

The Style Parameter in Quality Evaluation and Expectations of Simultaneous Interpreting

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Abstract

This study focuses on the analysis of the style parameter, which is one of the nine parameters established by Bühler (1986) to evaluate the quality of an interpretation, and its impact on conference interpretations. Three studies have been designed to analyze the replies of a group of specialized users, and how the subjects understand the concept of 'style'. These studies also show the effect of a manipulation to create an excessively complex style on the recipients of the interpretation, users' expectations, and the interaction of this parameter with others, both verbal and non-verbal. Although the study indicates the lack of consensus when it comes to a definition of the concept of style, it also shows that its significance may be greater than that which has been attributed to it so far in the field of interpretation.

Keywords: quality assessment, grandiloquent style parameter, user groups, users' expectations, simultaneous interpreting.

Resumen

El parámetro estilo en los estudios de calidad y de expectativas de la Interpretación Simultánea

Este estudio se centra en el análisis del parámetro estilo, uno de los nueve parámetros de calidad de la interpretación establecidos por Bühler (1986), y su impacto en la interpretación de conferencias. Mediante tres estudios llevados a cabo, se han analizado las respuestas de un grupo de usuarios especializados. En estos estudios se muestra el grado de conceptualización del parámetro estilo, su influencia en el usuario dependiendo de la metodología aplicada, las expectativas del usuario, la interacción del parámetro con otros parámetros tanto verbales como no verbales y los efectos del empleo de un estilo inapropiado. Si bien el estudio señala la falta de consenso en la definición del concepto estilo, muestra también que su papel puede ser más relevante que el que hasta ahora se le atribuye en la interpretación.

Palabras clave: evaluación de la calidad, parámetro de estilo engolado, grupos de usuarios, expectativas de usuarios, interpretación simultánea.

1. Introduction

This study falls within the line of research work carried out by the Quality Assessment in Simultaneous Interpreting Group (*Evaluación de la Calidad en Interpretación Simultánea [ECIS]*, in Spanish) on conceptualisation and specialist users' and professional interpreters' expectations for interpreting in relation to different quality parameters (Collados Aís, Fernández Sánchez, and Gile 2003; Collados Aís *et al.* 2007). Preliminary research suggests that the style parameter is a rather personal or subjective concept. Thus it seems to acquire different dimensions depending on the individual. This aspect, combined with the assumptions made about it in interpreting, makes it more difficult to define and to study its real significance in the assessment of interpreting. Consequently this impinges on the validity or rigour of studies which include this parameter.

2. Theoretical Framework

This paper is framed within the quality studies of Collados Aís (1998, 2007), who, following Bühler (1986), focuses on the study of parameters that have a bearing on the quality of an interpretation. Specifically, Collados Aís and the ECIS group study the effects of the following parameters: accent, pleasantness of the voice, fluency, cohesion, correct transmission of the original speech, complete transmission of the original speech, terminology, style, intonation, diction and correct grammar (Collados Aís *et al.* 2007). In the case of style, several key concepts of their study can be highlighted. The first is 'expressiveness', which includes a broad range of linguistic elements that share a common attribute: they do not directly affect the sense conveyed by the locution. Anything that goes beyond the purely referential and communicative facet of language belongs to the domain of expressiveness: emotional tone, emphasis, rhythm, symmetry, euphony and the so-called evocative elements that situate our style within a certain register (whether this is literary, domestic, slang, or other) or link it to a specific sphere (that could be historical, foreign, provincial, or professional, among others) (Ullmann 1968: 122). Alonso Schökel introduced another key concept: choice. Style is a question of choice. Each author chooses from all the options offered by "language that is already constituted as a social, traditional fact" (Alonso Schökel 1995: 67), selecting one among many stylistic variations (Hockett 1979). Even when the selection process is simple, the effects of having chosen one option or another are not at all simple (Ullmann 1968: 168 and ff.). For functional stylistics, choice responds to the specific needs of certain communicative situations that are subject to a sphere of human activity, distinguishing between colloquial, journalistic, scientific, technical, administrative and advertising style (Lvovskaya 2002). Style handbooks and manuals deserve a special mention because they share the common aim of orienting their users as to how language should be used, following specific style patterns. Each style book has a focus of its own, but they all tend to coincide in that grammaticality,

fluency, clarity, conciseness, simplicity and accuracy are all inherent components of good style (cf. Garrigues 2006, Ministerio para las Administraciones Públicas 1990). Both grammaticality and fluency are parameters included in expectations and quality assessment (Jiménez Ivars *et al.* 2007; Pradas Macías 2004, 2007). The remaining three parameters stand out as factors that determine the quality of a text, whether this is oral or written. Hence, in the following section we analyze the meaning of *style* in more depth and some of the factors that are considered to contribute to good style.

