An Exploration of Student Interpreters' Attitudes Towards the Undergraduate Interpreting Training Programmes at Yemeni Universities

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Abstract—This study investigates the attitudes of trainee interpreters towards their training programmes at Yemeni universities. 61 interpreters in Taiz province participated in the study. A 16-item questionnaire was designed to explore their attitudes towards their programmes. The findings of this study show that the interpreters are not satisfied with the current programmes. The results also show that the programme does not adequately enhance the interpreting competence of would-be interpreters. The programme is mainly concerned with the enhancement of the linguistic and cultural competencies, paying less attention to other components of interpreting competence such as instrumental, psycho-physiological, and strategic. The results also show that respondents are not satisfied with the content of instructional modules, activities used in the training, the time allocated for practicums, and the amount of technology integration. This study has also investigated the interpreting directionality of beginner and advanced student interpreters at Al-Saeed University by quantitatively analysing their final scores in interpreting modules. Beginner and advanced groups in the current study demonstrate different levels of interpreting competence in both directions. The results from various statistical tools show that student interpreters, whether beginners or advanced, are more competent to interpret into their mother tongue, while very few of them show balanced skills in both directions. Additionally, the overall scores of beginner and advanced student interpreters in both directions do not reflect the expected level of proficiency.

Index Terms—Interpreting, training, programme, Yemeni Universities, interpreting competence

I. INTRODUCTION

The last decade witnessed the introduction of many translation and interpreting programmes at Arab and Yemeni universities. Currently, more than twenty public and private universities in Yemen offer undergraduate and post graduate programmes in translation and interpreting. The race to introduce these programmes has been partly dictated by the pressing demand for competent translators and interpreters in local, regional, and international markets. Graduates of these programmes have greater opportunities for employment than graduates from other language departments at faculties of education and arts, where the focus is usually on either language education or literary studies. In general, colleges of languages and arts at Yemeni universities offer an eight-semester undergraduate BA major in foreign languages with a specialisation in translation and interpreting from Arabic into English, and vice versa. Student translators/interpreters are required to complete more than fifteen modules about the theory and practice of translation and interpreting studies. The training also includes practical modules in legal, business, political, religious, and literary translation. Additionally, student translators/interpreters must complete several courses in interpreting.

In the training programme, three modes of interpreting are generally included: simultaneous, consecutive, and sight translation. Although most conferences now include simultaneous interpretation, the terms "simultaneous interpreting" and "conference interpreting" are not always synonymous. Consecutive interpreting (CI) is commonly employed in press conferences, business meetings, and summits, among other settings. It may also be used in certain types of conferences where financial constraints limit possibilities for simultaneous interpretation. Almost all other types of interpretation, in one way or another, end up being a variation of consecutive or simultaneous. The COVID-19 pandemic compelled many institutions globally to revisit their programmes for interpreter training and introduce remote interpreting as a component in the training. Remote consecutive, simultaneous, or sight interpreting typically use web conferencing tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Skype, or telephone.

Sight interpreting and translation (SIT) is commonly used in public service assignments, involving, for example, witness statements. As a multimodal activity (Havnen, 2019), SIT involves the oral "rendition of a written text at sight" (Pöchhacker, 2016, p. 20) from one language into another. Other types of interpreting include dialogue interpretation, or liaison interpretation, which is commonly used in public service settings such as medical assignments, police interviews, legal meetings, prison visits, school meetings, and etcetera.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the start of the Yemeni war between the Saudi-led coalition and the politicised armed Houthi movement in 2015, Yemen witnessed the worst humanitarian crisis in the country's modern history, according to several neutral international reports. To respond to the massive crisis, international organisations from various countries rushed to provide humanitarian aid to millions of Yemenis in dire need of food, healthcare, potable water, and education. There has been great demand for translators and interpreters to facilitate communication between these organisations and the local people in cities, towns, and remote villages, as well as to provide humanitarian watchdog organisations with reports about the atrocities committed by all involved parties. Many international organisations were working on the ground long before the start of the war. Over the years, professional translators and interpreters have been working for these organisations operating in Yemen. Unfortunately, thousands of qualified translators and interpreters, as well as instructors and professors, have been forced to leave the country. Amidst the shortage of qualified translators and interpreters, relief organisations began recruiting nonprofessional translators and interpreters. Many universities in Yemen in general and in Taiz province in particular, the latter having been under siege for more than seven years, introduced translator and interpreter training programmes despite many struggling with lack of funding and academic personnel. Before 2015, there were two programmes for translators and interpreters in higher education institutions in Taiz province, one at the University of Science and Technology, and the other at Al-Saeed University. According to Al-Shehari (2019, p. 25):

> The Yemeni situation is a crisis translation situation (O'Brien, 2016) that involves both an ongoing conflict and an epidemic, in which the Yemeni population relies on the support of multilingual NGO operators, most of whom have limited proficiency in Arabic and near- zero professional T&I experience.

