103
Learn more about notetaking	71
Learn more about sentence restructuring techniques in interpretation	77
Have a real-life practice for interpreting	84
Increase the training hours	83
Enhance the speaking skill in the early academic levels	50

As illustrated in Table 7, one of the most suggested solutions (45.7%) by the respondents was practising interpretation in specialised translation courses. Providing glossaries of specialised terminologies was recommended by 44.4% of the respondents. Using equipped labs for training was preferred by 44% of the respondents. Additionally, 41.8% preferred optional training courses in the department, and 41.4% wanted to learn more about interpreting strategies. Last, 39.7% wanted feedback on their interpretation, while 36.2% wished to have real-life practice sessions for interpreting, and 35.8% chose increasing the training hours. Additionally, one respondent asserted, in the 'other' option, that providing optional training programmes would be helpful for interpretation students. The respondents also desired to learn more about note-taking techniques.

In conclusion, the questionnaire's collected responses indicated that the instructional strategies employed in interpreting classrooms are effective. However, there is room for improvement in areas related to identifying the actual needs for interpretation students every semester, providing feedback and glossaries of specialised terms, and the need to bring the classroom closer to real-life practice by minimising the chance to play the speech more than once in the class. The responses also proved that SI is

challenging, followed by ST and English-Arabic interpreting. Other reported challenges included speech speed and length, terminologies, numbers, and other linguistic issues (e.g., idioms, metaphors, phrasal verbs, and sentence structure). However, the respondents recommended solutions to these challenges, including more practice and training programmes for interpreting, learning about interpreting coping strategies, and getting more exposure to specialised terminologies.

5. Discussion

This case study examined interpretation students' perspectives on the factors affecting their performance in interpretation and their views towards the most suitable solutions for such issues. To answer the RQs, a questionnaire was administered to explore Saudi undergraduates' significant challenges in interpretation, the possible solutions for these challenges, and the teaching methods instructors usually employ in interpretation courses. Analysing the 234 responses revealed that the respondents generally perceived the instructional strategies within Saudi universities as practical and of high quality. They found value in the instructional methods and believed that these methods contributed to their learning and development as interpreters. However, their suggestion to provide a glossary of terminologies implies that they encountered difficulties with unfamiliar or specialised vocabulary during the interpretation tasks. Access to a glossary can help interpretation students better understand and accurately convey the intended meaning of such terms and be a valuable resource to support them in their interpretation practice to improve their overall performance.

From the questionnaire results, it is clear that the respondents find SI the most challenging mode, which implies a struggle with the demands of listening, comprehending, and interpreting in real time while maintaining accuracy and fluency. This finding can be linked to Jones' (2014) and Russo's (2010) conclusions that SI requires complex cognitive ability. Furthermore, Russo mentions that skills such as excellent comprehension and production of foreign languages, including one's native tongue, and the ability to coordinate listening and speaking can be developed through

training. This supports the need for targeted training programmes and practice opportunities in SI for interpretation students.

Most of the respondents selected 'speech speed' among the major challenges they encounter in interpreting, which suggests that they often struggle to keep pace with the speech during interpretation. This is an often-encountered challenge in SI, where interpreters must render the speech in real-time without pauses or breaks. This is consistent with Changshuan's (2010) emphasis on the impact of fast speech delivery on the quality of SI. The high number of respondents choosing 'sight interpretation' among the interpretation challenges indicates that students may also struggle with the instant processing and production of information. This finding indicates the importance of integrating ST in all translation courses to enhance students' cognitive and linguistic skills simultaneously, especially the specialised ones, which can enhance their interpreting skills and help them learn more technical terms. This also appeared as the most recommended solution as per the questionnaire respondents to enhance their interpretation performance by practising interpretation in specialised translation courses.

These challenges in SI, speech speed, and ST may be attributed to limited practice opportunities, lack of familiarity with the subject matter, and insufficient training in managing speech speed and structural differences. Addressing these challenges is crucial in improving the interpretation skills of interpretation students. Providing targeted training and practice in SI techniques, increasing exposure to different speech speeds, and offering guidance on effective strategies for note-taking can help students overcome these challenges. Instructors and curriculum designers must consider these findings when developing interpretation-training programmes for interpretation students. By addressing the identified challenges, instructors can better support students in their learning journey and help them develop the necessary skills and strategies to excel in SI.