2.1. Concepts associated with style

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines *clarity* as “[4.] clearness: in various current uses; e.g. Of colour, sky atmosphere, sight, intellect, judgement, conscience, style”. An author’s style is clear when the reader or listener does not have to make a constant effort to concentrate in order to understand what s/he is being told. According to Garrigues (2006: 199-200), clarity is obtained by avoiding ambiguity, incorrectness, inaccuracy, disorder, incoherence and contradictions. Clarity is usually the normal outcome of conciseness, correctness, simplicity and the logical development of previously drawn-up ideas.

The OED defines *conciseness* as “concise quality” and “concise”, referring to speech or writing, as “expressed in few words; brief and comprehensive in statement; not diffuse”. Garrigues (2006: 197-198) proposes the following recommendations for those hoping to achieve this quality of expression: think before writing, avoid using too many adjectives, reject those that are over-used, uncommon or superfluous, do not unnecessarily repeat the same idea, but rather strive to express it clearly, do not use clichés, stock phrases or unnecessary linguistic turns or roundabout expressions, and devote successive revisions of the text to refining and simplifying. However, the pursuit of brevity never justifies leaving out specific elements such as articles, or the over-use of abbreviations, which is a very common mistake in administrative style (Ministerio para las Administraciones Públicas 1990).

The OED defines *simplicity* as “[4.] Of language or style [...] freedom from ornateness or over-elaboration; plainness or directness of an attractive kind”. According to Garrigues (2006: 198-199), when producing speech or text in Spanish, the following guidelines help to achieve simplicity: avoid the use of archaisms and Latinisms (apart from short, well-known examples), restrict the use of neologisms (words not recognized by the Spanish Royal Academy) and foreign loan words when an equivalent accepted term exists in Spanish, and observe the logical order in the construction of sentences and paragraphs.

Accuracy is “the state of being accurate; precision or exactness resulting from care; hence, precision, nicety, exactness, correctness” (OED), and is achieved by using words appropriately. Correctness is defined as “in accordance with an acknowledged or conventional standard, *esp.* of literary or artistic style, [...]; proper.” It is this quality that enables each word to precisely express the meaning intended and thus demands a

range of lexical resources from writers or speakers. This takes us to a further parameter that is often included in quality studies: terminology. It would appear that style and terminology are closely linked.

2.2. Interpreting studies

As is the case with other parameters, such as voice pleasantness or fluency, definitions of the concept *style* in interpreting or expectations and quality assessment studies are not easy to find. However, we can draw on notions of style from other disciplines. A case in point would be relating concepts such as *dialect* and *register* to the reality of simultaneous interpreting (SI) (Pérez-Luzardo and Barranco-Droege 2011). A brief glance at the literature on interpreting reveals that both the style of the speaker and that of the interpreter are referred to as a determining factor in the communicative act (Dejean le Féal 1990; Paulsen Christensen 2010). Some authors consider adequacy of style to be a desirable factor in interpreting. This is the case of Kopczyński (1981), who drew up a classification of interpreting mistakes that included the use of inappropriate style (unsuitable register and the use of expressions with erroneous illocutionary force) as a factor that undermines proper or correct communication. Other authors indicate that the use of inappropriate style may affect not only formal aspects but also the transmission of the original sense. Altman (1994: 37) states that trainee interpreters are often insensitive to rhetorical devices in the original speech. This leads to a loss of connotation that may, on occasions, come to bear on the correct transmission of the sense. In empirical studies on interpreting quality, most authors include the concept of *clarity* (Gile 1983; Pöchhacker 2001). We can distinguish between those experts who consider the use of appropriate style to be desirable but not essential (Bühler 1986), and those who argue that the style parameter may have a more significant specific, unconscious weight than that generally attributed to it in the studies on expectations and quality assessment carried out to date (Berk-Seligson 1988). This author establishes a relation between the variations in the use of courtesy expressions and the appraisal by listeners of the credibility of the original speaker (1988: 421-422), while Mason (2008: 95-96) shows that jurors' perceptions of witness testimonies in court may be affected by the use or choice of linguistic resources by the interpreter. Also in this latter group, we can find studies that detect differences between user groups (in different contexts), differences between responses by gender (both regarding the gender of the interpreter and that of the user group) and interpreters working into their mother tongue and those that are not (Ng 1992; Kopczyński 1994; Moser 1995; Mason 2008).