This cross-sectional study aims to investigate the current interpreting programmes at Yemeni universities to determine the extent to which interpreters graduating from these programmes are prepared to start a career in the language and translation industry. This study also aims to investigate the interpreting directionality and competence of student interpreters enrolled in translation and interpreting programmes at Al-Saeed University in Yemen in 2019-2020. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Yemeni interpreters towards their interpreting programmes at Yemeni universities?
2. Do Yemeni beginner and advanced student interpreters exhibit similar or different levels of competence while interpreting in both directions?
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between Arabic-English and English-Arabic interpreting competence between beginner and advanced student interpreters?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A considerable number of studies have investigated translation programmes in different Arab countries. Some of these studies examined translation programmes at Arab universities in Yemen, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia (Al Aqad, 2017; Alaoui, 2008; Al-Mubarak, 2017; Gabr, 2002; Mohammed, 2020). Other studies have dealt specifically with the teaching of certain translation modules, such as the status of machine translation in Saudi Arabia (Almutawa & Izwaini, 2015), the use of project-based learning in teaching electronic tools for translators (Alkhatnai, 2017), the use of corpora tools when translating between Arabic and English (Mohammed, 2022) and the attitudes of female students in a Saudi university towards the use of computer-aided translation (CAT) tools in the classroom (Alotaibi, 2014).

Interpreter training in tertiary education contexts has not yet been adequately studied. Although courses in interpreting are offered in current translation programmes at many Yemeni and Arab universities, these courses are generally offered at a later stage in the programmes (i.e., in the third and fourth years). Available literature on interpreting studies in the Arab world either addresses the general challenges of interpreting programmes at Arab universities, or deals with specific aspects of a programme, such as teaching methodology or market relevance. Studies on interpreting competence focus mainly on the analysis of linguistic errors of trainees, directionality in interpreting, and quality assessments of interpreting products. Following is a survey of some of these studies.

A. Interpreter Training and Education

Very few institutions adopt a holistic approach to interpreting education and training. Many programmes focus on the training of community interpreters more than that of professional interpreters who may practice in various contexts and situations. Mo and Hale's study investigated the perspectives of community interpreters towards interpreting programmes in an Australian context (Mo & Hale, 2014). While Australia has been a pioneer in community interpreting and education, and it has a national accreditation system, at the time this study was conducted, the country did not have pre-accreditation education or training requirements. To obtain accreditation, aspiring practitioners must take an exam conducted by the Australian national standards and certifying authority for translators and interpreters (NAATI), complete a vocational diploma, or enrol in undergraduate or postgraduate degree programs. Mo and Hale's (2014) study concluded that although the interpreting curricula include practical units, and units on ethics, the vocational programmes lack theoretical and research-related units. This indicates that the proportion of practice time in the curricula is insufficient. The introduction of components in which trainees can practice under the guidance of

professionals may solve the problem. Another study was also conducted on the teaching of interpreting between Arabic and English at the Granville College of TAFE (Technical and Further Education) (Gamal, 1998) in Australia. The college has been offering courses in community interpreting since 1996 in Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, and other non-European languages in migrant communities. The programme, unlike those offered in the Arab world, places special emphasis on dialectology because a community interpreter will frequently interact in communities where people speak local vernaculars of different Arab cities. Hence, trainees are encouraged to experience as many dialects as possible.

Many universities in the United Kingdom and the United States of America have realised the significance of interpreter training programmes. As a result, they have introduced programmes in many target languages, including Arabic. Training in multiple languages usually requires customisation to serve various language streams and to familiarise trainees with the process of intercultural communication. Along these lines, Weiss (2012) has applied customisation in the design of a course for interpreter training at the School of Languages and International Studies at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, UK. The course has been tailored to ensure that all language streams learn the necessary skills for both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. Customisation enhances cooperation among students of the different language streams, such as Arabic, Chinese, French, German, and Polish, and has a positive impact on the employability of alumni.

As for interpreting education in the Arab world, Al-Maryani (2019) examined the situation of simultaneous interpreter education in Iraq. Despite the increasing demand for interpreters to meet the market needs in the military, political, and economic sectors, the training programmes generally fail to meet the requirements of global changes. The study recommended the review of syllabi, the appointment of well-trained staff, the integration of technology, and raising the overall standards of the programmes. Few studies have examined the assessment of student interpreters at Arab universities. Assessments of the performance of student interpreters often lack the use of objective criteria and are sometimes left to the discretion of instructors. Ahmed (2020) examined the use of rubrics in the assessment of simultaneous interpreting outputs of students at an Egyptian university. The findings of the study showed that the use of systematic and holistic approaches not only enhance the performance of students and increase the consistency in grading, but also the quality of training.

Other studies have reported on the types of activities and modes of training that should be adopted to compensate for the lack of practical training in formal institutions. Li (2015) investigated the use of mock conferences as a situated learning activity in a graduate interpreting programme in China. Similarly, Goutondji (2014) investigated the use of mock conferences for practical instruction of postgraduate interpreter trainees in a simultaneous interpreting programme at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Al-Zahran (2007) suggested a list of exercises that can be employed in the training of SI and CI, such as note-taking, listening and memory, shadowing, dual-task training, paraphrasing, abstracting, closing, sight translating, digit processing, and lag and anticipation exercises.

The role of technology in interpreter training is also emphasised in several studies. These studies tackled aspects such as the use of video cameras in simultaneous interpreting laboratories (Yang, 2018); the use of digital pen technology for note-taking in consecutive interpreting and assessment (Orlando, 2010); the use of corpora tools in terminological preparation to achieve greater accuracy in simultaneous interpreting (Xu, 2018); and the use of comprehensive types of applications such as the Black Box and virtual interpreting environment (VIE) in interpreter education and training (Sandrelli, 2005; Sandrelli & Hawkins, 2006).