Additionally, 'explaining how to use translation strategies in interpretation' received the highest rating, followed by 'pointing out the common and general mistakes in interpretation', 'providing feedback on student's interpretation in class', and 'teaching student how to take notes

in interpretation’. This suggests that respondents value receiving guidance and support in their interpretation skills. The importance placed on understanding and effectively using translation strategies indicates that respondents recognise the significance of employing appropriate techniques to ensure accurate and fluent interpretation. This highlights the participants’ desire to develop a strong foundation in translation strategies to enhance their overall interpretation abilities. This finding supports Takeda’s (2010) finding that learning interpreting strategies is one of the priorities of interpretation students to improve their performance. ‘Pointing out the common and general mistakes in interpretation’ received a high score indicating that respondents appreciate constructive feedback that helps them identify and correct errors. This feedback can improve their performance and prevent them from making the same mistakes in future interpretation tasks. The items related to ‘providing feedback on student’s interpretation in class’, and ‘teaching student how to take notes in interpretation’ were also sought by the respondents, as indicated by the high rankings for these items. Respondents therefore value the opportunity to receive personalised feedback on their interpretation performance and learn effective note-taking techniques. These indicate a desire for continuous improvement. Understanding these demands can improve the design and implementation of interpretation training programmes. Providing explicit instruction on translation strategies, offering constructive feedback, and teaching effective note-taking techniques can address the interpretation students’ needs and enhance their interpretation skills. ??

The suggestion to conduct a diagnostic test to identify the interpretation students’ needs also highlights an area for improvement. A diagnostic test can help assess the students’ skills and knowledge, allowing instructors to tailor the interpretation tasks and training accordingly. By identifying individual strengths and weaknesses, instructors can provide targeted support and address specific needs, leading to more effective learning outcomes. Implementing these suggestions can enhance the interpretation students’ learning experience and improve the quality of interpretation tasks within the university. By addressing the challenges related to specialised vocabulary and individual needs, interpretation students can

further develop their interpretation skills and feel more confident about their abilities.

Lastly, based on the results, it can be concluded that practicing ST in specialised translation courses is one of the most critical factors that can promote students' performance in interpretation. This suggests that hands-on practice and exposure to interpretation tasks within specialised translation courses are crucial in improving students' interpretation skills. More importantly, constant practice of ST would increase translation speed and interpretation and facilitate the acquisition of translation and interpretation competencies. Practicing interpretation techniques and strategies in a specialised context helps students develop their abilities and become proficient interpreters. The provision of glossaries of specialised terminology is ranked as the second most crucial factor. Access to a comprehensive glossary can greatly support students in understanding and accurately interpreting specialised terms. Having a reliable resource for specialised terminology helps students overcome language barriers and ensures the accuracy and fluency of their interpretations. Using equipped labs for interpretation training is another crucial factor that can positively influence students' performance. Well-equipped labs provide a conducive environment for practice, allowing students to simulate real-life interpretation scenarios. The availability of necessary equipment and resources in these labs enhances the learning experience and prepares students for professional interpretation settings. Conducting optional training courses in the department for interpreting is also ranked as an important factor. Providing these additional training courses allows students to refine their interpretation skills and gain more exposure to different techniques and strategies. Learning more about interpretation coping strategies and receiving feedback on interpretation are also important factors. Understanding effective coping strategies helps students manage the challenges and demands of interpretation tasks. Conversely, feedback helps students identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to enhance their performance.

However, enhancing speaking skills in the early academic levels was ranked as the least important factor. This suggests that while speaking

skills are essential, the questionnaire respondents view that such skill would not significantly affect their performance in interpretation compared to the other factors included in the questionnaire.

Based on these results, it is recommended to prioritise practice and training opportunities, note-taking techniques, and equipped labs in interpretation training programmes. Focusing on specialised terminology, coping strategies, and providing feedback can also improve students' interpretation skills.

6. Conclusion

This case study examined the students' perspectives on the factors affecting their performance in interpretation and the possible solutions they believe can contribute to enhancing their performance. The findings indicated that interpretation students value guidance and support in their interpretation skills, particularly in understanding and effectively using translation strategies. They also appreciate feedback on their interpretation performance and the opportunity to learn effective note-taking techniques. They indicate a strong desire for continuous improvement and a recognition of the importance of these aspects in enhancing overall interpretation abilities.

Furthermore, the study identified SI and English-Arabic language pairs as two of the major challenges in interpretation for Saudi interpretation students. Students also struggled with speech speed and specialised terms. These challenges may be attributed to limited practice opportunities, unfamiliarity with specialised terminology, and insufficient training in managing speech speed and structural differences.

The study also highlighted several factors that might improve students' performance in interpretation. Practising ST in specialised translation courses emerged as the most important factor, followed by providing glossaries of specialised terminology and using equipped labs for interpretation training to bring the interpretation class closer to real-life practice. Conducting diagnostic tests and optional training courses, learning more about interpretation coping strategies, and receiving feedback on interpretation were also deemed significant.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that interpretation-training programmes prioritise practical application and practice opportunities of ST within specialised translation courses, providing comprehensive glossaries, utilising equipped labs, and offering optional training courses, which can significantly enhance students' interpretation skills. Additionally, focusing on coping strategies and providing feedback can further support students in overcoming challenges and improving their performance.