At the same time, the above-mentioned studies reflect the confusion around the style parameter, which is variously identified with clarity or with language use or type (register). Some authors combine style with a different quality parameter such as Marone (1993), who combines it with the use of terminology. Although this confusion prevents us from being able to compare results across quality studies, this combina-

tion is in no way misconceived, given that the accurate use of language forms part of correct style.

Finally, we should mention those authors who question whether the role of the interpreter includes improving inappropriate style in an original speech (Altman 1990; Gile 1991). Following the work of Collados Aís (1998), several studies have been carried out by the Quality Assessment in Simultaneous Interpreting Group (ECIS). These include experiments aimed at determining the specific weight of each parameter and its effects in quality assessment by specialist users and professional interpreters. The work involved in three such studies on the style parameter is explained below.

3.A Pilot Study on the Conceptualization of the Term ‘Style’ and Users’ Assessment

Within the framework of a much broader project that studied the effect of verbal and non-verbal information in SI (Simultaneous Interpreting) quality, a pilot study with 10 subjects was undertaken including the style parameter (Pérez-Luzardo *et al.* 2005). All of the participants were lawyers, law teachers, and judges (henceforth, the subjects), and therefore familiarised with the topic of the video material presented.

3.1. Objective and methodology of the study

The objective of the study was two-fold: to conceptualize the parameter in question and test a video of an SI that had been manipulated for the style parameter. An initial questionnaire with open-ended questions was handed out to a group of ten users (judges) in order to determine: a) what they understood to be a pleasant style and b) what bothered them when the style was inappropriate.

In the second stage of the study, the subjects watched together a video in German about the financing of political parties in Germany with a manipulated SI in which the style was grandiloquent, and a control video in which the SI was not manipulated. After watching the videos, the subjects filled in an assessment questionnaire on the SI of each video, in order to determine the real effect of this parameter in each case. The subjects were asked a) whether they recognized in the video any of the bothering elements that they had already mentioned relating to the use of inappropriate style in a simultaneous interpretation, b) if they would add any other bothering elements that they recognized in the interpretation but did not mention before, and c) which of the irritating elements bothered them the most. They had to score the interpreter’s style on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= very unpleasant and 5= very pleasant). The comparison of the expectations (first part of the questionnaire) with the answers given to the assessment questionnaire (second part) enabled us to observe possible differences.

3.2. Results of the pilot study

The results of the conceptualization and style parameter questionnaire indicate discrepancies in the perception of what style really means and difficulties when defining the concepts. Some people tended to confuse cohesion with style. For others, good style meant not leaving any sentences unfinished. Appropriate style was understood to be that which best adapts to the context and the subject-matter of what is being interpreted, with no affectation, although the subjective nature of assessing appropriate style was mentioned often. In terms of what most bothered the subjects *a priori* in the non-manipulated style, three out of ten interviewees did not like it when the style of the original speaker and that of the interpreter differed, for example if the levels of expressiveness between the two were not the same; three of the subjects pointed out that inappropriate style might prevent them from concentrating on the sense of the speech (interpreting). But there was great confusion in the answers given: one related to logical cohesion as an bothering factor; another subject mentioned the quality of the voice; and a third mentioned incomplete transmission of the meaning. Once they had seen the manipulated video, two groups of subjects emerged: seven subjects were very satisfied with and grateful for the liveliness of the interpreter, while the other three criticised her perceived overacting. The latter group qualified their findings by saying that this approach is welcome when original speakers are very monotonous.

3.3. Conclusions of the pilot study on conceptualization and assessment

In conclusion, a high level of variability amongst the subjects was detected, indicating a general tendency to differently understand and apply established notions of the concept of style, as well as the fact that the subjects' sensitivity to this dimension of interpreting quality varied. These findings are similar to those obtained for other parameters in similar studies (Pradas Macías 2003, 2006, 2011). A further conclusion is related to the limitations observed in this preliminary study. The results obtained in the subjective definition of the style parameter, most of which were inaccurate, raise the issue of clarifying *a priori* what each researcher understands by style before undertaking questionnaires on expectations or assessment of this parameter in line with an early assumption by Collados Aís (1998).

