QUALITY INTERPRETING SERVICE: THE PARLIAMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA AS A CASE STUDY

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This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Philosophy at Stellenbosch University

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any University for a degree.

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Signature      Date

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the interpreting services in the Parliament of South Africa (POSA). The impetus to embark on such an investigation arose after Members of Parliament claimed that the interpreting service in the Parliament of South Africa (POSA) is poor. In seeking to determine why Members of Parliament made such claims, I therefore investigated the interpreting service rendered by staff of Parliament’s Interpreting Unit. Consequently, an investigation to whether the simultaneous interpreters currently employed by Parliament of South Africa possess the amalgam of skills attributes and qualifications necessary for them to render an interpreting service of good quality. Questionnaires were distributed to Members of Parliament and to interpreters, interviews were conducted with Control Language Practitioners (CLPs), observation of recruitment panels for interpreters also followed, and interpreters were recorded during the sitting of Parliament House in an attempt to check whether interpreters do deliver an interpreting service that is up to standard. The results of this study show that Members of Parliament have a valid claim as 65% of the sample of interpreters had joined Parliament without interpreting skills and had, to date, never been sent for interpreting training and most interpreters are demoralised by the working conditions of the Language Services Section at the Parliament of South Africa.
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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Interpreting plays a vital role in the communicative discourse at the Parliament of South Africa (POSA). It is used during Parliamentary Plenaries. Plenary refers to a formal session of either the National Assembly (NA) or the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) during which issues are debated and formal decisions are made through consensus or voting.

POSA also has a public participation programme. This involves having meetings, commonly known as “public hearings”, with members of the general public on a particular Bill or any matter of public interest. These public hearings require the use of interpreting services as most Members of Parliament (MPs) use English whereas most members of the public use their mother tongues during these proceedings.

Interpreting is also used when Parliamentary committees perform their oversight functions i.e. when committees visit other spheres of government and members of the public in order to verify whether the budget allocated to provinces and local governments is being used effectively.

Taking Parliament to the People is another programme which needs the provision of interpreting services. This programme involves oversight visits to the provinces and is conducted by the NCOP.

It was apparently envisaged that the interpreting service would have been extended to committee meetings by now. This, however, has not yet been realised, since the Parliamentary Language Policy has, to date, still only been implemented partially.

In summary then, the National Parliament of South Africa uses simultaneous interpreting and sign language interpreting to render interpreting services to its primary and secondary clients i.e. MPs and members of the general public. However, it is important to note that, during events which take place outside the precinct of the
Parliamentary buildings, consecutive interpreting is sometimes used when technical problems occur.

According to Tommola and Hyona (1990:180) simultaneous interpreting is a highly complex discourse performance during which language perception, comprehension, translation and production operations are carried out virtually in parallel and within tight time constraints. The contention is that the task is likely to create a heavy cognitive processing load. There is a great possibility that users of interpreting services are not aware of this. The researcher aims to bring this to their attention.

Gile (1995: 79) states that it is important to note that interpreting is not an easy task, that not everyone can make a good interpreter, and that it requires special cognitive skills and not a mastery of grammar. Gile’s point is that an interpreter must have extralinguistic knowledge of interpreting as a discipline as well as general knowledge about the subject matter being discussed by the clients in order for him to be able to handle the interpreting function properly. Simultaneous interpreting – which is used by Parliament of South Africa to render interpreting services to its clients – is even more difficult than other modes of interpreting.

1.2 Background

In compliance with Section 6 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) which outlines the official languages of the Republic as Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu, the South African National Parliament implemented the National Language Policy Framework in 2003. This prompted the establishment of a fully fledged language service section in 2004.

This section embarked on a drive to recruit language practitioners for all South African official languages including sign language, a drive which saw the creation of 44 language practitioner posts. Apart from the National Language Policy Framework, Parliament developed its own language policy, in order to provide language services in the form of reporting (also referred to as transcription), translating and interpreting for Members of Parliament and the general public. Thus, four language practitioners
per language were employed. [See addendum A – Parliamentary Language Policy.]
The first group of language practitioners that joined Parliament in 2004 included
experienced consecutive/court interpreters from the Department of Justice and
Constitutional Development.

Until recently there were no trained simultaneous interpreters. Interpreters were
selected and appointed on the strength of their grammatical knowledge of the source
and target languages. The majority of language practitioners were educators recruited
from the various education departments, as such individuals had expertise in the target
language.