As for interpreter competence, studies tend to revolve around linguistic dimensions. Some of these studies examined the errors of Saudi and Iraqi student interpreters (Ibrahim & El-Esery, 2014; Al-Jarf, 2018; Musa & Al-Maryani, 2021). Common errors reported in these studies include insufficient vocabulary knowledge, comprehension problems, incorrect terminology, meaning transfer errors, terminology of chemical and disease names and acronyms, disfluencies, and syntactic errors. Issa's study analysed the challenges that conference and television interpreters encounter. The rendition of culture-bound references, idioms, and jokes are some of these challenges (Issa, 2018). Other challenges are associated with external factors such as noise, speaker-related issues, and interpreter-related factors. In a similar study, problems encountered by volunteer translators and interpreters in Yemen were investigated (Al-Shehari, 2019). In another study, strategic competence of community interpreters was investigated in their translation into Arabic of a talk show called *Her Excellency* (Ahmed, 2016). Some of the strategies followed in interpreting the show into Arabic include close and expanded renditions, substitution, summarisation, and cultural mediation, among others. As for professional and ethical competence, few studies have dealt with the qualities of a professional interpreter in a healthcare context. Hadziabdic and Hjelm (2014) conducted a study on the skills a healthcare interpreter should possess from the perspectives of Arab seekers of health services in Australia. The personal qualities of an interpreter, according to the study, are not only confined to language skills. Other factors include origin, religion, dialect, political affiliations, and gender, among others; these factors may be decisive in the recruitment of an interpreter in a healthcare context.

Another aspect that draws attention in interpreting research is that of directionality. Many studies have investigated whether interpreters exhibit similar, different, or balanced competencies while translating from and into their native language. Analyses of directionality and interpreter competence of undergraduate students in Arab universities have shown that student interpreters are more competent when they interpret into their mother tongue (Al-Salman & Al-Khanji, 2002; Al-Jarf, 2022). A similar study investigated directionality among Chinese first-language interpreters in Chinese-English simultaneous interpreting. The study concluded that professional simultaneous interpreters who have

been frequently interpreting in both directions have shown equal abilities in both languages. However, only 30% of the sample of the study showed balanced knowledge. 70% of the sample showed more competence in interpreting into Chinese (Chang, 2005). Familiarity with context might, however, play a role in the accuracy of interpreting irrespective of directionality. Results from a study that was conducted in a postgraduate interpreting course at the University of Pretoria in South Africa (Dose, 2017) showed that familiarity with the context of a scenario plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of simultaneous interpreters' renditions and proves to be more beneficial while interpreting into the second language than into the native language.

The abovementioned literature demonstrates that most studies focus on the main challenges of university interpreting programmes, including mode of training, methodology, and logistical and infrastructure issues. Apart from the linguistic competence of trainees, other components of interpreting competence are generally overlooked in the literature. Omissions by student and professional interpreters may not be the result of their linguistic incompetence but could be due to external or psycho-physiological factors, such as stress. Training programmes should consider the various competencies that enable student interpreters to cope with the varied challenges they are likely to encounter in their careers.

B. Interpreting Competence

Several translator and interpreter training programmes are built around one of the key models of translation competence, which is defined by the PACTE research group as "the underlying system of knowledge, abilities and attitudes required to be able to translate" (Beeby et al., 2003, p. 43). Translation competence models are usually designed to include the skills, knowledge, and attributes of both translators and interpreters which do not undermine interpreting competence. The PACTE group uses a model for translation competence that consists of six components of competence, namely, bilingual, extra-linguistic, instrumental-professional, psycho-physiological, transfer, and strategic. Another well-known model of translation competence was developed by the EMT expert group. EMT was established by the European Commission's Directorate General for Translation to improve translator training. Their goal was to establish a European standard for a master's degree in translation. The EMT model also consists of six competences: translation service provision, language, intercultural, information mining, thematic, and technological. Additionally, some attempts have been made to create a separate model for interpreting competence. As early as the 1930s Sanz (1931; cited in Pöchhacker, 2016, p. 164) suggested several cognitive and moral qualities an interpreter needs in a professional setting. These abilities include memory, intuition, and intelligence. Moral and affective skills may include poise, tact, alertness, and discretion.

Kalina (2000, p. 5) defines interpreting competence as the ability to process texts using special strategies in communication scenarios where two or more languages are involved. She emphasises that these strategies are different from those used in monolingual situations. The interpreter acts as an interlingual mediator. This process is considerably constrained by time, "lack of semantic autonomy" and, "the potential interference between closely connected processes of production and comprehension" (Kalina, 2000, p. 5). Interpreting is not merely a linguistic phenomenon; rather, it makes use of psycho-linguistic and cognitive psychology as well (Kalina, 2000). Confirming that there are some competences, or what Kalina calls "basic competences" which translators and interpreters share, she also refers to the differences among them. The basic competences in her view are: linguistic, cultural, world, relevant special knowledge, text processing and production, stylistic, and dealing with interlingual problems.

Meng (2017, pp. 115-116) identified several components of interpreting competence including linguistic, cultural, professional and encyclopaedic knowledge, and excellent memory. An interpreter should also possess skills and abilities in notetaking, quick response, and emergency-dealing.