4. Study of Conceptualization, Expectations and Assessment

The main objective of this second study was to analyze the expectations of specialized users regarding quality for eleven quality parameters, including style. At the same time the aim was to conceptualize each of the parameters and determine their possible effect on the subjects' assessment of the quality of each of the SI events, being the subjects specialized users. Three different studies were carried out, as follows:

4.1. Study 1: Users' expectations

4.1.1. Objective and methodology of the study of expectations

The primary methodological objective of this study was to ensure that research was based on similar assumptions to those in other previous empirical work on the expectations of interpreting users (Kurz 2001; Pradas Macías 2004), thereby guaranteeing a homogenous starting point for the results of experiments (Collados Aís 2007). The users were 197 specialists in law, in line with the subject-matter featured in the audio-visual material used in the conceptualization and assessment study. More specifically, our subjects were lecturers in Schools of Law of the universities of Granada, Malaga, Jaume I in Castellón and Valencia.

The subjects were approached individually. In terms of the availability and accessibility of the subjects, it is worth mentioning that they were very receptive and interested once they had agreed to participate in the study.

A questionnaire was designed to test the quality expectations of the users for eleven different parameters, including style, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 refers to the fact that this parameter is not important, 2: it is of little importance, 3: it is neither important nor unimportant, 4: it is somewhat important and 5: it is very important). An open-ended question about other parameters or factors that may come into play and a section on personal aspects were also included (following Bühler 1986; Kurz 1989, 1993). This questionnaire had already been validated in previous pilot studies (Collados Aís 1998; Pradas Macías 2003).

The results of the surveys were computed in terms of means, standard deviation and range in order to investigate the subjects' quality expectations.

4.1.2. Results of the expectations study

These results are discussed in full in Pérez-Luzardo (2007). In the present paper we discuss only the aspects which are relevant to the notion of style. As expected, the style parameter was not considered to be one of the most important; it was ranked seventh, followed closely by grammaticality. The aspects ranked as most important were those related to content (cohesion, correct transmission of the original speech (OS), and complete transmission of the OS). Style ranked above other parameters related to the presentation of the interpreting, such as intonation, voice pleasantness or accent. In percentage terms, 52.28% of the subjects considered that inappropriate style has a somewhat important effect on the target text (i.e. 4 on the Likert-Scale represented 41.11%) or very important (5 on the Likert-Scale 11.17%), a further 36.55% considered it has an effect which is neither important nor unimportant (3 on the Likert-Scale), while the remainder considered inappropriate style to be of little (2) or no importance (1 on the Likert-Scale).

4.1.3. Discussion of the expectations study for the style parameter

It is difficult to compare our results with other studies such as Marrone (1993), due to the fact that this author – as already mentioned above – combines style with the use of terminology. In Kopczyński's expectations study (1994), style came in third place with fluency, after complete transmission and the use of terminology. Although the methodology used in the latter study is similar, comparison of the results is not possible, because the author did not include accent, intonation and logical cohesion, and this may have an impact on the position of style as a parameter. However, the results obtained coincide with previous studies using a similar methodology (Collados Aís 1998; Pradas Macías 2003), where style was also the seventh most important of the 11 parameters of the study. In Collados Aís (1998), 21 subjects interviewed (50% of the sample) thought that an inappropriate style considerably affects the interpreting (40.48%) or considered that inappropriate style has a somewhat important effect on the target text (9.52%). This is a very similar figure to the one obtained in our study (52.28%). In Pradas Macías (2003, 2004) 58.1% of the sample (43 participants) thought that an inappropriate style considerably affects the interpretation (48.8%) or considered that inappropriate style has a somewhat important effect on the target text (9.3%). In addition between 30% and 40% of all the participants thought that an inappropriate style affects quality in some way.

The results show once again that appropriate style is considered to be desirable but not crucial, as mentioned before by Bühler (1986).

4.2. Pilot Study 2: Conceptualization of the parameter

4.2.1. Objective and methodology of the study

On this occasion the starting point was the lack of clear definitions for quality parameters and the conceptualization of the parameters by users previously compiled by Mack and Cattaruzza (1995), Pradas Macías (2003: 454 and 499) and Pérez-Luzardo *et al.* (2005).

A questionnaire was drawn up including the spontaneous definitions given by the subjects for this parameter and what *a priori* annoyed them the most about inappropriate style. A new element (compared to the questionnaire used in the pilot study described in section 3 of this article) was the inclusion of the interviewers' own concept of 'style', while no mention was made of other possible causes of inappropriate style. Once this first part of the questionnaire had been completed, subjects watched a video of an SI that had been manipulated to feature a grandiloquent style. For example, from the original sentence "Kommen wir also zum Thema" the resulting sentence in the control video was "Let's get to the point" and the resulting sentence in the second version was "But let us not stray unduly from the subject with which we are dealing". The video was paused after 90 seconds and the subjects answered a number of questions to ascertain whether or not they had recognized any of the bothering elements in the video. This gave them the opportunity to add new bothering elements and assess

the interpreting up to that point in terms of the style parameter. The pause button was then released, the subjects continued to watch the second part of the video, and the same questions were repeated, referring to this second part. The subjects were five lecturers from the School of Law at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria with experience in SI, of whom three were women and two, men.