The first group of language practitioners employed by POSA was sent to Free State
University for a three-day simultaneous interpreting training course prior to assuming
their interpreting duties. To date, Parliamentary interpreters who were employed after
that were never sent for simultaneous interpreting training.

In the Parliament of South Africa, the Language Services Section is comprised of
three units, namely the Interpreting Unit, which provide interpreting services in the
NA and NCOP; the Translation Unit, which translates all parliamentary documents;
and the Reporting Unit, which produces a verbatim transcription of members’
speeches in order to compile the unrevised Hansard. The unrevised Hansard refers to
the concatenation and collation of the transcriptions of members’ speeches into the
debates in which they occurred before final proof-editing.

However, for the purpose of this research, the main focus will be on the Interpreting
Unit so that the alleged problem of, amongst others, quality in simultaneous
interpreting services provided in both Houses of the Parliament of South Africa can
be addressed.

Among others, this study intends to investigate whether recruitment procedure is
being viewed as an important tool in the process of determining the most suitable
candidates for simultaneous interpreting posts, particularly at entry level as this study
shall mainly focus on the entry level recruitment procedure in the Language Services
Section (LSS) in the Parliament of South Africa (POSA).
The study shall also investigate whether Language Services Section (LSS) consider training as a key means of improving the performance of simultaneous interpreters. As it is a general view that some of Parliament’s LSS managers view mentoring provided by senior language practitioners (SLPs) to beginner interpreters as a form of training that will produce quality interpreting services. Therefore, formal training involving theory and practice is being ignored by the section management.

Utmost care should be taken during the process of recruitment of simultaneous interpreters, since not every language practitioner is able to deliver an interpreting service of good quality. Jones (1998: 5) describes a simultaneous interpreter as someone who listens and interprets while the speaker continues speaking. In other words, the interpreter carries on speaking throughout the speech without any interruption. This is the opposite of consecutive interpreting, because a consecutive interpreter awaits his turn and does not start speaking until the speaker allows him the chance to do so. Jones (1998: 90) emphasises that the constant objective of the interpreter is to provide correct translation of the original in a form that sounds as natural and as authentic as possible in the target language: the audience should not feel they are listening to a translation. In other words this implies that the interpreter must be loyal to the source language speaker, this is not always possible for the interpreter due to cultural diversity.

Even translators (who are used to getting enough time to really think about their translations) can not do it. Consecutive interpreters however, have an advantage of delivering quality interpreting services as they have some experience in language interpreting.

Recruitment practice was also evident in the recruitment of interpreters for the Nuremberg Trials. This was cited by Siegfried Ramler (2006:10) in his special lecture held at Tokyo University of foreign studies that simultaneous interpreters were recruited from the pool of consecutive (court) interpreters, from linguists working as document translators and from researchers who were preparing the documentary evidence for the trial. It was found that many of these individuals, while possessing
language mastery and good academic credentials, tended to be perfectionists who froze at the microphone when the right word did not come to mind immediately.

A similar situation presents at the Parliament of South Africa, because many candidates arrive at this institution without the relevant skills, experience and qualifications in simultaneous interpreting. Some language practitioners in the Parliament of South Africa are regarded by management as specialists only in terms of their mother tongue and English. Language skill is but one of the facets in the make-up of a good interpreter, but it does not guarantee quality service delivery if not underpinned by theoretical and practical interpreting skills.

Kayoko (2007:11) claims that the Nuremberg Trials were the first official international gatherings at which simultaneous interpreting was used. However, this statement is being challenged by researchers who investigated the use of simultaneous interpreting at the 1928 International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conference and the 1928 Comintern. For instance, Baigorri (1999: 36) cites multiple sources from archival records to point out that attempt to use simultaneous interpreting started in the mid 1920s and real simultaneous interpreting was used throughout the meetings of the ILO conference in 1928. This implies that Baigorri (1999) does not concur with Gaiba as regards the date of the first official use of simultaneous interpreting.