Meng's study concurs with Gile, who points out that interpreters have exaggerated the differences between translation and interpreting Gile (1995, p. 3). Gile attributes the differences to the cognitive stress that interpreters experience during time-constrained processes. Gile proposes the interpreter's effort model (Gile, 1995, pp. 158-159), which is based on the assumption that in interpreting, mental energy is required, and this energy is only available in short supply. Interpreting consumes most of this mental energy, sometimes requiring more than is available, causing performance to deteriorate.

For Pöchhacker, the most important knowledge components and skills an interpreter is required to possess are excellent knowledge of working languages, general world knowledge, a diverse range of interests, comprehension, analytical skills, memory, verbal fluency, expressive ability, language transfer, communication skills, stress resistance, stamina, good voice quality, confident delivery, and team spirit (Pöchhacker, 2015, pp. 17-18). In the case of sign language interpreting and dialogue interpreting, Pöchhacker also emphasises the significance of psycho-motor and interpersonal skills.

As for consecutive interpreting competence, Gillies (2019, p. 146) draws on Gile's (1995) study, dividing the interpreting process into two main phases; the first is listening and analysis, in which the interpreter is required to have skills of note-taking, short-term memory operations, and coordination (effort management); the second phase is that of production during which an interpreter is required to enhance their recalling and note-reading skills.

The validity of translation competence models in interpreter training also appears in the national standards and certifying authority for translators and interpreters in Australia (NAATI) which has designed a comprehensive certification scheme to evaluate aspiring interpreters. The model revolves around the concept of competence, and it

does not differ much from other certification systems for translators. A certified interpreter should have the following competencies: transfer, language, intercultural, thematic, ethical, research, service provision, and technological (NAATI, 2016). NAATI also requires specific competencies for other categories of interpreters such as certified conference, certified specialist (health, legal, etc.), certified provisional and recognised practising interpreters. Although the competency areas specified by NAATI for interpreters and translators are largely similar, the knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) required by each category may differ, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES IN NAATI'S INTERPRETING MODEL

	Knowledge	Skills	Attributes
Language Competency (in two languages)	Vocabulary knowledge Grammar knowledge Idiomatic knowledge Language trends knowledge	Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer	Attentive-to-detail Desire-to-excel Reliable Willing-to-learn Objective Respectful Collaborative Self-reflective Problem-solving Confident
Intercultural Competency	Cultural, historical and political knowledge	Sociolinguistic skill	
Research Competency	Research tools and methods knowledge	Terminology and information research skill Create and maintain a knowledge bank	
Technological Competency	Interpreting technology knowledge	Interpreting through communication media Information and communications technology (ICT) skill	
Thematic Competency	General knowledge Current events knowledge Subject-matter specific knowledge Institution-specific knowledge		
Transfer Competency	Interpreting modes knowledge	Discourse analysis skill Discourse management skill Meaning transfer Memory skill Rhetorical skill	
	Interpreting standards knowledge	Self-assessment skill	
Service Provision Competency	Knowledge of the business of interpreting	Interpreting business skill Communication skill Interpersonal skill	
Ethical Competency	Ethics knowledge	Professional Ethics	

Although the development of the various skills and attributes is not always possible in formal training programmes, these are sometimes acquired through experience and practice. Interpreter training in a higher education context should familiarise students with all the dimensions of interpreting competence. Some aspects can be developed in a physical or virtual mode through micro-learning groups, projects, tasks, and simulations. Practicum and mock conferences may also assist in sharpening the psycho-physiological attributes of would-be interpreters. Along these lines, this study investigates the current interpreting programmes at Yemeni universities to determine the extent to which they enhance the competencies, skills, and attributes of would-be interpreters.

IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study is descriptive-analytical. It investigates the status of interpreter training at Yemeni universities. The participants are 61 interpreters, who graduated from Taiz University, Al-Saeed University, and the University of Science and Technology between 2015-2019. This study employs a quantitative approach, using a survey composed of twelve five-point Likert items and four multiple-choice items covering the various dimensions of interpreting competence. The following steps were considered in the development of the questionnaire:
1. A 25-item questionnaire was initially prepared, and it was sent to two professors of translation studies who suggested the deletion of six items.
2. To ensure the clarity of all items, a pilot study was then conducted with eight interpreters from the same population as the participants. Three other items were deleted.
3. A 16-item questionnaire was administered to 61 interpreters, none of whom had participated in the pilot study. An exploratory factor analysis was also conducted, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were calculated. The results indicate an acceptable KMO index of (0.896). Results of the principal component factor analysis showed that the factor loads of the scale are acceptable, ranging between 0.74 and 0.96.
4. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha consistency, which revealed that the questionnaire had acceptable internal consistency (r = 0.964).

The survey used for this study has a structure that can be applied in terms of factor distributions and validity-reliability values. Apart from the satisfaction section of the questionnaire, another section was devoted to the various aspects of the training programme. Respondents were given four multiple-choice items in which they were asked about the training methodology, technology integration in the programme, entry requirements, modes of interpreting, and training activities, among others.

In addition to the survey, this study also investigated interpreting directionality and competence by analysing the final scores of two groups of student interpreters at Al-Saeed University during the academic year 2019-2020. The beginners' group included 17 student interpreters, and the advanced group included 12. Although the beginners' group had recently finished their first interpreting course at the time this study was conducted, they had already completed many language and translation courses. The advanced group, on the other hand, were in their final year, having completed almost all the requirements of the degree.

