CONFERENCE INTERPRETING IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY ON USERS, INTERPRETERS, AND CLIENTS' QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

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ABSTRAK

Interpretasi persidangan perlu dikaji dengan teliti untuk menghasilkan kualiti yang optimum dalam konteks Malaysia. Jangkaan pengguna, jurubahasa, dan pelanggan dikaji menggunakan kaedah tinjauan soal selidik yang diadaptasikan dari kajian oleh Zwischenberger & Pöchhacker (2010), Bühler (1986), dan Moser (1995) dalam tesis ini. Matlamat kajian ini adalah menghasilkan profil pengguna, jurubahasa, dan pelanggan; mengenal pasti jangkaan berkenaan kualiti interpretasi dan sama ada terdapat perbezaan yang ketara antara jangkaan berdasarkan jantina, jenis persidangan, umur, pengalaman, bahasa pertama, dan tahap pendidikan; mengenal pasti masalah utama yang dihadapi jurubahasa persidangan, dan mengemukakan cadangan untuk meningkatkan kualiti. Selaras dengan teori Terjemahan yang menekankan fungsi dan tujuan (Scopos), teras kajian ini adalah daripada data pengguna. Analisis kuantitatif dan kualitatif terhadap soal selidik daripada 256 pengguna, 42 pelanggan, dan 11 jurubahasa menunjukkan setiap kumpulan mempunyai jangkaan yang berbeza, dan jangkaan individu daripada kumpulan yang sama berkemungkinan berlainan. Jurubahasa meletakkan kriteria linguistik sebagai yang terpenting. Pengguna percaya pengetahuan dan kemahiran, penyesuaian diri dengan kelajuan penutur, dan kekangan masa adalah bahagian yang paling bermasalah dalam interpretasi persidangan. Jangkaan jurubahasa adalah lebih tinggi daripada pelanggan, dan jangkaan pengguna adalah yang lebih rendah daripada pelanggan. Jangkaan oleh pengguna bukan Malaysia, pengguna berbahasa Inggeris dan pengguna lebih tua adalah lebih tinggi daripada jangkaan pengguna Malaysia, pengguna berbahasa lain, dan pengguna muda. Cadangan paling penting bagi pengguna, jurubahasa, dan pelanggan dari segi penambahbaikan kualiti interpretasi adalah yang berkaitan dengan kriteria kualiti. Penyelidik menyarankan lebih perhatian diberikan kepada ciri-ciri konteks, sebagai tambahan kepada isu linguistik yang didalami dalam kajian kualiti ini.

CONFERENCE INTERPRETING IN MALAYSIA: A STUDY ON USERS, INTERPRETERS, AND CLIENTS' QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

ABSTRACT

Conference interpreting needs to be explored thoughtfully to obtain optimum quality in Malaysian setting. Expectations of users, interpreters, and clients are explored by a questionnaire-based survey adapted from Zwischenberger & Pöchhacker (2010), Bühler (1986), and Moser's (1995) studies in this thesis. The objectives of the study are producing users, interpreters, and clients' profile; identifying their expectations of interpreting quality and any significant difference between those expectations based on gender, conference typology, age, experience, first-language, and educational level; determining the key problems that conference interpreters encounter; and putting forward suggestions for improving quality. In line with Translation theories that emphasise the function and purpose (Scopos) of translation, the core of the study is the users' data. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaires from 256 users, 42 clients and 11 interpreters suggest that different groups have different expectations, and expectations of an individual from the same group might be different from the expectations of the others. Interpreters attach the utmost importance to linguistic criteria. Users believe knowledge and skills, adapting with the speaker's speed, and time constraints are the most problematic aspects in conference interpreting. Interpreters have higher expectations than clients, and users have lower expectations than clients. Expectations of non-Malaysian, English-speaking and older users are higher than expectations of Malaysian users, speakers of other languages and younger users. Users, interpreters, and clients' most important suggestions to improve quality of interpreting are associated with the quality criteria. The researcher calls for taking further notice of contextual features, in addition to the linguistic issues that have been pursued in quality research.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preview

This introductory chapter begins with the background of the study elaborating on interpreting quality (IQ) research and status in conference interpreting (CI), as well as the Malaysian setting of CI. The statement of the problem and research objectives precede research questions. The chapter progresses with the significance of the study that is followed by the research scope and limitations. Then, operational definitions of the key terms come before the eventual organisation of the study or chapter outline.