Hung (2002: 83) states that Lotriet (1997) says that simultaneous interpreting in South Africa started in 1996 during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which ended in 1998. Lotriet (1997), in Hung (2002: 83) also says that interpreting is a clearly defined and well-established profession in many countries, but that the situation is somewhat different in South Africa. She further states that, until 1994, South Africa had a policy of two official languages, namely Afrikaans and English. This, despite the fact that the country has an estimated 25 languages. Interpreters were never used on an official basis, since all Members of Parliament had to be able to communicate in the two official languages. The above statement clearly implies that courts were the only places where interpreters were used for other indigenous languages. Lotriet (1997), in Hung (2002) further points out that, until 1998, court interpreters had received very little if any formal training.
However, Lotriet (1997) states that in 1999, court interpreters started to receive formal training through the introduction of a three-year diploma in legal interpreting. In other words, Lotriet refers to the curriculum implemented in 1999 to give formal training to court interpreters in which the researcher was also one of the students enrolled for this diploma in 1999.

The researcher concurs with Lotriet (1997) as the researcher started his career as a court interpreter in 1990, when the official languages of the court were English and Afrikaans. Court interpreting was not a profession then. People who never visited courts did not even know that there was a career such as interpreting. During those years simultaneous interpreting was not known to court interpreters; court interpreters started to know about simultaneous interpreting when they registered for their first formal qualification in 1998 – the diploma in legal interpreting. They only knew of the mode “simultaneous” but they did not know how it is performed and how difficult it is.

Kayoko (2007:10) also refers to studies conducted on interpreting during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 1996-1998) hearings in South Africa. He mentions a report by du Plessis and Wiegand (1998), which clearly describes the interpreting arrangements and operations at the TRC hearings. He also draws a parallel between interpreting at the TRC and the interpreting at the Nuremburg Trials. Kayoko (2007: 10) reflects on the role of interpreters at the TRC by referring to the gaps between the prescribed role of the interpreter as “a neutral intermediary” or “a conduit” and the reality of interpreters at the TRC who experienced difficulties and trauma while interpreting about atrocities.

Chernov (2004: 6) states that conference interpreting is a complex type of bilingual verbal communicative activity, performed concurrently with audio perception of an oral discourse offered once only, under conditions imposing limits on available processing time and strict limits on the amount of information which can be processed, its object and product to be observed in the semantic (meaning and sense) structure of the verbal communication processed. This implies that a simultaneous interpreter does not enjoy the advantages that derive from being in the same physical space as the source language speaker, as is the case with consecutive interpreting. The
simultaneous interpreter operates from a booth, follows the discussion through headphones and views the speaker on a monitor, if such is available. The simultaneous interpreter therefore does not have an opportunity or the means to request the source-language speaker to clarify or repeat what was already said. This is most probably why simultaneous interpreting is the most difficult and stressful mode of interpreting.

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims to investigate:

i) The quality of interpreting service as rendered in the Parliament of South Africa (POSA); and

ii) The aspects surrounding recruitment and appointment of interpreters that is vital for the actual service.

In order to obtain the above stated goals interpreting literature will be reviewed. Taking into account the fact that quality interpreting service starts at the entry level, during recruitment and selection process. During literature review the following will be reviewed among others:

- quality interpreting from the interpreter’s perspective;
- quality interpreting from the user’s perspective;
- quality interpreting from the speaker’s perspective;

The study will among others include:

- The advertisements used to recruit language practitioners.
- The interview process for short-listed candidates.
- The assessment test conducted during the interview process.
- The provision of interpreting training.
- The working conditions of interpreters employed by the Parliament of South Africa (POSA).

Continuous complaints about the poor quality of interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa prompted this study. This study aims to determine the root cause(s) of the problems regarding the poor quality of simultaneous interpreting in POSA. In this
study, the focus will be on Members of Parliament as the primary clients. Due to time and financial constraints the researcher will not be able to focus on the secondary clients i.e. the general public, but simultaneous interpreters’ as well as their supervisors will be consulted.

The researcher will embark on a qualitative analysis of simultaneous interpreting, in order to determine the causes of poor quality interpreting at POSA. It is also this researcher’s intention to improve contribution to the debate around the improvement of the quality of simultaneous interpreting offered by POSA, and, to that end, some will make some recommendations.

In the empirical research to be conducted, the focus will be on two working languages i.e. English and isiNdebele. IsiNdebele will be used as the target language. The languages mentioned in this research are languages in which the researcher specialises in, when rendering an interpreting service to POSA. At a technical level the following aspects will be evaluated: vocabulary, sentence construction, treatment of idiomatic expressions, grammar, content, and technique/presentation and booth behavior.

Through this research the researcher would like to devise a turnaround strategy for the interpreting unit, and bring about a positive mind shift in the perceptions of the clients and language service management about interpreting as a profession, particularly simultaneous interpreting, in order to project the desired image of Members of Parliament about the provision of interpreting services in the South African Parliament.