4.2.2. Results of the study on conceptualization of the parameter

As was seen in the pilot study described above (3.2.), the definitions of the subjects surveyed differed. Two of them come close to the concept of style as ‘choice’ (Alonso Schökel 1995), as they cite “singularities and peculiarities of the interpreter” and “the way, mode or manner in which something is carried out”. Another subject considered appropriate style to be “the omission of reiteration or redundant words”. The other two subjects refer to other parameters included in the study, specifically, the correct transmission of the information, use of suitable terminology, grammaticality and voice pleasantness.

In terms of what *a priori* most bothered the subjects in the non-manipulated video, three of the five interviewees mentioned vocabulary used out of context, incorrect use of linguistic resources (without defining these any further) and monotony, as possible causes of loss of concentration when listening to the interpreting. Another subject included (as bothering elements of inappropriate style) parameters of intonation, diction, voice quality parameters and fluency. In fact, we can consider that all these factors have some kind of effect on the general impression of the style of an interpreter or interpreting.

After watching the video, two discernible groups were identified. While two subjects did not recognize any irritating elements, the rest made some observations relating to the bothering elements mentioned. Two interviewees referred to the speed of the interpreter and only one alluded to redundancy.

In response to the question asking if they would add any further bothering elements, only one subject mentioned the excessive use of formalisms and unnecessary adjectives. Two respondents stated that the interpreter conveyed the sensation that s/he was reading the text and unable to keep up with the pace of the original while maintaining a natural delivery. In any case, the respondents’ overall perception of the style of the video in which the interpreting was deliberately grandiloquent was not affected, as the average score given on the Likert-Scale was four out of five (4-4-5-4-3).

After the second and final viewing of the style video, two groups could once again be distinguished. Three subjects referred to the apparently inappropriate emphasis put on some expressions or words, as well as redundancy and excessive formalism, while the other two continued not to identify any bothering elements. The interpreter’s fluency was mentioned once again, as well as her changes in rhythm and the sensation conveyed during her interpreting that the pace of the original had overwhelmed her. Once this second viewing was over, the style score awarded was more varied (3-4-5-4-2).

4.2.3. Conclusions of the conceptualization study

The number of subjects/questionnaires was clearly low, but it remains the case that subjects find it difficult to define the concept of style and include references to other parameters included in quality studies. Both inappropriate use of terminology and the tone of voice could be considered as part of appropriate style in a broad sense of the term (Pérez-Luzardo 2007).

Some subjects detected bothering elements related to the fluency parameter that could be the result of manipulation. The introduction of elements of grandiloquent style in the SI leads to an increased number of words per minute, given the use of formalisms, emphatic adjectives and elaborate expressions, which is then perceived in these cases as “a feeling that the interpreter is overwhelmed by the pace”. The interpreter is forced to speak more quickly in order to maintain a suitable *décalage*, or time lag, vis-à-vis the original speaker.

4.3. Study 3: Assessment of grandiloquent style

4.3.1. Objective and methodology of the study

The objective here was to assess the grandiloquent style parameter of an interpreting segment (a manipulated video) in comparison to one that had not been manipulated (control video). To this end, an experimental methodology was chosen that had been used in previous studies, namely, on the intonation parameter (Collados Aís 1998), on the voice parameter (Pradas Macías 2003), and on the rest of parameters (Collados Aís *et al.* 2007). This methodology consisted in showing a video with a manipulated parameter, with the viewers subsequently filling in an assessment questionnaire on the SI that they had just heard.

The questionnaires used in the evaluation study were largely similar to those used by Collados (1998) and Pradas Macías (2003) so as to ensure comparability of results. In the evaluation experiment, the subjects were asked to judge the simultaneous interpretation by assigning a value on a 1-5 Likert-Scale to the following 14 parameters: overall quality; impression of professionalism; impression of reliability; quality of original speech; accent; voice; logical cohesion; correct rendition of meaning; completeness; terminology; style; diction; intonation; and fluency.

Of a total of 164 subjects for the study of the 14 parameters, each subject watched and assessed just one video which included one parameter in order to avoid undesirable biases in the assessment of the second video (Collados Aís 2007: 10-11). Fourteen subjects watched the video corresponding to the style parameter. They were lecturers from the School of Law at the University of Málaga (8) and the University of Vigo (6) with experience in SI as users.