1.1 Background of the Study

Translation and Interpreting (T/I) have fundamental roles in facilitating communications among different nations and even the people of the same nation by removing the language barrier. Among the key rules of Skopos Theory such as Skopos rule and Coherence rule, the Skopos rule as an outstanding rule for any translation, determines that in every translational action the end justifies the means (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984, p. 101). In Skopos theory, developed by the German translator Vermeer in 1978, the process of translation is determined by the function of the product. This function is specified by the addressee. This theory is one of the functionalist approaches whose aim is to dethrone the source text (ST). Although translation was used as an umbrella term for interpreting, the most succinct way to distinguish interpreting from other translational activity is by its "immediacy" (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 39). Every individual text or utterance is produced for a specific purpose and should be in line with this purpose whereby the translator/interpreter

should translate/interpret in a way that enables the text/interpretation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984, p. 101). In other words, the target text must be adapted to the standards of intra-textual coherence (it must make sense within its communicative situation) and inter-textual coherence (it must be loyal to the source text). Research in interpreting was primarily influenced by other disciplines such as psychology, cognitive processing, etc. until the 1980s and early 1990s. Approaching the end of the 20th century, interpreting in courtrooms, hospitals, schools and other social institutions came to the centre of attention in Interpreting Studies (IS). The progress towards such community-based interpreting within related socio-cultural contexts is deemed as a pivotal point of IS development. Within the recent decade, a wide range of profession-associated subjects such as training, professional standards, code of ethics, etc. have caught the eyes of IS researchers and practitioners. Various psychological and sociological foundations are illustrated by Pöchhacker (2004, pp. 16-17) through a conceptual spectrum which ranges from international context represented in simultaneous interpreting (SI) in conferences to intra-social interactions in face-to-face dialogue interpreting.

The issue of quality in the literature has been approached from at least two perspectives: mainly the criteria for evaluating quality and factors that could negatively affect interpreting quality. In addition, when discussing interpreting quality, the first point on which an agreement has to be reached is from which angle interpreting quality is to be seen. Quality is most often seen from the point of view of the two parties who operate on opposite ends of the interpreting spectrum, the one producing the target text and the one

receiving it, namely the interpreter and the listener. This can be seen in the section entitled "Methodological Approaches" in Pöchhacker's article, "Quality Assessment in Conference and Community Interpreting" (2001). In this section, Pöchacker mentions 32 different empirical studies on interpreting quality, and 17 of them are seen from either the users' or the interpreters' perspective, (e.g. Hearn et al. 1981, Bühler 1986, Feldweg 1996, Marrone 1993, Pöchhacker 2000 and Kadric 2000). The other empirical studies are examples of researchers analysing interpreting corpora in order to measure and/or evaluate quality (e.g. Barik 1971, Lindholm 1995 and Cockely 1992). Three of the studies mentioned, Rehbein 1985, Roy 1993 and Mason 1999, cannot be placed in the two categories as Pöchhacker does not go into depth with which topic areas of interpreting quality the three studies cover.

It is widely known that the first scholar who sought to collect empirical data on the various factors that play a role in the evaluation of conference interpreting was Hildegund Bühler, an interpreter who took a special interest in the profession and conducted several studies on aspects of a conference interpreter's work. In a pioneering effort, Bühler (1986) surveyed members of AIIC about the criteria they presumably applied when assessing the quality of an interpreter and his or her performance. For this purpose she drew up a list of 16 criteria, distinguishing between linguistic-semantic and extra-linguistic factors. The former included "native accent", "fluency of delivery", "logical cohesion of utterance", "sense-consistency with original message", "completeness of interpretation", "correct grammatical usage", "use of correct terminology" and "use of appropriate style", and the latter "pleasant voice", "thorough preparation of conference documents", "endurance", "poise", "pleasant appearance",

"reliability", "ability to work in a team" and "positive feedback of delegates" (Pöchhacker, 2012).

Recapitulating earlier studies on IQ and expectations, the present research focuses on users, interpreters, and clients' (abbreviated as UIC in this study) expectations of interpreting quality and their particular characteristics in international conferences, and accentuates the necessity of taking their perspectives and expectations into consideration. Such necessity has been highlighted by researchers such as Seleskovitch (1986), Kurz (1989, 1993, 2001), Vuorikoski (1995), Moser (1995), Shlesinger (1997), and Grbić (2008) for users' expectations. Interpreters' expectations are also sought by researchers like Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker (2010). Expectations of clients (see Section 1.8.7) have not received enough attention despite their significance. Among different methods, survey studies using questionnaires have played a significant role in IQ research. Although questionnaires cannot strictly determine preferences in evaluating quality, they are instruments that can help the researcher approach the purpose of promoting the quality of interpreting. In this study, questionnaire-based survey research was tailored in international conference setting in Malaysia. Different linguistic and non-linguistic criteria regarding the significance of quality criteria were implemented for evaluating quality criteria in a broad view. The importance that different parties (UICs) attached to each quality criterion, and the analysis of those criteria according to the background variables (age, gender, conference-going experience, conference subject matter, first language, and educational level) in large sample, determine to what extent each quality criterion is ranked as important by each group and the individual. These quality criteria were sense-consistency with original message,

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fluency of delivery, synchronicity, logical cohesion, appropriate style, completeness, lively intonation, pleasant voice, native accent, correct terminology, and correct grammar adapted from Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker's study (2010). The findings from the study are useful in the effort to form, consolidate, and enhance the understanding of IQ in CI. As an implication of the present investigation, such understanding helps promote the interpreting service provided for the different parties and delegates in the international conferences in Malaysia. The better quality of interpreting service at these conferences brings about satisfaction of the customers, and this can boost the Malaysian conference industry and eventually achieve many economic, social, cultural, and political advantages for the country.

The complex and multidimensional notion of quality is addressed here from the perspective of the users, interpreters, and clients. With Bühler's pioneering survey among conference interpreters serving as the point of departure, the importance of various quality criteria is investigated on the basis of a questionnaire-based survey conducted in the context of Malaysian conference interpreting setting. The findings, which point to a stable pattern of preferences, are discussed with regard to their generalizability on a global scale, with special reference to Malaysia.

1.1.1 Quality in Interpreting Studies

The notion of "quality" has lately become one of the most significant paradigms in both T/I fields. Translation Studies (TS) and Interpreting Studies (IS) have the quality notion as a fundamental issue in their cores in profession and research (Tommola, 2003, p. 125). The definition of quality, as Grbić (2008, p. 236) states, is primarily

drawn from other scientific interdisciplinary issues. Despite partial agreements on a few facets of quality research and profession-related issues, still there is no inclusive definition of IQ (Clifford, 2005, p. 97). Kalina's (2005, p. 771) definition of quality, as "a function of situation, context, and variables which might call for different priorities in different interpreting situations", is the other foundational definition in the present study. In these definitions, quality is viewed as a set of perspectives in wide range of particular situations fluctuating with different variables.

1.1.2 Research on quality

According to Pöchhacker (2004, p. 153), the majority of research in the scope of IQ commenced since 1980. Quality was considered a major criterion in the process of professionalisation. The first stage of quality research was characterised by qualifying standards by the most experienced peers alongside with a vague and general definition regarding 'good' interpreting (Setton & Motta, 2007, p. 202).

Quality of interpreting has been sought at different levels, allocating parts of it to the expectations and the relevance for different user groups, as well as the interpreters and clients. In this respect Tommola (2003, p. 125) states that evaluation of quality is based on "extraction of the users' perspectives based on their personal ideas", "implementation of different effectiveness analysis", "analyses of the professional situation", and "determining the significance of the quality criteria by the old peers or the professional interpreters". Pöchhacker (2001, pp. 414-16) states that survey researches as empirical studies on IQ have been conducted through different approaches considering UICs' perspectives, as well as case-based studies. The significance of those

perspectives and the studies devoted to them are introduced here briefly.

I. Users' perspectives

Conference interpreting literature which often touches upon a better understanding of user expectations is critical to the profession. User expectations have mostly been studied through the survey method. The needs and expectations of users of SI have been sought by large-scale survey authorised by The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC). AIIC's standards and guidelines are important in conference interpreting. First founded in 1953, when conference interpreting was still a fledgling profession, AIIC has now over 2900 members in more than 100 countries, and is present throughout the world. In the absence of any formal recognition of the profession, AIIC has become the main point of reference for the technical standards and working conditions required to guarantee quality, safeguard health, and train the future generations of colleagues. The goal is to assure the best possible service to clients and to create safeguards in practice that will contribute to professional interpreters having successful careers that span a lifetime. By adopting appropriate standards and guidelines and by sharing information on best practice with all stakeholders in the conference industry, AIIC recognises that quality interpretation depends on more than an individual interpreter's knowledge and skills. Working conditions, a spirit of collegiality in a profession where one rarely works alone, and the quality of conference and simultaneous interpretation equipment in a field often dependent on technology are but a few of the factors that will affect the interpreter's performance (AIIC Website).

The importance of users, as receivers of interpreting service, is highlighted because of "at least indirect feedback" that this awareness of their perspectives can give to every party in interpreting scene, interpreters in particular (Stenzl, 1983, p.44). Seleskovitch points out "interpretation should always be judged from the perspective of the listener and never as an end in itself. The chain of communication does not end in the booth" (1986, p. 236). Our ultimate goal must be to satisfy our audience (Déjean le Féal, 1990, p. 155) and an interpreter should always have the most demanding listener in mind and aim at fulfilling all the criteria of good quality interpreting (Vuorikoski, 1995, p. 173).

What is meant by "good" interpreting in the users' viewpoints? What are their preferences? What characteristics do they consider as important and which ones are conceived unimportant? How do the perspectives and expectations vary according to different background variables? These are sets of questions that most of IQ researchers who seek quality from users' perspectives have been trying to answer. Studies conducted by Kahane (2000), Kopczynski (1994), Kurz (1989, 1993, 2001), Moser (1995), Moser-Mercer (1996), Pöchhacker (1995, 2001) and Vuorikoski (1993) are focused in the present survey, in relation to their designs, methods, quality criteria, and consideration of perspectives for IQ. For instance, Kurz, as a pioneering researcher who conducted the first survey study on quality from users' perspectives in 1989, concludes that not only different user groups might have different expectations, but also even the same users might have different expectations in different situations (Kurz, 1993, p. 20). In 1994, Pöchhacker published the results of a bilingual questionnaire from a three-day conference asking the delegates to rate the overall impression, quality of verbal expression, mastery of

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technical language, voice quality and accent, and rhythm and intonation. His results suggested that quality of verbal expression was regarded the most important by users followed by mastery of technical language and the prosodic features of SI output such as voice quality, rhythm, and intonation (Pöchhacker, 1994). Moser's attempt in conducting such an investigation in 1995 using interviews was to find answers to questions such as; what is regarded as good interpretation in the users' perspective? How do users rank the quality criteria? Is conference type and size effective in the users' viewpoints and their expectations of quality and to what extent is this variable in different conferences? It was found that the relative importance that different users attached to each criterion was not the same. For example, in Moser's (1995) study it was found that essentials in contrast to completeness of rendition received higher ratings in the larger meetings and with the increase of age, the respondents gave priorities to essentials. Other background variables such as experience, gender, etc. also represented the previous conclusions on the varieties of users' expectations according to their individual characteristics and background variables. Moser used structured interviews with established set of questions and some of his questions are used in the present study as well in designing the questions of demographics. This is because Moser's survey has the largest number of respondents and it is regarded as one of the mostly referred researches so far (Diriker 2011, Garzone 2002, and Tiselius 2012).

Moreover, users and their perspectives in IQ research are explored by different researchers such as Berber-Irabien (2010), Grbić (2008), Kurz (1989, 1993, 2001), Moser (1995), Seleskovitch (1986), Shlesinger (1997), and Vuorikoski (1995). Kurz (2001, p. 394) regards users as the most significant component of quality notion.

Most of the surveys conducted so far prove that different user groups with different features or background variables such as age, gender, and experience might not have the same expectations of interpreting quality. Among wide range of hypotheses, the hypothesis that different user groups have different expectations has also been examined by researchers such as Kurz (1989) and Moser (1995).

II. Interpreters' perspectives

The common agreement among interpreters about the different standards or the norms of quality is indicated as part of the most valid knowledge in current quality research and profession (Setton & Motta, 2007, p. 202). As the pioneering study on interpreters, the characteristics of a "good interpreter" from interpreters' perspectives were sought by Hearn et al. (1981) in Australia. Hearn et al. (1981) surveyed 65 interpreters in an evaluation of two interpreting services and found the knowledge of both languages and of the migrant culture, objectivity, socio-communicative skills, reliability, responsibility, honesty, politeness and humility as the most important characteristics of a good interpreter (Hearn et al., 1981, cited in Pöchhacker, 2001, p. 414).

Moreover, one of the first attempts to identify the significance of the different quality criteria was a research conducted by Bühler in 1986 on AIIC members. Bühler's study is considered as one of the most frequently referenced studies in IQ literature. Although Bühler surveyed the interpreters' points of view, the findings were (over) generalised to users as well. Bühler developed a survey on AIIC members and juxtaposed sixteen criteria with a four-scale questionnaire to query the respondents and signify the relative importance they gave to each criterion both on "interpreter-related

qualities" and "interpreter's output". Interpreter-related notions included aspects like appearance and perfect preparation. Factors such as sense-consistency, logical cohesion, native accent, and fluency of delivery were the output-related quality criteria in this study. The most recent study on interpreters' points of view in quality research is Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker's study (2010), a web-based survey study which focused on professional interpreters' attitudes about the quality criteria and their attributes.

III. Clients' perspectives

"*Do our clients know what's good for them?*"

(Shlesinger et al., 1997, p. 126)

Clients are those who employ and pay for the interpreters. Examining clients' point of view has been almost neglected in IQ research, despite its significance. Moser-Mercer points out that the same methods that are used in evaluating quality from the users' point of view can be adapted for the employer or client perspective. Accuracy of content and technical terminology, rhetorical skills, as well as cooperative discipline, versatility to different settings, and schedules, payment, availability and loyalty to a particular employer are the other important parameters. Therefore, various employer subcategories must be taken into consideration such as agencies, professional conference organisers (PCOs), large language services of international organisations (Moser-Mercer, 1996, p. 50).

Despite Seleskovitch's perspective that "employers are not competent judges since most of them never have occasion to actually use interpreters' services"

(Seleskovitch, 1986, p. 236), Pöchhacker indicates that the observation to see if a discussion went smoothly may provide the employer a definite idea of interpreting quality, likely integrated by users' feedback that the employer will attempt to attain (Pöchhacker 1994, p. 124).

Hence, it should also be noted that interpreters are often not measured against the quality of the interpretation, as the criterion for the majority of employers for selecting an interpreter might be their budget compliance. Some employers, such as The European Commission's interpreting service and conference organiser (The DG Interpretation), systematically evaluate quality of interpretation and add cost efficiency and management considerations to the list of quality-related concerns. As Kahane maintains, The DG Interpretation's carrying out systematic analyses of interpreting performances is something expected, The DG being the world's largest client of interpreting services (Kahane 2000).

The clients' role as the employer who commissions for the individual interpreters is deemed "pivotal" by Pöchhacker (2001, p. 416). Cost and management considerations were the additional facets of the quality-related concerns in CI, in a major study by the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service of the European Commission, the world's largest client of interpreting services (Pöchhacker, 2001, p. 416). For the present study, clients are deemed as the individual representatives of the institutions or interpreting service providers, which employ and pay for interpreters. Therefore, clients are considered at an individual level and not at an institutional level, i.e. interpreting service customers per se without referring to any particular institution.

IV. Quality expectations

Today, the need for coherent empirical researches on quality expectations is accentuated mostly because organisations associated with interpreting insist on clearer criteria when evaluating IQ. However, most studies so far have been devoted to the assessment of the interpreters' performance than evaluating the expectations and perspectives of the different parties involved in conference interpreting scene. Such a need to scrutinise quality components and determinants has been the concern of the researchers of IS.

Pöchhacker (2001, p. 412) describes different analytical distinctions underlying the study of quality, and highlights two ways a researcher can approach his/her research objectives. He also maintains that an external observer might survey the various actors, norms, attitudes, needs and viewpoints either off-site, with regard to an abstract (hypothetical or previously experienced) interpreting event or with reference to a concrete communicative event in a given communication situation (Pöchhacker, 2001, p. 412). In the present study, the researcher had direct access to the concrete situation, i.e. international conferences. Therefore, the process in the communication event was approached. The basic milestones of the present investigation were formed using information about the expectations and perspectives of interpreting service users, as well as interpreters and clients. This study stresses on UICs' perspectives of quality criteria, and assessing any particular interpreter's output was beyond the scope of the present study.

1.1.3 Conference interpreting in Malaysia

Conference Interpreting is an extremely complex art to master that places a premium on excellence of delivery and engage professional linguists whose skills have been honed through years of experience, who command a vast repository of information and knowledge, both linguistic and extra linguistic, and have a proven capacity to quickly grasp the unique and complex discourse of each and every one of the many varied assignments through dedicated pre-conference research and study.

Conference interpreting, originated in Europe, still needs to be studied thoughtfully by the T/I researchers in the East, based on the different international conference situations and contexts in which interpreting services are provided. After the first conference involving CI in 1989 for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), other different international conferences, meetings, seminars, and workshops with the use of CI service were held in Malaysia (Ibrahim-González, 2009, p. 182).

Ibrahim-González, 2009 (pp. 182-184) summarises the players of CI in Malaysia as:

- Convention Division of Tourism Malaysia (CDTM),

- The Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS),

- International Conventions Sections of the Prime Minister's Department (ICS),

- Professional Conference Organisers (PCO),

- Interpreting Service Providers (ISP), and

- Host Organisations (HO).

Malaysia has also the potential as a conference hub for international conferences. This demands a worthwhile attention towards "customers" or the users of interpreting service who expect to receive high quality interpreting service in these conferences. The importance of good interpreting service and its requirement for CI and CM industry can be stressed by considering the number of people who depart to Malaysia to attend international conferences, meetings, workshops, etc. The number of these conference arrivals, part of them as users of interpreting service, is subject to increase by promoting the quality of the interpreting service they receive at conferences.

This implies a promising step towards attracting more arrivals under Malaysian Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) which consequently brings about developments such as economic, social, cultural, as well as many other contributions (Ibrahim-González, 2009, p. 182).

The present study explores international, as well as local objectives, in the CI industry. The survey tailored multifaceted features of the interpreters, clients, and users' expectations in terms of the quality criteria and the background variables in a Malaysian context, which can contribute to the identification of the different effective variables of IQ in CI. In order to achieve that goal a reliable sample from delegates, interpreters, and clients attending different international conferences with interpreting service in Malaysia was required. In addition, the direct access of the researcher to the real-life interpreting situations can be claimed to have resulted in more detailed, authentic, and worthwhile data, as there was no broker obstacle between the respondents and the researcher.

I. Language policy in Malaysia

Language and socialisation issues are regarded significant throughout the modern history of Malaysia. The features of Malaysia as a multi-ethnic country with a variety of languages makes it different from most of other Asian countries, such as Thailand or China whereby the majority of their citizens communicate with one language and English is only considered as the medium of communication with foreigners. Although Bahasa Malaysia has become by law as the official language, the practical status of this language is still not fully realised. This language still gives way to English, and in certain cases loses out to Mandarin. A tertiary student is not assured of a place in the private sector if he or she does not have a good grasp of English. A Malay student with no knowledge of Mandarin will have very little chance in getting a job in Chinese firms (Puteh, 2012).

In the 19th century, Malaya emerged gradually as a multi-ethnic society by the large number of migrants from China and India/Sri Lanka due to the changing phases of economic production system in the Peninsula (Ozay, 2012). The country is a multi-cultural society with major ethnic divisions, each group having associated linguistic and religious affiliations. Of all the diverse elements, perhaps, language is a conflicting issue which has posed a thorny problem to the newly independent nation because of the existence of diverse ethnic divisions between Malays, Chinese and Indians, each group having associated linguistic affiliations which intensify the divisions of Malaysian society. At the very first steps of the developments of English and Bahasa Melayu as official and national languages, the British administrators aimed to educate all classes of peoples in Malaya by founding English schools, after some initial individual attempts opening Malay vernacular schools for Malay people. As a consequence of this

development, the natives gave much attendance to the newly grounded English schools facilitated under both government and mission groups in the course of time, owing to fruitful results of the education system (Ozay, 2012). The standardisation of language was among the important factors in creating unity in Malay society (Raffels, 1991).

According to Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin et al. (2008), the national and official language of Malaysia has been Malay after independence; however, English is taught as compulsory subject from Standard One to Form Five, a period of eleven years. English is also used as a language of communication in urban areas as well. Malaysia has accorded English as a second language status as stated in Article 152 and given due attention. The language medium policy, i.e. the policy of the medium of instruction in schools, in Malaysia's educational system is as follow (Puteh, 2012):

i. National school

- Primary: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English as medium of instruction.
- Secondary: Malay and English as medium of instruction.
- Tertiary: Malay and English as medium of instruction.

ii. Private school

- Primary: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, English and Arabic as medium of instruction.
- Secondary: Malay, Mandarin, English and Arabic as medium of instruction.
- Tertiary: Malay, Arabic and English as medium of instruction.

In higher education two streams have emerged; public universities where undergraduates study in Malay, and private institutions of higher learning where instructions are provided in English (Saran, 2002). In a nutshell, the underlying rationale

of Malaysia's educational policy is that education with a common content syllabus reinforced by a common language, would promote the growth of a homogeneous outlook leading to the evolution of a common culture. While most developing countries that are culturally plural are pre-occupied with problems of welding the ethnic components into a cohesive unit, conference interpreting and promoting the quality of interpreting in international conferences in Malaysia could provide the basis for such intra-social and inter-social cohesion and homogeneity by facilitating communication and removing the language barrier.