The researcher’s ultimate aim (which would not be immediately attainable through this study) would be to bring about a change in the way in which simultaneous interpreting as a profession is viewed by its clients as well as by those who manage such interpreting service.

As responses will be received from the aforementioned stakeholders, this research has the potential to influence the perceptions of those who view simultaneous interpreting as being poorly rendered in the National Parliament of South Africa. It can do so by providing a possible remedy for those practitioners who are said to be rendering
interpreting services which do not satisfy the required standard. This study will also bring to clients’ attention that interpreters have to cope with a continuous strain which can be hard to bear. This is why the performance standard for interpreters in the Language Services Section and Interpreting Unit business plans is given as 85%, unlike 100% for, say, the Translation Unit.

Gile (1998: 6-7) states that a widespread problem in research on interpreting is the difficulty of access to relevant literature. He further says only few university libraries, even in well-known translation and interpreting schools in West-European countries, let alone academic departments not specialised in translation and interpretation, offer adequate coverage of interpretation literature. Gile’s statement implies that a limited attempt has been made to conduct a research on interpreting, especially simultaneous interpreting. This is particularly true of the interpreting service of the South African Parliament. However, Lotriet conducted a study on the simultaneous interpreting services which were rendered at the TRC proceedings which took place from 1996 to 1998. Various studies conducted were in European parliaments. Most of the research conducted on European parliaments will be mentioned in the literature review chapter.

This research will improve the awareness of all stakeholders mentioned earlier so that they can recognise the importance of quality in the recruitment, training and working conditions of skilled and professional simultaneous interpreters in the employ of South African Parliament. This will enable Parliament to be responsive to the needs of all the people of South Africa during House debates and public participation processes. Taking into account that this area of research still has some unexplored territories, the researcher hopes that this thesis will challenge other practising interpreter researchers to debate and carry out further research in the field.

1.4 Research Statement
Simultaneous interpreters are expected to provide a quality simultaneous interpreting service to Members of Parliament and the general public. However, judging by complaints received from Members of Parliament, there seems to be a problem with interpreting services rendered in the Parliament of South Africa.
Franz Pöchhacker (2004: 30) states that quality in interpreting has been a basic concern underlying the process of professionalisation. Australia remains unique in the sense that it has a National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). This body gives accreditation to training courses and administers tests for the recognition of different levels of vocational linguistic qualifications in more than forty languages. In conference interpreting more attention has been paid to product-oriented analysis, whereas the issue of interpreters’ abilities and qualifications remains dominant for community-based domains, where the quest for professional standards is still far from being realised.

The above statement is likely to be correct because, for one to be a professional and adhere to professional standards, one needs to be accredited as a professional in that particular field for quality service delivery, and for one to be accredited as a professional one has to belong to an accredited professional body. Unfortunately, Parliament’s interpreters do not belong to any accredited professional body that is able to accredit them as professionals. However, they adhere to Parliamentary Language Services Section’s Code of Conduct for Simultaneous Interpreters (Draft). At the time of writing, this code of conduct was still in draft form, but staff in the Interpreting Unit has agreed that it will be utilised provisionally in order to regulate day-to-day interpreting services. This code of conduct requires interpreters to adhere to:

- Standards of Conduct and Decorum
- Confidentiality
- Competence
- Impartiality
- Accuracy and
- Professional Development

A comparison between this Parliamentary draft Code of Conduct for interpreters and the South African Translators’ Institute (SATI) Code of Ethics reveals that SATI’s Code of Ethics seems to be more for individual members or freelance interpreters and
not for permanent staff members, as it also mentions translators instead of interpreters.

Bochum (2006: 04) states that quality assurance has become a matter of the profession’s reputation as well as a basis for assuring good working conditions and adequate remuneration since those who pay for interpreting services have a justified interest in getting good quality. Both professional interpreters and clients should therefore be interested in quality assurance. This statement implies that the importance of quality assurance, in the context of South African Parliament interpreting services, means the opposite, since Parliament employs SLPs who are responsible for quality assurance but who are not trained on the principles and procedures of quality control. For them to ensure quality of interpreting services effectively such SLPs would need to have uniform methods of quality control across languages.