The implications of this study are significant for interpretation training programs and educators in understanding and addressing the factors that affect interpretation students' performance. The findings highlight the importance of guidance and support in interpretation skills, particularly in the understanding and effective use of translation strategies. Educators should prioritize providing students with the necessary guidance and support in developing these skills, as they are crucial for enhancing overall interpretation abilities. The study also emphasizes the value of feedback and the opportunity to learn effective note-taking techniques. Incorporating regular feedback mechanisms and dedicated instruction on note-taking can help students improve their interpretation performance and develop essential skills for accurate and coherent interpretation. The challenges identified in the study, such as SI, English-Arabic language pairs, speech speed, and specialized terminology, point to areas that require special attention in interpretation training programs. Addressing these challenges may involve providing more practice opportunities, introducing specialized translation courses with comprehensive glossaries, and utilizing equipped interpretation labs to simulate real-life practice scenarios.

The study highlights the importance of conducting diagnostic tests to assess students' strengths and weaknesses and offering optional training courses to target specific areas for improvement. This personalized approach can enhance students' interpretation skills and cater for their individual needs. Furthermore, the study underscores the need for interpretation students to learn coping strategies to manage challenges effectively. Integrating coping strategies into the curriculum can empower

students to overcome difficulties related to speech speed, complex texts, and unfamiliar topics.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 234 interpretation students from Saudi universities and the number of interpretation courses completed may not represent the entire population of interpretation students in Saudi Arabia or other contexts. Therefore, caution should be exercised in generalizing the findings to a broader population. Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data obtained through an online questionnaire. Future research could employ additional methods, such as interviews or observations, to complement and validate the findings. Finally, the study focused on interpretation students' perspectives and did not incorporate the viewpoints of instructors or professionals in the field. Future work should include multiple perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting interpretation performance.

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Appendix A: The Questionnaire

Interpretation Challenges: An Explanatory Case Study of Saudi Undergraduates¹

* This Questionnaire is FOR SAUDI TRANSLATION STUDENTS ONLY.

You are invited to participate in a research study about the interpretation challenges Saudi undergraduates encounter in class. This research study aims to identify the significant challenges in interpretation and the reasons behind these challenges. Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate in the study, it will take approximately 10 minutes. All your information and responses will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential within reasonable limits. Only those directly involved with this project will have access to the data.

Name (optional):

Gender:

- Male
- Female

University:

Academic years completed:

- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years

How many interpretation courses (simultaneous, consecutive, bilateral, and sight interpretation) have you completed?

- Less than 2
- More than 3
- Other:

Do you perform any interpretation task outside the university?

¹ This questionnaire is available at:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfcEFYZuUd3-puM4SLMwABeRq3KqG8aEWxqFM09ZISycXrFnw/formResponse>

- Yes
- No

If your answer was "No" you can jump to the next question.

If your answer was "Yes", please write here where do you perform the interpretation task.

How often do your interpretation instructors do the following:

	Always	Often	Sometime	Rarely	Never
	s	s	s	s	s
Explain how to use translation strategies in interpretation (e.g., paraphrasing, addition, omission, compensation...)					
Use the role-play technique to learn from my classmates' interpretations					
Provide a glossary of terminologies included in the speech before the exam					
Teach me how to take notes in interpretation					
Provide feedback on my interpretation in class					
Provide feedback on my interpretation after the exam					
Use equipped labs for interpretation courses					
Conduct a diagnostic test in the first lecture to identify our needs					
Point out the common mistakes we make in our interpretations					
Point out the common and general mistakes in interpretation					
Start with easy speeches to harder ones in class					
Play the speech more than once in class					
Play the speech more than once in the exam					

Please rate yourself honestly based on what you find more challenging in interpretation (1 is the most challenging)

	1	2	3	4	5
Simultaneous interpretation					
Consecutive interpretation					
Sight interpretation					
English to Arabic interpreting					
Arabic to English interpreting					
Speaker's accent					
Speech speed					
Lengthy speech					
Sound clarity					
Idioms					
Metaphors					
Phrasal verbs					
Cultural references					
Specialized terminologies					
Sentence structure					
Numbers					
Proper names					
Unfamiliar words					
The use of technical equipment					

How do you think your interpretation skills can be improved? (You can choose more than one)

- Add more interpretation courses to the program
- Learn more about interpretation coping strategies
- Receive feedback on my interpretation
- Evaluate my classmates interpretations
- Practice interpretation in specialized translation courses
- Use equipped labs for interpretation training
- Conduct optional training courses in the department for interpreting
- Provide glossaries of specialized terminology
- Learn more about note-taking
- Learn more about sentence restructuring techniques in interpretation
- Have a real-life practice for interpreting
- Increase the training hours
- Enhance the speaking skill in the early academic levels
- Other: