Quality criteria in simultaneous interpreting: an international vs. a national view

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Abstract

Ever since the profession became internationally organized in the early 1950s, quality has been a central topic in conference interpreting. In the mid-1980s, members of AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) were first asked what importance they attributed to various quality criteria when sponsoring candidates for membership (Bühler 1986). Follow-up studies, however, were mostly conducted among users of interpretation services. With the exception of Chiaro and Nocella (2004), who conducted a web-based survey among conference interpreters, service providers have had no chance to express their views on the issue of quality. The two studies reported in this paper take the web-based approach pioneered by Chiaro and Nocella (2004) as a starting point for a survey among two well-defined populations, that is, members of AIIC and of the German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD). This paper presents the findings for conference interpreters' rating of the relative importance of output-related quality criteria for a simultaneous interpretation. Furthermore, the two associations' members were also asked to link the importance of the various criteria to concrete assignment types. The main aim of this paper consists in comparing the two groups and finding out whether members of a national and international professional organization attach similar importance to quality criteria or whether they differ in their perceptions of quality.

1. Introduction

Ever since the use of simultaneous interpreting became internationally widespread after the Nuremberg Trials, interpreting practitioners, trainers and researchers alike have taken a keen interest in the topic of quality which has generated one of the most prolific research lines in interpreting studies. Even so, no consensus on how to define quality in the field of interpreting has been reached. Thus, quality is still seen as "that elusive something which everyone recognizes but no one can successfully define." (AIIC 1982:1).

The concept of quality involves many different variables and perspectives so that it may be very difficult and maybe even impossible to ever find one uniform working definition of interpreting quality applicable to all kinds of interpreting situations and all the viewpoints involved. It always needs to be specified for whom, how and under which circumstances quality is investigated. Furthermore, one always needs to bear in mind that any single contribution can only illuminate a small part of the overall construct of quality. An approach that views quality not as an intrinsic feature but as a time-, context- and culture-bound social construct which varies from viewpoint to viewpoint and is continuously (re-)negotiated, therefore, seems highly appropriate (cf. Grbić 2008).

Of the various relevant perspectives, this paper focuses on the service provider's viewpoint which has been neglected for years. The reason for this neglect was that the focus had shifted to the user as recipient and thus also judge of the quality of an interpreter's output. And yet, the interpreters' perception of the various quality standards obviously plays a vital role, both in professional service delivery and in access to the professional community in the first place. Thus, when a conference interpreter applies for membership with AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) s/he also depends on the judgement of colleagues. And when applying to work for the EU institutions, a conference interpreter's performance will be judged in an accreditation test by more senior interpreters. Therefore, finding out about the profession's understanding and perception of quality standards is not only of interest to interpreting research but also has particularly important implications for the fields of practice and training.

Conference interpreters have only very seldomly had the opportunity to express their views on the issue of quality. Bühler (1986) asked members of AIIC to rate the importance of various linguistic and extra-linguistic (pragmatic) criteria for an interpretation. Her list of criteria became something like the backbone of empirical research into quality. The large number of quality survey studies which followed took inspiration from Bühler (1986) and adopted her criteria, but all of them – with the exception of Chiaro and Nocella (2004) – were targeted solely at users (cf. Kurz 2001). Even though there is no consensus on the definition of quality as such,

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there seems to be broad agreement on the criteria which make up good quality. Various studies among users and conference interpreters have shown a clear preference for content-related quality criteria such as sense consistency with the original or logical cohesion over form- and delivery-related parameters like grammatical correctness or voice quality.

This paper also takes Bühler (1986) as a starting point but links it up to the web-based approach pioneered by Chiaro and Nocella (2004). The paper presents a comparison between the international[1] view on the relative importance of various quality criteria as expressed by members of AIIC and the national view represented by members of the German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD). It seeks to find out whether members of a large and influential international professional association like AIIC and members of a smaller national association like the German VKD exhibit differences in their perceptions of quality standards, which may in part be due to differing admission requirements. For the first time survey respondents were not only asked to rate the importance of various criteria at a purely theoretical level but also to link it to concrete interpreting situations.

Before presenting results of the two web-surveys, I will offer a theoretical discussion on the concept of quality as such, followed by a succinct overview of empirical survey research dedicated to the issue of quality undertaken among conference interpreters.

2. Dimensions of quality

One of the most recent and holistic theoretical discussions on the concept of quality in interpreting has been put forward by Grbić (2008). Her contribution is an overview of the many different notions of and research approaches to "quality" which have been developed within the last decades in the field of interpreting. She postulates that the concept of quality is socially constructed and thereby underlines the subjective nature inherent in all descriptions and evaluations of quality, which are always time-, culture- and context-bound. The quality of an interpretation is never inherent in the interpretation itself but attributed to it by somebody. Grbić (2008) identified three dimensions or social metaconstructs of quality prevalent in the field of interpreting.

The first dimension she presents is the idea of *quality as exception* which encompasses the traditional notion of quality as advocated by the circle of conference interpreter pioneers around Jean Herbert who regarded quality as something exclusive which can only be attained by the most gifted. This metaconstruct also includes the notion of quality as advocated

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1 The two qualifiers "international" and "national" only serve to label the two associations and do not say anything about the degree to which individual members of the two associations work in international assignments, however defined.

by AIIC which defines quality as compliance with very high professional standards. In this sense quality is no longer something exclusive and can be reached by everyone who fulfills the standards set by the association. However, these standards may be set so high as to bar some applicants from joining the association.

The second popular model which can be found in the field of interpreting is the notion of *quality as perfection*. This notion prevails in the fields of training and practice alike which very often demand a perfect or zero-defects performance of their members. Examples of this model are the evaluation schemes developed by Riccardi (2001) or Kutz (2005) for the field of training or the definition of the concept of *optimum quality* by Moser-Mercer (1996) for the field of practice which posits that a perfect performance is indeed possible given the right external conditions.

The third and last set of approaches described by Grbić (2008) is *quality as fitness for purpose*, under which she subsumes the application of translation and interpreting standards such as DIN 2345 for Germany or the Austrian interpreting standards D 1202 and D 1203, but also the notion of defining quality based on satisfying user needs as represented by the large number of user expectation surveys.

3. Survey research on quality among conference interpreters

The beginning of survey research into quality in conference interpreting was marked by the already legendary survey conducted by Bühler (1986) among 47 members of AIIC including seven members of the Committee on Admissions and Language Classifications (CACL) during two seminars in Brussels convened by AIIC. Survey participants were asked which degree of importance they attributed to 16 linguistic (semantic) and extralinguistic (pragmatic) criteria on a four-point ordinal scale ranging from *very important* to *irrelevant* when sponsoring new applicants for AIIC membership. The two content-related quality criteria *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion of utterance* were the two top-rated criteria in the survey. Despite the limited and non-representative sample, the results obtained by Bühler (1986) are still cited to represent AIIC's standpoint on quality. No other survey explicitly dedicated to the topic of quality has since been carried out among the worldwide membership of AIIC.

The issue of quality, however, cropped up in three subsequent surveys undertaken among conference interpreters. Altman (1990) asked members of the United Kingdom and Ireland region of AIIC and interpreters working for the European Commission about factors contributing to effective communication. Survey participants were asked to rate the importance of various items, such as knowledge of the technical field in question, possibility of getting briefed etc., for the quality of an interpretation.

In his qualitative interview-based survey, Feldweg (1996) asked 39 members of the German region of AIIC about their self-image and professional status as conference interpreters in general. Most of the questionnaire items dealt with the interpreter's role, but there was also one question which requested respondents to name the personal and professional qualities of a conference interpreter and rate their importance.

It was only in 2000 that a replication of Bühler's (1986) study was undertaken. Chiaro and Nocella (2004) carried out the very first web-based survey in interpreting studies and adopted nine of Bühler's criteria, integrating them into their electronic questionnaire. The two researchers, however, requested survey participants not to rate but to rank the nine criteria listed, from the most important to the least important. An invitation e-mail containing the link to the questionnaire was sent out to approximately 1,000 interpreters belonging to several professional associations. The latter, however, were not specified by the authors, so that the general population of their study was not clearly defined. The web-based questionnaire yielded a total of 286 responses. Neither a specific fielding time nor a response rate were indicated by the two researchers. Again the two content-related criteria *consistency with original* and *logical cohesion* were ranked highest, whereas the two delivery-related criteria *pleasant voice* and *native accent* were considered the least important.

Taking inspiration from the pioneering work of Chiaro and Nocella (2004), a state-of-the art web survey project was designed, endeavouring both to reach a global target population and to explore possible variations with reference to a national-level association of conference interpreters. Results from these surveys will be described in this paper from a contrastive perspective.

4. Methods

As part of a larger research project on *Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting*,[2] two web-based surveys on the two interrelated concepts of quality and role were carried out at the Center for Translation Studies of the University of Vienna. They were designed as full-population surveys among members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and the German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD) and implemented in autumn 2008 and 2009. For the survey among VKD members the original questionnaire in English was translated into German. Conference interpreters with double membership who had already participated in the AIIC survey did not receive the invitation to participate in the VKD survey. A total of 54 VKD members were identified as having double membership

in 2009. These were then checked for actual participation in the survey among AIIC members one year earlier. In the end, 19 conference interpreters were excluded from the survey among VKD members since they had already participated in the AIIC survey in 2008.

In the case of the AIIC survey, which was conducted in autumn 2008, a total of 2,523 e-mail invitations containing the survey link were sent out of which 49 e-mails could not be successfully delivered due to some mail delivery faults. The list of e-mail addresses was compiled from the printed version of the official AIIC Directory 2008. For the survey among VKD members in autumn 2009 a total of 322 e-mail invitations was sent out. All the e-mail addresses were taken from the official membership list available online. The fielding time for the survey among AIIC members was seven weeks, including two reminders, whereas the fielding time for the VKD survey was four weeks, with one reminder. A total of 704 responses from AIIC members were received, which amounts to a response rate of 28.5%. The survey among VKD members yielded a response rate of 33%, with 107 questionnaires filled in.

Both surveys were carried out with the help of LimeSurvey, a web-based questionnaire generator tool installed on one of the servers of the University of Vienna Center for Translation Studies. For every entry in the e-mail database the system creates a personalized link to the questionnaire which rules out the possibility of multiple completions. The software automatically creates two separate databases – one containing all the e-mail addresses and the other one containing all the responses. What is crucial is that the two databases are not linked to each other. While the system allows the survey administrator to see who has submitted a response, the response as such cannot be traced back to the respondent. Participants were informed about this safeguard of their anonymity on the last page before they submitted the filled in questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 41 items[3], including some follow-up questions, and was divided into three main parts. Part A elicited information on sociodemographic background variables such as age, gender, working experience, etc. Part B, some findings of which will be presented here, was mainly a replication of Bühler (1986) but also included a web-based experiment for which respondents were asked to listen to a one minute audio sample and give their impression. Part C, the questionnaire's longest part, was devoted entirely to the topic of the conference interpreter's role and will be reported elsewhere[4]. All the questions referred exclusively to simultaneous conference interpreting.

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3 The questionnaire for VKD members contained a total of 39 items because not all of the items in Part A on the CIs' social background were equally relevant for both groups.

4 A presentation of the findings on the definitions and metaphors conference interpreters use to describe their role can be found in Zwischenberger 2009. A summary of the main results of the survey undertaken among AIIC members can be read in Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker 2010.

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5. Results
5.1. Sample

Of the 704 AIIC members who filled in and submitted the web-questionnaire, 76% were female, and 24% were male. By comparison of the 107 VKD respondents 86 % were female and 14% male. 89% of the AIIC members in the sample work as freelance interpreters, which closely matches the membership structure of the organization (cf. Neff 2008). In the case of VKD respondents, 96% work as freelancers, and only 4% indicated that they were staff interpreters.

The average AIIC member in the sample is 52 years old, with a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 87 years of age, while VKD respondents are younger, with an average age of 40 years, a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 72 years. The largest number of AIIC survey participants is in the age category from 50 to 59 years, whereas the largest group of VKD respondents can be found in the category from 30 to 39 years.

In terms of formal education received, 79% of AIIC informants indicated having a university-level degree in interpreting/translation compared to 92.5% of respondents in the VKD sample. Furthermore, 60% of AIIC respondents and 23% of VKD informants hold a university-level degree from another field.

In the case of AIIC, participants' average working experience as conference interpreters is 24 years, with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 57 years. Most of the responses fell in the category of 20 to 29 years of working experience. VKD participants, on the other hand, have an average working experience of 12 years, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 45 years of experience as conference interpreters. Here most of the responses fell into the category of up to 9 years of working experience. The rather striking differences between the two groups in terms of age and working experience may be attributable to the differing admission requirements of the two associations. For AIIC membership an applicant must provide evidence of a minimum of 150 working days. Moreover, there have to be at least three sponsors who are active AIIC members, have worked with the applicant and can guarantee the candidate's competence in the language combination applied for as well as his/her professional ethics. The requirements for VKD membership are less strict. In order to become a member of the German association, candidates need to present a diploma from an interpreter and translator school which is recognized by the VKD. The VKD, however, makes a distinction as far as the professional status of its members is concerned. There are members called "Konferenzdolmetscher (conference interpreters)" who can provide evidence of having already worked at least 200 days and members called "Konferenzdolmetschanwärter (conference interpreter candidates)" who have worked less than 200 days. This explains why VKD members are much younger on average and have less working experience than their

AIIC colleagues. Furthermore, the VKD's admission requirements may also account for the extraordinarily high percentage of VKD members who are in possession of a university-level degree in interpreting/translation (cf. AIIC 2010; VKD 2010).

As far as the working languages were concerned, the most frequently reported A language of AIIC interpreters was French (24%), closely followed by English (22%) and German (18%). Quite unsurprisingly, English (55%) is in the clear lead among B languages, followed by French (27%) and German (9%). The pattern is rather similar for C languages, with English (47%) in the lead again, followed by French (43%) and then Spanish (29%). In the case of VKD participants, the most frequently indicated A language was of course German (84%), followed by French (6%) and Italian (5%). English (51%) is by far the most widespread B language, followed by French (19%) and German (16%). With 42%, English is also the leading C language, followed by French (35%) and Spanish (21%).

Participants were also asked to indicate the sector in which they primarily worked. The majority of AIIC respondents (42%) are mainly engaged in the non-agreement sector (private market). 33% work for the agreement sector[5] (UN family, EU institutions, etc.), and the rest (25%) are evenly distributed between the two. In the case of VKD survey participants, 89% indicated that they work primarily for the private market and only 4% work for the institutional market, while 7.5% indicated working for both markets to roughly the same extent.

In terms of working mode, the vast majority of informants in both samples work primarily in the simultaneous mode: 79% of AIIC and 76% of VKD respondents indicated that they *rarely* or *never* work in the consecutive mode.

5.2. Quality criteria and their relative importance

In the second part of the web-questionnaire, respondents were requested to rate the relative importance of eleven output-related quality criteria for a simultaneous interpretation on a four-point ordinal scale ranging from "very important" to "unimportant".

Quite unsurprisingly, the content-related criterion of *sense consistency with the original* was attributed the highest degree of importance by both groups of survey participants, followed by the criterion of *logical cohesion*. However, some of the respondents commented that they themselves did

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5   AIIC negotiates collective agreements on remuneration and working conditions with the European Union, United Nations and other major employers worldwide (termed agreement sector in AIIC jargon). The non-agreement sector refers to the private market. With this question VKD members were simply asked whether they primarily worked for the institutional market, the private market or both of them to about the same extent.

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not feel solely responsible for the logical cohesion of their interpretation: "Logical cohesion can only be a criterion when the original speech is coherent." (AIIC R 23), "Logical cohesion depends on the speaker, although we must do our best to improve its logic." (AIIC R 129).

	Source	very important	important	less important	unimportant	N=
Content-related criteria						
Sense consistency with original	AIIC	88.3	11.1	0.6	-	702
	VKD	90.6	9.4	-	-	106
Logical cohesion	AIIC	74.8	24.8	0.4	-	698
	VKD	76.4	22.6	0.9	-	106
Completeness	AIIC	47.7	45.7	6.3	0.3	698
	VKD	46.2	50.0	2.8	0.9	106
Form-related criteria						
Correct terminology	AIIC	61.0	38.0	0.9	0.1	703
	VKD	56.6	43.4	-	-	106
Correct grammar	AIIC	54.4	40.4	5.1	0.1	701
	VKD	32.7	56.1	11.2	-	107
Appropriate style	AIIC	36.2	55.6	7.4	0.9	702
	VKD	32.1	61.3	6.6	-	106
Delivery-related criteria						
Fluency of delivery	AIIC	70.7	28.6	0.7	-	704
	VKD	57.0	43.0	-	-	107
Lively intonation	AIIC	28.2	59.3	11.7	0.9	703
	VKD	19.8	67.9	12.3	-	106
Pleasant voice	AIIC	27.5	58.5	12.7	1.3	702
	VKD	24.5	62.3	12.3	0.9	106
Synchronicity	AIIC	15.3	52.0	30.1	2.7	675
	VKD	7.9	49.5	39.6	3.0	101
Native accent	AIIC	14.1	42.1	39.7	4.1	701
	VKD	8.4	41.1	44.9	5.6	107

Table 1. Relative importance of output-related quality criteria (in percent).[6]

6   The criteria were not presented in the order used in the table, nor was there a categorization into content-, form- and delivery-related criteria in the questionnaire.

As indicated in Table 1, the ratings by the AIIC and the VKD group for content-related criteria were relatively similar. Among the form-related criteria, *correct terminology* was rated most highly, followed by *correct grammar* and *appropriate style*. The AIIC group attributed a higher degree of importance to form-related criteria than their VKD colleagues. The same applies to the five delivery-related criteria, which consistently received a higher rating by AIIC respondents. Thus, AIIC members seem to be more demanding with form- and delivery-related criteria than their colleagues affiliated with the VKD. The criterion of *fluency of delivery* was rated the most important delivery-related criterion by both groups of survey participants.

Synchronicity and *native accent* were considered to be the least important delivery-related criteria and also received the lowest degree of importance in the overall rating by both groups. Almost one third (32.8%) of AIIC respondents rated the criterion as either "less important" or even "unimportant". In the case of the VKD this percentage is even higher (42.6%). Quite a few respondents pointed out that the importance of the criterion of *synchronicity* varied with the type of discourse: "Synchronicity is important in certain types of speeches – with punch lines or lots of numerical data. In other speeches I would rate it as less important." (AIIC R 643); "The more interaction there is, the more important is synchronicity (vote, applause)." (VKD R 15; my translation). In the case of *native accent* as many as 43.8% of AIIC and 50.5% of VKD respondents considered the criterion either less important or unimportant. Some survey participants stressed in their comments that the importance of a *native accent* depended on the target language: "The native accent is more important when going into French than when going into English, where more flavors of English are customary." (AIIC R 550); "Native accent is primarily demanded by French (more demanding) clients." (VKD R 70; my translation). In a very perceptive comment, accent was related to prosodic quality: "Native accent threw me, because if it was only accent it would be less important, but it is invariably associated with native intonation, which is essential to meaning." (AIIC R 137).

In order to test whether the two groups actually differ significantly in their perception of the eleven output-related criteria listed, a chi-squared test was performed. It showed only the difference in the ratings of the form-related criterion of *correct grammar* to be statistically significant (χ^2 (n=808, df=1) = 5.744; p = 0.017<0.05). 94.7% of AIIC respondents perceived this parameter to be very important or important for a simultaneous interpretation compared to the 88.8% of VKD survey participants. The difference between the two groups was more marked for the delivery-related criterion *synchronicity*. 67.3% of AIIC informants rated that criterion as either very important or important compared to the 57.4% of VKD respondents, but this difference in perception did not reach statistical significance.

5.3. Variance of importance with meeting or assignment type

In order to go beyond a decontextualized rating of the various quality criteria, and mindful of the diversity of meetings at which conference interpreters work (e.g. Gile 1989), survey participants were also asked whether the importance of the criteria varied depending on the type of meeting (e.g. large assembly, training seminar, negotiation, press conference, etc.). The response options for this question were "Yes", "Not sure, maybe" and "No". 43% of the AIIC members responding to this question (n=681) answered "Yes", compared to exactly half of the VKD informants (n=104). 17.6% of the AIIC participants and 9.6% of VKD respondents ticked the category "Not sure, maybe", and an almost identical percentage of AIIC (39.1%) and VKD members (40.4%) opted for answering this question with "No". Those answering "Yes" or "Not sure, maybe" were presented with a follow-up question requesting them to indicate spontaneously what might vary, when, and how.

According to these comments it is mainly the form- and delivery-related criteria that vary. Interestingly, it was the criteria which received a medium or lower overall rating, such as *correct terminology, appropriate style* or *synchronicity*, that were spontaneously mentioned as top priorities or as of (very) high importance when associated with concrete interpreting situations.

Among AIIC members, most of the spontaneous comments referred to technical congresses, media events and training seminars/workshops. In the case of the VKD, the three most frequently mentioned meeting types were technical congresses, press conferences/presentations and seminars/workshops.

(1) *Technical congress*	*Of (very) high importance/top priority*	*Of less importance/(totally) unimportant*
AIIC (N=90)	Correct terminology (56.7%) Completeness (12.2%)	Appropriate style (26.7%) Lively intonation (14.4%)
VKD (N=14)	Correct terminology (50.0%) Completeness (7.1%)	Appropriate style Lively intonation (35.7%) Fluency of delivery (28.6%)

Table 2. Relative importance of quality criteria in technical congresses

7   The sometimes rather low percentages are due to the fact that all responses were given spontaneously. "Technical congress", for example, was mentioned by 90 AIIC respondents. 12.2% of these 90 respondents spontaneously mentioned the criterion of "completeness" to be of (very) high importance or even a top priority for this particular meeting type. Furthermore, some respondents spontaneously mentioned a certain criterion to be of (very) high importance while others associated the same criterion with less importance or (total) lack of importance for one and the same meeting type (cf. Table 3, completeness).

Both groups most often mentioned technical congresses. The criteria *correct terminology* and *completeness*[7] were most frequently reported spontaneously to be of (very) high importance or even a top priority for this type of meeting by both groups: "Terminology can be decisive in very technical meetings." (AIIC R 98); "Terminology would be of paramount importance in a technical meeting." (AIIC R 527).

Appropriate style, lively intonation and *fluency of delivery* were the criteria most frequently mentioned spontaneously to be of less or no importance for a technical congress: "Appropriate style could be less important in very technical meetings." (AIIC R 696); "Lively intonation is less important for a technical congress." (VKD R 105; my translation).

(2) *Media events & press conferences/presentations*	*Of (very) high importance/ top priority*	*Of less importance/(totally) unimportant*
AIIC: Media events (N=63)	Synchronicity (46.0%) Pleasant voice (42.9%)	Completeness (11.1%) Correct terminology (6.3%)
VKD: Press conferences/ presentations (N=14)	Fluency of delivery, Lively intonation, Appropriate style (28.6%) Completeness (14.3%)	Completeness Pleasant voice (7.1%)

Table 3.　Relative importance of quality criteria in media events and press conferences/presentations

The second most frequently indicated meeting type was media events in the AIIC survey (N=63) and press conferences/presentations among VKD members (N=14). For media events the criteria of *synchronicity* and *pleasant voice* were most frequently associated spontaneously with (very) high importance: "Synchronicity is vital when interpreting for television programmes." (AIIC R 23); "Synchronicity, pleasant voice is essential for TV." (AIIC R 301). Whereas, *completeness* and *correct terminology* were deemed to be of less importance or even of (total) unimportance: "For TV completeness is less important." (AIIC R 560).

For press conferences/presentations, VKD members responding to this question considered *fluency of delivery, lively intonation, appropriate style* and *completeness* the leading criteria: "At a press conference completeness and fluency are of high importance." (VKD R 4; my translation); "At a press conference a lively intonation is of very high importance." (VKD R 44; my translation).

Interestingly though, the criterion of *completeness* was also found to be reported spontaneously as a less important or even unimportant criterion for this type of assignment. *Pleasant voice,* in contrast with the AIIC survey result, was likewise reported.

The third most frequently reported meeting type in both surveys was training seminars/workshops. Here *correct terminology* and *lively intonation*

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were the two most frequently mentioned criteria by AIIC respondents, who considered them to be of high importance or even a top priority: "In a training seminar it is very important to use the correct terminology." (AIIC R 29).

(3) Training seminars/workshops	Of (very) high importance/ top priority	Of less importance/(totally) unimportant
AIIC (N=45)	Correct terminology (37.8%) Lively intonation (11.1%)	Appropriate style (20.0%) Correct grammar, Synchronicity (6.7%)
VKD (N=9)	Fluency of delivery, Lively intonation (22.2%) Correct terminology, Appropriate style (11.1%)	Correct grammar (22.2%) Native accent (11.1%)

Table 4. Training seminars/workshops and criteria importance

VKD respondents added *fluency of delivery* and *appropriate style*: "The appropriate style is important for seminars/workshops." (VKD R 105; my translation).

Among AIIC members, *appropriate style*, *synchronicity* and *correct grammar* were the most frequently reported criteria of less or no importance for seminars/workshops: "At workshops and training seminars synchronicity and style are less important." (AIIC R 234). VKD members also cited *correct grammar* and *native accent*: "At a seminar where the aspect of learning is at the focal point, correct grammar and native accent are less important." (VKD R 76; my translation).

Interestingly, the two top-rated content-related criteria of *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion* were never among the top criteria of varying importance. There seems to be a high degree of variance for form-related criteria, while the two content-related criteria remain largely stable, as summarized by a respondent in the AIIC survey: "all of them [vary], except sense consistency and logical cohesion." (AIIC R 430).

6.   Discussion and Conclusions

After years of neglect of the service provider viewpoint on quality, the study reported here sought to elicit the opinion of members of two professional associations of conference interpreters, one operating at a global and one at a national level. Respondents were requested to rate the importance of various quality standards at a hypothetical, decon-textualized level, as well as to think of assignment types in which the importance of the criteria might vary.

The general rating of the importance of the various criteria confirms a preference for content-related criteria over form- and delivery-related parameters by both groups. It is particularly the two content-related criteria of *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion* which received the highest overall ratings from both groups. This finding is in line with the results of previous studies. *Sense consistency with the original* was the most highly rated criterion in Bühler (1986) and Chiaro and Nocella (2004). In Bühler (1986), the second most highly rated criterion was *logical cohesion*, while in Chiaro and Nocella (2004) *completeness of information* ranked second, closely followed by *logical cohesion* in third place. While Bühler's survey was targeted exclusively at AIIC conference interpreters, we do not have any specific information about the composition of the sample in the case of Chiaro and Nocella (2004).

AIIC members attributed a higher degree of importance to form- and delivery-related quality criteria than did their colleagues from the German VKD. Nevertheless, the difference between the two groups was statistically significant in a chi-squared test only for the criterion of *correct grammar*. In contrast to national associations, AIIC has always been very active in propagating the idea that interpreters should only work into their A language(s). Working in this direction might be associated with higher demands on formal aspects such as the grammatical correctness of an interpretation. The figures obtained for the markets for which the interpreters primarily work may lead to the conclusion that members of AIIC indeed work more often into their A language than their colleagues from the VKD. 33% of AIIC members vs. only 4% of VKD members indicated to work primarily for the institutional market (UN family, EU institutions, etc.). Another 25% of AIIC respondents vs. only 7.5% of VKD respondents reported working for the institutional and private markets to almost the same extent (cf. Sample). In these institutions it is common practice to work mainly into one's A language[8].

Despite the sociodemographic differences between the two groups in terms of age, working experience, the markets for which they primarily work, etc., the statistical data analysis has shown that the two groups attach a rather similar degree of importance to the various quality criteria, the only exception being *correct grammar*.

The majority of AIIC and VKD members hold the view that the quality criteria vary depending on the type of meeting. But this variation applies only to the form- and delivery-related criteria, whereas the two content-related criteria *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion*, which received the highest overall ratings, were never among the top criteria said to vary with assignment type. While *logical cohesion* is a prerequisite for

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8   This, however, does not hold true for languages such as Slovak, Bulgarian, etc., for which a shortage of interpreters with the required language combination necessitates retour (into-B) interpreting.

the success of inter- and intralingual communication alike, *sense consistency with the original* may be considered a professional norm – "the norm of the honest spokesperson" (Harris 1990: 118) – for interlingual communication. This norm exists beyond doubt and is strongly rooted within the professional interpreting community: "It is dunned into student interpreters. It is so unquestioned, however, that mostly it "goes without saying"" (Harris *ibid.*).

Both survey populations also show a high degree of agreement with regard to the criteria subject to varying importance. For technical congresses both groups spontaneously mentioned the same criteria as being of very high and of less importance, respectively. This indicates that there seems to be a rather homogeneous understanding among conference interpreters about which kind of prioritisation of form- and delivery-related criteria is needed for a particular assignment type.

The findings from these two surveys go some way towards establishing the quality-related standards for conference interpreting as a global profession while at the same time exploring possible differences in emphasis between members of an international and a national association. In either case, it has been shown that quality standards for simultaneous conference interpreting do not exist in a vacuum but need to be evaluated in relation to a given type of professional assignment.

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