4.3.2. Results of the study on the evaluation of grandiloquent style

The average score of the style parameter in the manipulated video was 4.29, whereas the control video scored 4.21 (SD .996). The style parameter received simi-

lar scores in the two videos, although the manipulated version scored slightly higher. The other parameters, apart from grammaticality, obtained similar or higher scores in the manipulated video. The clearest difference in this sense was recorded for the fluency parameter (4.21 in the control video and 4.79 in the manipulated version with grandiloquent style). In the professionalism and accent parameters, the difference in favour of the manipulated video was 0.35 points. For the remaining parameters, the difference in scores was less than 0.3 points, but the manipulated video received higher scores. The manipulated interpreting even improved the impression perceived of the original speech.

The same correlation observed in the video with deliberately manipulated style for the fluency parameter was found in the video in which fluency was deliberately inappropriate. In this video, the style parameter obtained a low score of 3.14. This drop in the assessment was of more than one point compared to the control video or the video manipulated for the style parameter (Pérez-Luzardo 2007: 154). In the videos manipulated for the parameters of accent, cohesion, diction, intonation, grammaticality, complete transmission and voice pleasantness, a slight decrease in the style score was observed, although the difference was of more than 0.3 points for grammaticality, complete transmission and voice pleasantness. It is also worth noting that the style parameter obtained a very high score (4.58) in the video manipulated for the correct transmission parameter.

4.3.3. Discussion of the study of assessment of grandiloquent style

The discussion section of this study (Pérez-Luzardo 2007: 155-156) tentatively posited that the emphatic or grandiloquent manipulation of style was welcomed by this user group. This manipulation positively affected not only the assessment of the manipulated parameter, but had a knock-on effect on almost all the other parameters. Even the professionalism and reliability parameters scored higher in the manipulated video than in the control video. Given the results obtained, it would seem to be the case that this user group, made up of legal specialists, may unconsciously prefer the use of very elaborate expressions. This is not surprising. Anglophone authors have found that the English language used in the law is pointlessly convoluted (Mellinkoff 1963, 1982; Kimble 2006; Adler 2006). The same situation occurs in German (Lerch 2004; Muhr 2013; Nussbaumer 2004) and in Spanish (CMLJ 2011; González-Ruiz 2014). Any such preference would be unconscious because, in the conceptualization studies, the subjects seem to prefer a plainer style. The fact is that all the parameters that affect the presentation would appear to interact, although in some cases the link between them is more visible than in others, such as the cases of style and fluency.

5. Expectations Study

5.1. Objective of study and methodology applied

This further expectations study broadens the type of user surveyed in order to determine differences or similarities in expectations by professional field while also drawing up a specific questionnaire for each parameter, bearing in mind the complexity and ambiguity involved.

The starting point was the expectations questionnaire used by Collados Aís *et al.* (2007) following Bühler (1986) and Kurz (1989, 1993). All the questions had to be answered on a scale of 1-5. In question 2, the range of the parameters was amplified by asking for further detailed responses, in line with the work done by Pradas Macías (2006), with reference to style. Specifically, questions were asked about the following items: inappropriate vocabulary; an excessively elaborate style; an excessively plain style; excessive cultural adaptation; lack of cultural adaptation; lack of lexical suitability and diversity; lack of concision and directness; lack of clarity; inappropriate use of grammar; and any other considerations the subjects wanted to raise.

In question 4 subjects were questioned about the effect an inadequate style had on their understanding of a specific interpretation. This was further broken down into subsections, taking into account the answers obtained in previous studies on expectations (Collados *et al.* 2007). These included: it distracts me; I can't concentrate; I get bored; it makes it more difficult to understand; it bothers me; I get tired; I feel I have to work harder; and any other considerations the subjects wanted to raise.

Similarly, subjects were asked if they considered if an inadequate or adequate style could affect them negatively or positively, respectively, in the evaluation of other quality parameters in an SI. They were asked to rate this effect on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the maximum effect and 1 the minimum. Finally, they were asked, in two open-ended questions, what other aspects, apart from inappropriate style, bothered them during an SI and what other aspects apart from appropriate style they liked.

Fourteen subjects responded to the style questionnaire, of whom six were women and seven, men; one subject did not fill in the personal details section. They were professionals drawn from different areas of Humanities and Sciences. Most of the subjects claimed to have scant experience with SI and only three subjects registered a medium level of experience with it; no subjects had significant experience in this field.