In order to build the infrastructure and facilitate the creation of the translation and interpreting industry in Malaysia, The Malaysian National Institute of Translation Berhad (Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia (ITNM) was established in 1993. Being a public limited company, the Malaysian government, under the Ministry of Finance (Incorporated) owns its share capital. However, the Ministry of Education supervises its administration (Ibrahim, 2009). Despite the establishment of ITNM (now known as The Malaysia Institute of Translation and Books (Institut Terjamahan & Buku Malaysia or ITBM) as a governing body, the current situation of interpreting in Malaysia does not differ markedly from before (Ibrahim, 2009). Language service providers in Malaysia operate in a chaotic market, in which anyone who claims to be an interpreter/translator can set up as one. Unlike the medical and legal fields, where entry, continued membership and behaviour of members are governed, language service providers lack such regulation. There is a gnawing concern that translators and interpreters can, and may, distort meaning, whether deliberately or inadvertently (Ibrahim 2009).

Conference interpreting is Euro-centric and developed there, while it is still young and arising in Malaysia. The unique feature of Malaysia, being multi-lingual and multi-cultural, has inevitably made English language somehow perceived as the medium of communication in most of Malaysian international conferences, and not many conferences provide interpreting service in this country. One reason could be that in most of European countries and even Asian countries, their first languages are used in social and academic situations, while in Malaysia, English language is a compulsory language; therefore, most educated people have or assume that they have an "acceptable" command of English and or the organisers who should supply interpreting service do not believe that providing such service is necessary. This has created a gap in Malaysian conference interpreting research and practice.

Considering the unique scene of multi-lingual and multi-cultural Malaysia, the role and importance of the key players of CI in Malaysia, discussed in Section 1.1.3, and the potentiality of Malaysia in becoming a conference hub for international conferences, the need to address quality of interpreting in CI is becoming more apparent. This study hopes to provide as distinct a description and profiling of the conference interpreting practice in Malaysia. It is also hoped that the findings of this study will give rise to meaningful suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the quality and status of the Malaysian conference interpreting profession. The study is the first of its type and no such work has been carried out before in the Malaysian conference setting. In addition, acknowledging quality expectations in conference interpreting can help improve the quality of interpreting service, as an important tool to promote international conferences in Malaysia, and turn it to a conference hub in the region. To

fill in the gap between the current status of Malaysia' language policy and planning and the scenario of conference interpreting in Malaysia, this study attempts to describe Malaysian conference interpreting setting and focuses on the elements of promoting quality of interpreting. This focus from the angle of quality expectations involves the characteristics of interpreting profession, building users, interpreters, and clients' profiles, working conditions, background variables, working languages, specialised areas, problems and constraints, suggestions, and issues such as the role of conference interpreting service providers, and professional ethics code among practitioners and its implementation.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The debate over interpreting quality is still unresolved. The need for the evaluation of interpreting quality, as stressed by almost all researchers who have debated this issue, arises from the need to improve performance and thus obtain reliable and high quality interpreting on the professional level and develop methods to improve performance on the training/teaching level (e.g. Bühler 1986, p. 231; Moser, 1995; Kurz, 2001, p. 407).

The essential problem of quality can be summarised by Shlesinger et al.'s (1997, p. 23) with two questions: 'Quality according to what criteria? Quality for whom?' Several studies with varied methodological lines such as surveys, experiments, corpus-based observations and case studies (Pöchhacker 2001) have identified a number of criteria which can be divided into two main groups: professional standards and user criteria or what is generally referred to as professional norms (Chesterman, 2000, p. 67) and expectancy norms (which in turn reflect a deeper argument over who is qualified to

assess interpreting quality. The dichotomy between criteria defined by professional interpreters and standards defined by users of the service reflects an even deeper chasm in the question of who should assess interpreting quality: is it the user or interpreter? What makes it more complicated is that the user is not only the listener, but could also be the speaker (Kopczynski, 1994, p.190) or client who might not be a speaker or listener (Gile, 1995d, p.36). Interpreters are the ones who finally deliver a service. Therefore, it is important to see which aspects of quality they prefer to fulfil as the most outstanding ones. On the other hand, since listeners and speakers are the ones who actually use the service rendered by interpreters, it is also important to learn how they perceive interpreting quality. Bühler's study proved highly effective (Pöchhacker, 2012) in stimulating more surveys among interpreters and, in particular, end-users (e.g. Kurz 1993). Hence, the limitations of Bühler's small-scale study seem all too clear. Most critically, it is not known how her sample of 47 AIIC members was constituted, so it is not possible to generalise the findings to the total population. And because Bühler's questionnaire did not contain items exploring demographic background information, nothing is known about the age, gender, working experience or language combination of the research participants.

