

Simultaneous or consecutive interpreting in a veterinary context: A Veterinary Pathology Teaching Experience in the South China Agricultural University (SCAU), Guangzhou, China

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ABSTRACT

China is the second world's strongest economy and the largest manufacturing economy and exporter of goods. Furthermore, it is also the world's fastest-growing consumer market. Veterinary Sciences are underdeveloped in China Universities due to a complete lack of veterinary specialists in the country. This paper describes the experience of a Board Certified Veterinary Pathologists during one week of teaching in the South China Agricultural University (SCAU), Guangzhou, China. A course (40 h) entitled "Fundamental and Practical Pathology for Veterinary Clinicians and Researchers" was provided to 100 attendees including; veterinary students, researchers and veterinary graduates. The teaching was given in English by a native Spanish with a C1 English level. The lectures were translated into Chinese using two modalities; simultaneous and consecutive. Significance differences regarding the adequacy of each method were noted after analysing a survey conducted at the end of the teaching. Simultaneous interpreting was preferred over consecutive by 82% of the attendees. The present work emphasizes the need of specialist veterinary medical training in China and highlights how simultaneous interpreting is a useful tool to provide veterinary pathology teaching in the context of a highly-specialised discipline.

Keywords: Accuracy, China, Highly-specialised contexts, Simultaneous and Consecutive Interpreting, Target Message, Veterinary.

1. INTRODUCTION

As defined by Russel simultaneous interpreting is the process of interpreting into the target language at the same time as the source language is being spoken, while consecutive interpreting is the process of interpreting after the speaker has finished one or more fragments in the source language and makes continuous pauses for the interpreter to transfer the information.¹

On the one hand, simultaneous interpreting implies a more fluent development of the event and a faster understanding of the audience. However, it must be taken into account that the high level of specialization of the speech, in terms of clinical veterinary, makes the work of the interpreter harder and complex. The interpreter must accurately understand the original meaning to find the better equivalence in the target language by using the correct specialized terminology, what involves a good knowledge of the subject and a skilled mastery of specialised terminology.^{1,2}

On the other hand, consecutive interpreting implies a slower linguistic process and a loss of secondary information. However, there is an interaction between the speaker and the interpreter, who can in certain moments clarify concepts and have a nearer approach to the information and the speaker. Furthermore, the consecutive interpreter has more time to understand the speech and reformulate by using more accurate terms.^{1,2}

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1.1. Terminology management

A crucial aspect is the terminology management and the most adequate selection of terms and concepts within the specific scientific field. Nowadays, science and technology play an important role in our society. In consequence, “the way specialized knowledge concepts are named, structured, described, and translated has put terminology or the designation of specialised knowledge concepts in the limelight”^{1, 2}. Specialized language occupies a more complex level in the general language. It has its own technical and particular linguistic features that considerably vary from general terminology and make the interpreting process more difficult. In words of Cabré “as a subject field with explicit premises, terminology emerges from the need of technicians and scientists to unify the concepts and terms of their subject fields in order to facilitate professional communication and the transfer of knowledge”³.

1.2. Veterinary and medical language: the importance of its correct understanding

Importantly language barrier could considerably reduce the effectiveness of veterinary and medical professionals in clinical practice. Language knowledge at a basic and functional level does not guarantee the correct understanding of specialised language. A functional proficiency level of the foreign language is essential to correctly understand veterinary concepts and terms. Therein lies the cause of the language gap and it is precisely in this matter where a quality interpreting service is needed to bridge gaps. In any veterinary setting, the lack of language proficiency may lead to serious health risks and it implies less confidence in the clinical practice.^{4, 5}

1.3. South China Agricultural University (SCAU), Guangzhou, China

SCAU was founded in 1909. Currently is formed by 26 colleges/department in which approximately 40,000 students attend lectures in the field of agricultural sciences. English is barely used throughout the different degrees and both students and academic staff have very poor to no competence in the usage of English language (personal communication) (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).



Figure 1. South China Agricultural University is located in Guangzhou, Canton Province.



Figure 2. Part of the audience at the South China Agricultural University. Dr. Alejandro Suárez-Bonnet six by the right from the Royal Veterinary College.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to compare the precision of these two interpreting modalities, we carried out a survey addressed to the Chinese audience who attended the aforementioned pathology course. The survey focuses on the importance of accuracy and quality of the interpreting activity in a highly specialised veterinary context, where the majority of the audience is composed by veterinary students, professionals, experts and researchers in the field of medical practice.

Questions 1 and 2 of our survey provided basic information about the respondents regarding their age range and current academic or professional situation.

Questions 3 and 4 are intended to find out the degree of accuracy of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting in a high-specialised context based on veterinary experts' opinion and considering that in the consecutive interpreting there is a direct interaction between speaker and interpreter. Consecutive interpreting technique implies frequent interruptions of the original speech so the interpreter can transfer the source message into the target language of the audience. Its use entails less technical costs; however, it is highly time-consuming.

Question 5 is meant to find out the appropriateness of this interpreting technique in an international conference of this type.

Finally, questions 6 and 7 of our survey focused on the quality and precision of the interpretation considering that the interpreting act happens in a highly-specialised communicative context and the speech addresses an audience of Chinese experts in the field of veterinary, what involves to deal with cultural aspects and with a completely different language syntax and phonology. Below are detailed the questions provided and the end of the course to the attendees.