V. RESULTS

To investigate the attitudes of the interpreters towards their training programmes, the percentages of each item were calculated, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF RESPONSES

No	Items	Percentages (%)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	The interpreting programme at my university does not put adequate attention to the structural (i.e., morphological and syntactic) differences between Arabic and English.	57	15	13	2	13
2	The programme does not enhance the lexical knowledge of trainee interpreters in the two languages.	55	23	8	7	7
3	The interpreting programme does not attempt to enhance the socio-cultural competence of trainees properly.	68	15	5	7	5
4	Differences between the textual and cohesive systems of the two languages are not considered.	72	22	2	2	3
5	Trainees are not introduced to various genres and text types.	65	18	3	12	2
6	A proper training in the mother-tongue competence is not offered.	72	15	3	7	3
7	Bi-cultural competence and research skills competence (e.g., encyclopaedic, and subject knowledge) are given less attention in the programme.	62	22	0	13	3
8	Trainees are not familiarized with problems-solving translation strategies such as syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic strategies.	52	32	3	7	7
9	The programme in its present form promotes the trainees' cognitive abilities like memory, perception, attention, and emotion.	8	8	7	12	65
10	The programme helps develop the attitudinal attributes of trainees such as intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigour, and critical spirit.	3	16	7	14	60
11	The programme enhances the trainees' creativity, logical reasoning, analysis, and synthesis.	13	5	5	13	63
12	Interpreting courses should not be taught at the current translation programme, and they need to be introduced in a separate programme.	20	32	3	17	28

As the data in Table 2 shows, the participants of this study believed that their interpreting programmes did not contribute much to the enhancement of their interpreting competence. Investigating the treatment of the linguistic competence of student interpreters has shown that 72% of the respondents see that the content places no special emphasis on the structural (i.e., morphological, and syntactic) differences between Arabic and English. 78% of respondents were dissatisfied with the role their programme played in the enhancement of their lexical knowledge in the two languages. 94% of the respondents reported that the textual and cohesive systems of the two languages were not adequately considered in the syllabus. Similarly, 83% of the respondents were of the view that their programme did not familiarise them with various genres and text types they are likely to encounter in their future career. Although interpreting programmes at Yemeni universities focus mainly on translation between Arabic, English and French, 87% of the respondents agreed that sufficient training in first-language competence was not offered.

The cultural and specialised competences of the trainees did not improve; 83% of the participants reported that the interpreting programme did not attempt to enhance their socio-cultural competence properly. Similarly, 84% held the view that the bi-cultural and research skills competences (e.g., encyclopaedic, and subject knowledge) were given less attention in the programme. As for strategic competence, 84% of respondents believed that they were not sufficiently familiarised with problem-solving translation strategies such as syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic.

Emerging statistics showed that the programmes analysed in this study undermined the psycho-physiological sub-competence of the student interpreters. 77% of the respondents reported that their programme did not encourage the development of cognitive abilities like memory, perception, attention, and emotion. 74% of the respondents reported that their programmes did not help develop attitudinal attributes of trainees such as intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigour, or critical spirit. 76% of respondents felt that the enhancement of creativity, logical reasoning, analysis, and synthesis were undermined. The inclusion of translation and interpreting modules in one unified programme may contribute to the lack of interpreting competence of the trainees; this is what may have prompted 55% of respondents to hold the view that interpreting courses should be introduced in a separate, fully-fledged interpreting programme.

Apart from the satisfaction levels of the respondents with their interpreting programmes, the survey included a section on the status quo of the training programmes, their components, entry requirements, and questions about the tasks and activities used in training and technology integration. When asked to describe the interpreting situation at their university, most respondents described their training as a transmissive programme aiming to transfer knowledge from teachers to learners. A minority of respondents pointed out that theirs was a professional-oriented programme with a humanistic approach aiming to integrate students into a community of professional practice. In the view of the respondents, the psycho-cognitive aspects of the profession, including cognitive strategies and process capacity

management, were rarely considered in their programmes. Figure 1 shows the situation of interpreter training at the time this study was conducted.
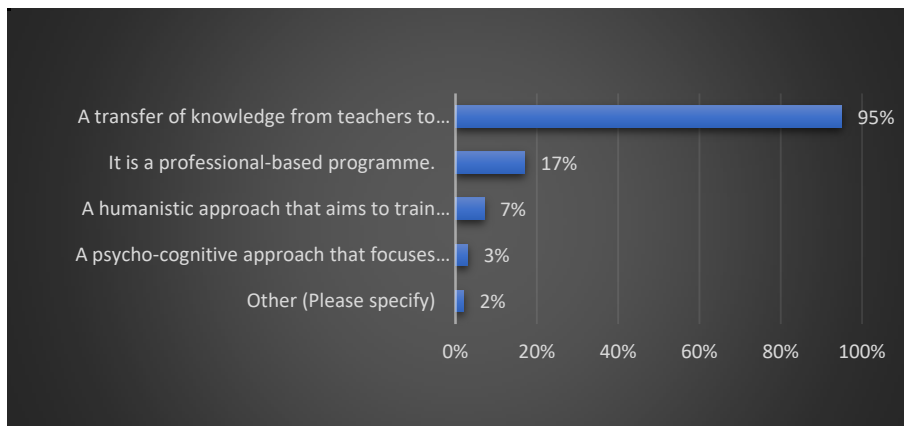

Figure 1. Current Situation of Interpreting Programmes at Yemeni Universities

Student interpreters reported that their training programmes mainly revolved around basic concepts in language and communication, language enhancement, and the enhancement of specialised and socio-cultural background knowledge. Professional ethics, international organisations, and skills training in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting were given less attention. Figure 2 shows the components of the training programmes as viewed by trainees.
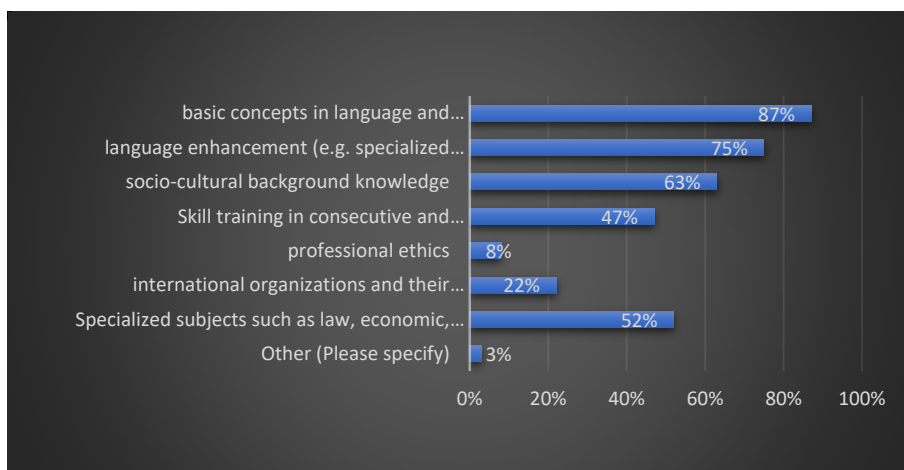

Figure 2. The Content of the Training Programmes

As for the tasks and activities frequently used in training; note-taking, simultaneous paraphrasing, role playing, sight translation, and mock conferencing were among them. Cognitive activities such as processing overload and shadowing hardly featured. Similarly, internships and practicum were rarely used. Figure 3 shows the frequencies of the various activities in the training programmes.
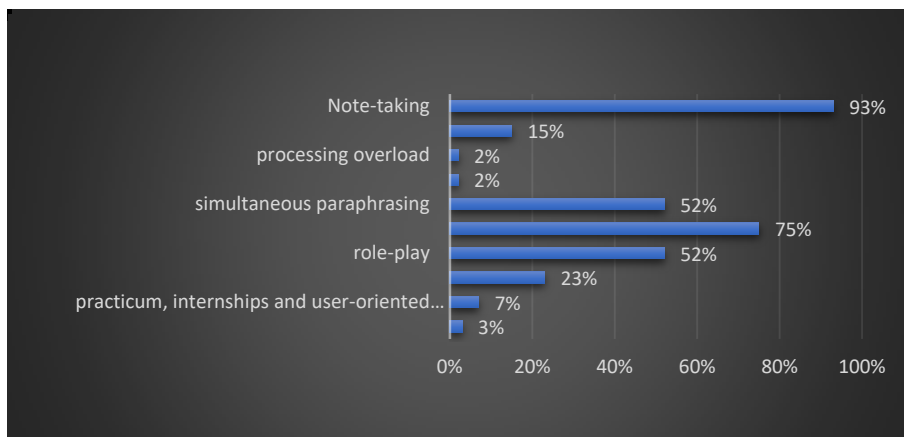

Figure 3. Tasks and Activities Used in the Programmes

As for technology integration, the results showed that the training modes were largely traditional. Face-to-face interpreting training was the most common, followed by telephone, video conferencing, and remote simultaneous interpreting. However, 50% of the student interpreters indicated that they did not receive any technology-enhanced training. In other words, the training took place in traditional classrooms without the use of technology. Figure 4 shows the frequency of technology integration in the interpreting programmes.
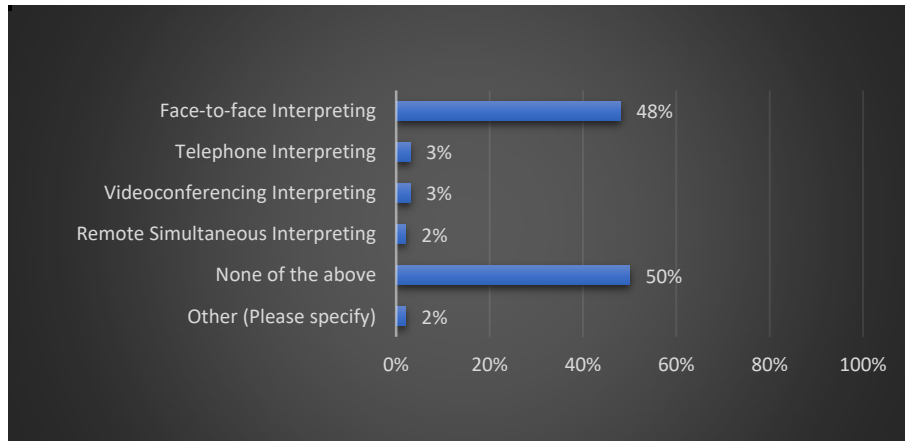

Figure 4. Technology Integration in the Interpreting Programme

To answer the second question of this study, "Do Yemeni beginner and advanced student interpreters exhibit similar or different levels of competence while interpreting in both directions?", descriptive statistics of the scores of beginner and advanced student interpreters and T-tests were conducted. Descriptive statistics of the scores of the two groups appear in Table 3.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDENT INTERPRETERS' SCORES IN INTERPRETING MODULES

	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Mean Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic
Beginners Arabic-English	17	14.16	21.00	35.16	31.2735	.87310	3.59990	12.959
Beginners English- Arabic	17	17.16	25.00	42.16	37.1153	1.14048	4.70231	22.112
Advanced Arabic-English	12	14.00	30.00	44.00	36.0000	1.40346	4.86172	23.636
Advanced English - Arabic	12	11.00	34.00	45.00	39.6667	1.07544	3.72542	13.879
Valid N (listwise)	12							

Findings reported in Table 3 show that for the beginners' group, the typical English-Arabic score was 37.1153% and the typical Arabic-English score was 31.2735%. The mean scores reflect differences in interpreting ability in both directions. The variance and range scores show differences in interpreting competence within the group. To find out whether these differences are statistically significant, one-sample t-test was used, as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST OF BEGINNER STUDENT INTERPRETERS' SCORES IN BOTH DIRECTIONS
Test Value = 30

	t	Df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Beginners Arabic-English	1.459	16	.082	.164	1.27353	-.5774	3.1244
Beginners English- Arabic	6.239	16	<,001	<,001	7.11529	4.6976	9.5330

The t-test results showed no significant differences in the students' competence while interpreting from Arabic into English. However, statistically significant differences were found in their competence in interpreting from English into Arabic. That is, students' interpreting competence differs significantly when they interpret into their mother tongue. Furthermore, some student interpreters are more linguistically competent in the use of mother tongue than others. A Pearson correlation was also used to determine any statistically significant correlation between beginner student interpreters' Arabic-English and English-Arabic interpreting competence, as shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5
PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE SCORES OF BEGINNER STUDENT INTERPRETERS

		Beginners Arabic-English	Beginners English-Arabic
Beginners Arabic-English	Pearson Correlation	1	.315
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.218
	N	17	17
Beginners English- Arabic	Pearson Correlation	.315	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.218	
	N	17	17

As the results of the Pearson correlation test show, there is no significant correlation between Arabic-English and English-Arabic interpreting scores of beginner student interpreters. The Pearson correlation coefficient is .315 and the 2-tailed significance is .218. This means that in the beginners' group, if a trainee's interpreting skill in one direction is good, it does not follow that their interpreting skills are equally good in the other direction. Similarly, should the interpreter's score be poor in one direction, it may not be poor in the other.

As for the advanced group, the typical Arabic-English and English-Arabic scores were 36 and 39.66, respectively. Results of the one-sample t-test appear in Table 6.

TABLE 6
ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST OF ADVANCED STUDENT INTERPRETERS' SCORES IN BOTH DIRECTIONS
Test Value = 30

	t	Df	Significance		Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p		Lower	Upper
Advanced Arabic-English	4.275	11	<,001	.001	6.00000	2.9110	9.0890
Advanced English - Arabic	8.989	11	<,001	<,001	9.66667	7.2996	12.0337

T-test results of the scores of the advanced interpreting group indicate significant differences in the students' competence in Arabic-English and English-Arabic interpreting. That is, advanced student interpreters differ significantly in terms of interpreting competence. This means that advanced students' ability in English-Arabic interpreting is better than Arabic-English. A Pearson correlation was also used to determine any statistically significant correlation between advanced student interpreters' Arabic-English and English-Arabic interpreting competence, as shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7
PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE SCORES OF ADVANCED STUDENT INTERPRETERS

		Advanced Arabic-English	Advanced English - Arabic
Advanced Arabic-English	Pearson Correlation	1	.908[**]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		<,001
	N	12	12
Advanced English - Arabic	Pearson Correlation	.908[**]	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	<,001	
	N	12	12

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

A significant correlation was found between Arabic-English and English-Arabic interpreting scores. The Pearson correlation coefficient is .908 and the 1-tailed significance is <.001. This means that in the advanced interpreting group, if a trainee's interpreting competence in one direction is good, their interpreting skills are equally good in the other direction. Similarly, should the interpreter's skills be poor in one direction, they are likely to be poor in the other direction.

To investigate the existence of any significant relations between the scores of beginner and advanced student interpreters, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, as shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8
ANOVA TEST FOR THE SCORES OF BEGINNER AND ADVANCED STUDENT INTERPRETERS
OS

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	369.590	166	369.590	6.599	.016
Within Groups	1512.157	27	56.006		
Total	1881.747	28			

As for beginner and advanced students' performance, the ANOVA revealed significant differences in the total test mean scores of the beginner and advanced groups in interpreting in both directions (Df= 166; F=6.599, P<.016). This means that beginner and advanced groups in this study show different levels of interpreting competence in both directions. Advanced student interpreters have better interpreting skills than beginner student interpreters, which could

be attributed to their experience, and to the fact that the former have completed more language, translation, and interpreting courses, and they have been exposed to more practical sessions than beginners.