To draw up the specific part of the questionnaire on the style parameter, the pertinent bibliography was studied (cf. Collados *et al.* 2011), particularly concerning questions 2 and 4 as mentioned above.

5.2. Results of the expectations study

The results are presented following the order established by the questionnaire for the questions relating to the style parameter. The discussion of the results for each question appears immediately after the results.

5.2.1. Frequency of inappropriate style in interpreting: results and discussion

Of the fourteen subjects comprising the sample, one did not answer this question. The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Of those subjects that perceived some kind of inappropriate style in the interpreting at some point, five were women and three, men. Of the four subjects who only perceived poor style on a few occasions, three were from Sciences and one from Humanities. Not a single response suggested that the subjects had ever found inappropriate style to be characteristic of SI.

The average of all the responses (2.69) is half way between the only two responses obtained for the *style* parameter (2: infrequent and 3: with some frequency). The standard deviation of subjects' responses was not very high (.480). The combination of these two data suggests that style is a parameter to which all the subjects in the sample are sensitive to a similar extent.

Table 1. Frequency: average and standard deviation · Style

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	SD
Frequency	13	2	3	2.69	.480

Table 2. Frequency: Percentage values · Style

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	2	4	28.6	30.8	30.8
	3	9	64.3	69.2	100.0
	Total	13	92.9	100.0	
Lost		1	7.1		
	Total	14	100.0		

These data should be interpreted very cautiously given that the subjects' experience with interpreting is average or scant. In fact, one of the subjects who had very little experience with interpreting did not respond to this question. The fact that all the users who responded gave a score of between 2 and 3 may indicate that the subjects con-

sidered this parameter to be of secondary importance compared to others that directly affect the sense, such as correct transmission. This would confirm previous studies on expectations such as the following: Kurz 1989, 1993; Marrone 1993; Kopczyński 1994; Collados Aís 1998 and Pradas Macías 2004.

The average among female subjects (3) shows that all the women who answered this question considered lack of appropriate style to be frequent. The average among men (2.42) could reflect that men are less sensitive to style, a gender difference that has also been reflected in studies by Ng (1992) and Moser (1995).

5.2.2. Intraparameters of inappropriate style: results and discussion

Of the fourteen subjects who participated in this study, twelve answered this question. The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Intraparameters of style

	N	Min.	Max.	Average	SD
Inappropriate vocabulary	12	1	5	3.50	1.168
Over-elaborate style	12	1	5	2.83	1.337
Over-synthetic style	12	1	5	2.75	1.545
Excessive cultural adaptation	12	1	5	2.33	1.303
Lack of cultural adaptation	11	1	4	2.18	1.250

The fact that inappropriate vocabulary (Kopczyński 1981; Playor 1994; Garrigues 2006) was the most bothering interparameter could indicate once again the close relationship between two parameters that have tended to be studied separately, but which are so close that users may establish a relationship between them, as Marrone (1993) suggested in his study.

At the same time, this small sample clearly reveals the high level of subjectivity present in these kinds of assessments; it seems evident that what annoys some people does not bother others in the slightest.

5.2.3. Interaction of inappropriate style with other parameters: results and discussion

The subjects considered that inappropriate style would have a maximum effect (4.42) on how professional the interpreter was perceived to be, and a considerable effect on how reliable he/she was perceived to be (3.93), as well as on the correct transmission and complete transmission of the sense parameters (3.92). The parameters deemed least affected by the subjects were accent (2.67) and intonation (2.75%). The

value attributed to the other parameters was higher than 3: cohesion (3.62), fluency (3.62), diction (3.54), terminology (3.54), grammaticality (3.50) and voice (3.08).

It is surprising that a parameter considered secondary had such a strong negative repercussion on the factors of professionalism, reliability and correct and complete transmission of meaning. This result would appear to coincide with the observation made by Collados (1998) about how users may judge the quality of an interpreting using superficial parameters they can perceive in the interpreting act, given that they cannot understand the original speech. It also coincides with the responses obtained in the previous study in which interviewees were annoyed if inappropriate style prevented them from concentrating on the sense of the interpretation. Correct style is closely linked to the concept of clarity of expression and this is directly linked to the transmission of meaning. Thus, for the listeners, the fact that an interpreter does not convey ideas clearly may indicate that he/she has problems conveying the sense of the original. This entails a loss of reliability, which, in turn, would lead the user to think that the interpreter is not a competent professional.

Returning to the repercussion of inappropriate style on the other parameters, it should be pointed out that the parameters on which it appears to have a concomitant effect are mainly verbal parameters: complete and correct transmission of the message; terminology, grammaticality and cohesion. But there are also two non-verbal parameters that would be affected: fluency and diction. Given the wide range of answers obtained and the fact that the sample size is small, no conclusions can be drawn, although once again, different degrees of sensitivity to the same parameter were registered.