Please, mark the most appropriate option in every question.

1- Please, select your age range:	
A	20-30
B	30-40
C	40-50
D	≤50

2- Please, select your position:	
A	Student
B	Graduate

C	Researcher
D	Professor

3- How accurate do you think it is a simultaneous interpreting in a high-specialized veterinary context?	
A	Very much
B	Much
C	Little
D	Very little

4- How precise do you think it is a consecutive interpreting in a high-specialized veterinary context, considering the interaction between speaker and interpreter?	
A	Very much
B	Much
C	Little
D	Very little

5- In terms of time, simultaneous interpreting is immediate, while consecutive interpreting involves frequent pauses during the speech, so the interpreter can transfer the information. Do you think consecutive interpreting may be regarded as a possible interpreting technique during a conference?	
A	Very much
B	Much
C	Little
D	Very little

6- How is the level of quality and precision of the simultaneous interpreting considering that it is a simultaneous act of reformulation?	
A	High
B	Medium
C	Low
D	Very low

7- How important is the precision and the correct use of the terminology in the veterinary context of this Conference?	
A	Very much
B	Much
C	Little
D	Very little

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After having analysed the survey results, we obtained interesting and variable results. According to the personal profile, the respondents were divided into two main groups of age: a) 57 aged 20 to 40, of which 21 were students, 13 graduates, 17 researchers and 6 professors; and b) 43 aged 40 to ≤50, of which 25 were researchers, 9 graduates and 9 lecturers. Regarding the linguistic aspects studied through questions 3 to 7 of our survey on the interpreting act, the results show that a high per cent (82%) of the audience, mostly aged 40 to ≤50, considered the interpreting activity as a key step in every conference, meeting or debate to ensure the correct understanding of the information and the accuracy of the data provided by the speaker. However, it is curious that a 65% of the audience, mostly aged 20-40, considered that the use of a more general terminology in the veterinary field would also guarantee the correct understanding of the original information transmitted by the speaker (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

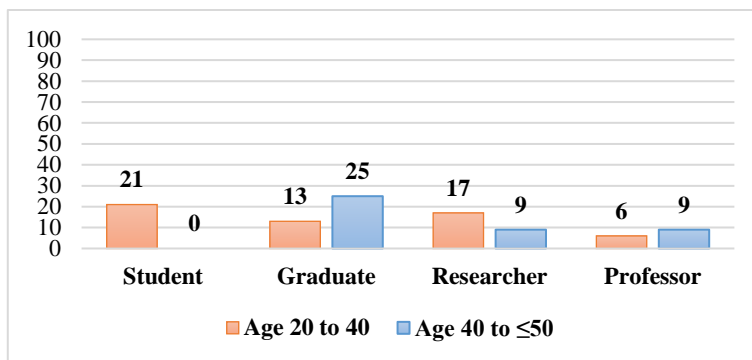


Figure 3. Personal profile of the respondents.

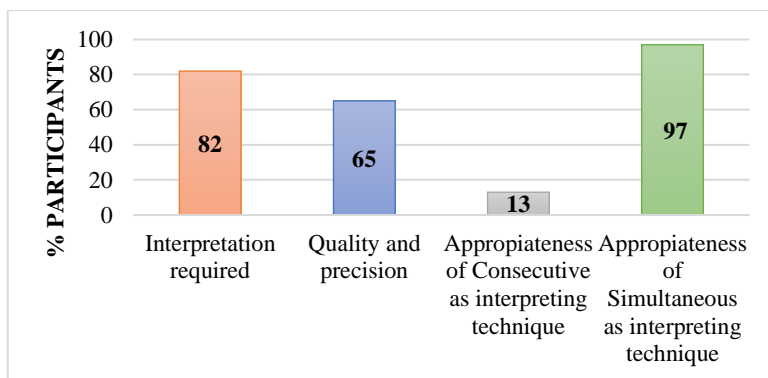


Figure 4. Assessment of characteristic analysed regarding the interpreting act.

Given that Chinese is an analytic and agglutinative language, syntax, morphology and phonology differ considerably from English, which is a synthetic language. In analytic languages, context and syntax are more important than morphology, while synthetic languages seek to reach concordance and reference between the different parts of the sentences. Therefore, morphology is more important than languages.³

Regarding the linguistic aspects involved in the interpreting act of English as source language (SL) and Chinese as target language (TL), the interpreter has to deal with considerable long sentences composed by multi-syllable morphemes to be transferred into Chinese, which is mainly monosyllabic and a morpheme or unit of meaning is just a single syllable with plenty meaning. This fact during the interpreting act implies different time lapses due to the extension of the sentences, the creation of complete new syntax in the SL, what slows down the communicative procedure and makes the job of the interpreter difficult and challenging.^{2,3}

4. CONCLUSIONS

When it comes to the selection of simultaneous or consecutive interpreting in highly-specialised contexts, it exists an open dilemma to decide which technique will work in a more effective and accurate way, ensuring that the original message is correctly understood by the participants. In the present work, we have analysed the accuracy of the target message through simultaneous and/or consecutive interpreting in the language combination English-Chinese during a veterinary pathology course. Simultaneous interpreting ensures a significantly better learning-process. Furthermore, consecutive interpreting produces significant time-loss, loss of content and a significant delay in the lecturing process.

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