VI. Discussion

The findings of this study show that Yemeni interpreters are generally not satisfied with their training programmes at Yemeni universities. Quantitative data shows that these programmes do not contribute much to the enhancement of several dimensions of trainees' interpreting competence, including linguistic, cultural, and psycho-physiological, among others. These findings are consistent with those of other studies that investigated the translation and interpreting programmes at many Arab universities (Gabr, 2002; Alaoui, 2008; Mohammed, 2020). The findings of this study also show that Yemeni training programmes are mainly concerned with the transfer of theoretical knowledge; they are generally not profession-oriented and do not attempt to integrate students into a community of professional practice. The programmes typically focus on key concepts in language and communication, language enhancement activities, as well as on some specialised literary, legal, economic, and business texts. Trainees are neither familiarised with the ethics of the profession, nor the terminology of international organisations that normally recruit interpreters. The programmes also do not generally aim to enhance students' psycho-cognitive skills and strategies. In terms of activities, note-taking, role-playing, simultaneous paraphrasing and sight translation of texts, the selection of which is based on the trainer's discretion, are commonly used. These drawbacks of the programmes are reported in studies that were conducted in different Arabic countries including Al-Shehari (2019), and Musa and Al-Maryani (2021), among others. The problems that student, novice and professional interpreters encounter may be attributed to the training they receive at their universities. Although some differences were found between the scores of beginner and advanced interpreters, the performance of trainees in consecutive, simultaneous, and on-sight interpreting is unsatisfactory. In fact, the trainees' mean scores did not exceed the acceptable statistical level. These findings of this study are in agreement with other studies conducted on trainee and professional interpreters including, Farghal and Shakir (1994), Alduhaim and Alkhaldy (2019), and Al-Jarf (2022). Although the beginner and advanced interpreters, according to the emerging statistics, showed greater competence while interpreting from their second language to their mother tongue, the overall scores of the trainees in both directions do not reflect the expected level of proficiency. Few interpreters showed a balanced knowledge of their working languages during the interpreting tasks. The interpreting products abound with lexico-grammatical, cultural, and communication problems. This finding is in line with the findings of Al-Jarf (2022) about Saudi student interpreters, Farghal and Shakir (1994) about Jordanian advanced interpreters, Akki and Larouz (2021) about Moroccan interpreters, and Al Zahran (2021) on the structural problems that simultaneous interpreters encounter when translating between English and Arabic. Omissions that can affect the coherence and informativity of the discourse are also common (Alduhaim & Alkhaldy, 2019).

Given interpreters' dissatisfaction with their interpreting programmes, as well as the scores of beginner and advanced student interpreters in interpretation modules, this study recommends the adoption of a holistic training approach that takes into consideration all the dimensions of interpreting competence, including bilingual, intercultural, research, technological, thematic, strategic, professional, ethical, and service provision (Beeby et al., 2003; NAATI, 2016). Materials and activities should be customised to suit the individual needs of trainees. The selection of training materials should not be at the discretion of trainers; they should make use of available digital repositories such as UN and TED. A digital repository that includes Arabic videos about the Arab world could be prepared using YouTube and Arab channels such as Aljazeera, Al-Arabiya, Sky News, etc. This could include genuine consecutive and simultaneous translations of speeches, briefings, and interviews. Interpreter training has long focused on the teaching of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting using political speeches and materials. The ongoing crises in the Middle East necessitate the integration of community interpreting in the curriculum. The humanitarian crises in countries such as Yemen, Syria, and Libya indicate that interpreters, who not only understand politicians' words but can operate on the ground in war zones, are needed; they may be requested to interpret information about education, healthcare, famine, and aggression-related discourses in extremely risky environments. Furthermore, it is the contention of this study that adequate training is not possible without using technology-based approaches that utilise the power of interpreting training platforms and cloud-based training labs.

VII. Conclusion

This cross-sectional study investigated the current interpreting programmes at Yemeni universities to determine the extent to which these programmes contribute to the enhancement of student interpreter competencies, skills, and attributes. It employed a quantitative approach through a survey composed of 16 items covering various dimensions of interpreting competence. It also investigated directionality in interpreting among two groups of trainees, one novice and the other advanced. Various statistical tests were used to analyse the scores of student interpreters in training modules. The findings of this study have shown that student interpreters at three Yemeni universities were generally not satisfied with their programmes, because they did not contribute to the enhancement of their interpreting competence via various linguistic, cultural, psycho-physiological, and other dimensions. Although some differences were found between the

scores of beginner and advanced interpreters, the performances of trainees in consecutive, simultaneous, and on-sight interpreting were unsatisfactory.

This study has its own limitations. It only investigated the interpreting programmes at Yemeni universities from the perspectives of graduate interpreters. More studies are needed to examine the attitudes of other stakeholders towards the programmes. This may include professional interpreters, trainers as well as local and international organisations that employ the graduates of these programmes. This study also examined the interpreting competence of a limited number of beginner and advanced student interpreters and thus the findings cannot be generalised. Further studies could, for instance, evaluate interpreting competence of trainees at various universities in other provinces in Yemen, and the country at large, based on student scores in final examinations. The focus of future studies could shift away from the analyses of test and exam scores towards examining the quality of translated content based on a longitudinal trainee corpus, or a parallel corpus of interpretations performed by professional and expert interprets.

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