5.2.4. Effects on the user: results and discussion

The results obtained would appear to be linked to those of the previous question. The subjects expected that inappropriate style would, firstly, make understanding more difficult (4.00) and, secondly, represent a major source of distraction (3.92), which would increase the subjective perception that the sense of the original speech is not being understood.

The impact of inappropriate style in the interpreting on users' capacity to concentrate and understand is only slightly less (3.77 and 3.62, respectively); the responses indicate a considerable effect on both parameters. Despite the fact that the subjects were not experienced in the use of interpreting, the results would seem to indicate that they were aware of some of the effects produced by the use of inappropriate style by the interpreter.

5.2.5. Effects of inappropriate style on a negative assessment

92.86% of the subjects considered that inappropriate style would have a decisive negative effect on the global assessment of an SI. Indeed, 78.57% of the sample considered that the effect would either be very important (35.71%) or somewhat important (42.86%), as it would undermine the perception of the quality of the interpreting.

These results may appear surprising, although they are in line with the responses obtained in previous questions. They also coincide with studies by Moser (1995), in which a high percentage of subjects (64% and 73%, depending on the type of setting in which the study was undertaken) stated that clarity of expression is very important (see section 2.1).

As is the case with other parameters in this evaluation study, the methodology used (evaluation by specific parameters) may predispose subjects to consider the style parameter to be more important than in studies where users have to assess several quality criteria in one survey.

5.2.6. Effects of inappropriate style on a positive assessment

85.71% of the subjects considered that appropriate style plays a decisive positive role in the overall assessment of an SI. Despite the fact that the subjects had little or medium experience with interpreting, they felt able to associate good style with a successful interpretation. These data are just as surprising as those obtained in the previous question.

5.3. Discussion of the results of the expectations study

It is important to remember that studies that use instruments such as questionnaires are conditioned by the fact that questionnaires may be filled in by people in a hurry who interrupt their daily tasks to dedicate a few minutes to researchers. This methodology may lead to problems when gathering data. Subjects may not think their answers through to the extent that the researcher would prefer and this could affect the results. In this study, subjects did not fill in the open-ended questions, so the study was not enriched by any personal contributions.

Another general aspect worth mentioning is the wide variety of scores, with a standard deviation of more than one point in almost all cases, which emphasizes once again the highly subjective nature of expectations.

The methodology used (evaluation of a specific parameter) may well have led subjects to rate the style parameter as more important than has been recorded in studies in which users have to assess several quality criteria in the same questionnaire.

In light of the results obtained from this pilot study, no definite conclusions can be drawn. The next step would be to replicate the study with a larger group of subjects drawn from different areas of knowledge, which would enable us to identify possible preferences according to specialist field.

6. Conclusion

In the first two studies presented, a degree of confusion and subjectivity concerning the definition of the style parameter was detected. In further quality studies, it would

be advisable to clarify the definition or explanation of this parameter, including references to correct language use, clarity, simplicity or conciseness, as required.

Although we are cautious in the conclusions drawn, the results of the assessment study would seem to indicate that subjects from the field of law appreciated the more grandiloquent style of the manipulated video, in line with expectations and quality assessment studies that detect differences between user groups (Ng 1992). This manipulation was carried out in the belief that the exaggerated style would be judged unacceptable, so our expectations were not confirmed. The results confirmed that different groups of users have style preferences and this is in line with the plain vs. non-plain translation literature (González-Ruiz 2005, 2014).

The last expectations study reported does not enable us to draw conclusions beyond mere observation and the discussion of the responses obtained, given the small sample size and the subjects' lack of experience with interpreting. However, it is obvious that they were aware of the repercussion that inappropriate style could have on the other parameters. Despite the fact that style is relatively unimportant in comparison to that of other parameters (it is traditionally ranked seventh), it would appear to have a considerable impact on how the interpreter is perceived (as professional or not, and reliable or not) as observed by other researchers (Berk-Seligson 1988; Kopczyński 1994; Mason 2008).

The studies carried out reveal that although the parameter of style is complex to define, it may play a significant role in the assessment of interpreting and thus deserves further study.

Future research should focus on exploring the preference of plain vs. non-plain language in conference interpreting but also in community interpreting, as has already been done in translation studies (González-Ruiz 2005, 2014). It would be interesting to extend these studies with the assessment of audience comprehension following Pöchhacker's approach (2013).

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