In Malaysia, three organisations that have played a major role in translation/interpreting work are Persatuan Penterjemah Malaysia/Malaysian Association of Translators (PPM/MTA), Institut Terjemahan & Buku Malaysia/Malaysian National Institute of Books & Translation (ITBM), and Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka/ Institute of Language and Literature (DBP). PPM is an association with about 1200 registered members which seeks to promote cooperation and also protect the interest of translators

in the country (Bell, 2007). PPM also conducts training, workshops and courses in translation for interested individuals. ITBM was created in Malaysia to provide translation courses and also undertaking the task of translating materials from Malay into other languages and vice versa. PPM often collaborates with ITBM and Malaysian universities in organising biennial translation conferences. DBP, on the other hand, is instrumental in creating new terminologies in Malay and promoting them so that foreign language terms can be matched with their equivalent pairs in Malay. DBP also serves as a resource centre for translators who wish to translate materials into the Malay language. Where education in translation is concerned, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) is the sole tertiary institution in the country which offers a discipline specialising in translation and interpretation up to the doctoral level. Apart from USM, ITBM offers professional diploma and certificate courses while PPM/MTA conducts a diploma in translation in collaboration with DBP. Possessing a certificate, a diploma or a degree in translation is a prerequisite in applying to become a member of the PPM/MTA, which acts as the main representative body of Malaysian translators (Myoung Sook & Shunmugam, 2014).

Although there is clearly a substantial amount of translation and interpreting work being carried out in Malaysia by ITBM, DBP and members of PPM, little is really known about the goings-on in the Malaysian interpreting scene. For one, the size of the conference interpreting market in Malaysia is yet to be properly documented. Many individuals refer to themselves as conference interpreters, and this includes service providers which offer interpreting services. This makes it more difficult to determine the actual number of practising professional and authorised conference interpreters in Malaysia, and evaluate the quality of interpreting service which is provided by such in

international conferences in Malaysia. Also, there is still no research to clearly indicate to what extent the conference interpreting service in Malaysia has developed. It is not clear if there is a set of standard regulations enforced in overseeing the interpreting services provided in Malaysian conferences, and there is certainly a dearth in research on the status of the conference interpreting profession in terms of its recognition and reception in society.

Hence, this study aims to investigate certain aspects which leave gaps in our knowledge concerning the conference interpreting profession in Malaysia. These aspects relate in particular to the status of the profession and the expectations of quality from users, interpreters, and clients' perspectives. In other words, in the face of lack of empirical findings regarding professional interpreters, users, and clients' quality-related preferences in general, there was an obvious need for further research. In an effort to respond to this need, the present research is conducted to fill in the stated gap between research and practice in the scope of IQ expectations from UIC's perspectives in Malaysian setting. The UICs' expectations of IQ are investigated in a realistic context to judge whether their expectations shared a common ground according to their particular features and background variable such as age, gender, first language, conference-going experience in different conference types with a wide range of subject matters.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are set based on several aspects including the problems mentioned earlier, as well as the fresh platform of IQ research in Malaysia. In addition, quality of service is deemed as one of the major issues by interpreting researchers and AIIC. It also

deserves attention that the majority of research objectives in the scope of quality have been mainly trying to answer questions such as: Are the interpreters well aware of the actual requirements of the profession? What about the receivers or users of the service? Are their expectations of a good quality of service met?

Bearing these questions in mind and based on the problems stated in the previous section, the present exploratory study aims to achieve the following objectives:

I. To build a profile of UICs in Malaysian CI.

II. To identify UIC's expectations of IQ and any significant difference between those expectations in Malaysian CI.

III. To identify the extent to which UICs' expectations of IQ vary based on their:

    A. gender

    B. conference typology

    C. age

    D. experience

    E. first language

    F. educational level

IV. To determine the respondents' view on the key problems and constraints that interpreters face at international conferences.

V. To put forward suggestions for modifications and improvements of interpreting service in Malaysian international conferences based on UIC's expectations.

It should be noted that the current survey only reflects perceptions. As for the fourth objective of the study in seeking the key problems and constraints, the purpose is