“Quality is acknowledged as an essentially relative and multidimensional concept which can and must be approached with different evaluation methods from a variety of perspectives. This is indeed correct as it is presented in this research, quality appears not as a self-contained topic but as a complex, overarching theme in which all aspects of the interpreter’s product and performance – texuality, source-target correspondence, communicative effect and role performance – play an integral part” (Garzone/Viezzi 2002: 95-106).

1.5 Research questions and hypothesis
The notion of quality in respect of simultaneous interpreting has varying interpretations. Aspects such as recruitment, level of training, working conditions of interpreters etc are accorded differing values. Consequently, a number of research questions worth investigating in the context of simultaneous interpreting offered at POSA, are raised. These are:

- Does the simultaneous interpreting practical test undertaken by interviewees determine quality in simultaneous interpreting?
• Does the language service section or interpreting unit provide formal training in simultaneous interpreting to language practitioners before they assume their duties?
• Are the recruitment advertisements relevant to attract the most suitable candidates?
• Do interviews panels constitute language and technical specialists able to appoint the best suitable candidates?
• Are the working conditions of interpreters conducive to the delivery of a quality interpreting service?

This study is premised on the following assumption: Whether complaints continually received from Members of Parliament that the quality of simultaneous interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa is not up to standard, are justified or not.

The quality of a simultaneous interpreting service rendered to Members of Parliament is thus a consequence of the skill levels of the interpreters employed by Parliament (where skill level refers to an amalgam of academic qualifications, work experience and personal attributes).

While premised on the above-mentioned assumption, the study is furthermore driven by the concern that, if the complaints are not attended to, the resulting situation could likely to lead Members of Parliament to no longer using their home languages during House debates, but resorting instead to using English only, a situation that will have a negative impact on the promotion and development of multilingualism.

Kurz (2002: 52-53) states that there is a general agreement among simultaneous interpreters that their profession is very demanding. Simultaneous interpreting requires the maximum use of the interpreter’s attention and concentration. Physiological stress can be experienced when performing simultaneous interpreting over prolonged periods of time. The need to cope with different (often highly difficult) subjects, different speakers and accents, the possibility of failure any time, etc are among the factors that are generally regarded as contributing to such stress. The literature abounds with intuitive statements to the effect that stress is intrinsic to
interpreting. This statement implies that interpreters should be well trained for them to be able to cope with the stress under which they are subjected in the course of their work.

Bochum (2006: 26-27) supports this idea by stating that one must possess “a quality perhaps best define by the modern word ‘unflappability’, or coolness under pressure”. Gambier (1997: 9) supports this statement by stating that with its high level of complexity, simultaneous interpretation (SI) is a cognitive task which also represents an interesting field of research for a neurolinguist. These statements demonstrate how difficult simultaneous interpreting is.

These statements emphasise the need for interview panels to appoint the most suitable candidates to interpreting posts. Such candidates would be individuals with extralinguistic abilities in interpreting, possessed with the ability to find instantaneously the alternative or the third choice of a word in the target language if zero equivalence strikes, so that the pace and flow of interpretation could be maintained.

These statements also suggest that employers of interpreters should ensure that training is provided timeously and that reasonable working conditions for interpreters are made available.

1.6 Methodology

This research methodology includes basically a theoretical and an empirical component. The theoretical component includes a literature review in which will focus on relevant interpreting literature; whereas the empirical component will focus on the actual data that will be gathered and the interpretation thereof. For the latter I had to obtain the necessary permission from the Secretary of Parliament to do my field work in parliament. This was granted to me (see addendum F and G).

Regarding the research design of the empirical component I refer the reader to 4.2. and 4.3. Suffice to state at here that the research will be carried out by:
• Reviewing theoretical research and relevant interpreting literature compiled by various researchers.
• Attending interpreters’ interviews as an observer.
• Conducting unstructured interviews with some of interpreters’ supervisors.
• Recording isiNdebele simultaneous interpreters.
• Reviewing current advertisements for simultaneous interpreters in Parliament.
• Reviewing the testing method used by Parliament during the interview phase of the recruitment of simultaneous interpreters.
• Developing and distributing questionnaires to relevant stakeholders for their inputs regarding the interpreting service in the Parliament of South Africa.

From a practical viewpoint simultaneous interpreting is regarded as very difficult activity simply because the interpreter has to think on his feet. This also implies that simultaneous interpreting is more complex as compared to consecutive interpreting, as the interpreter has to listen and speak at the same time, while a consecutive interpreter has time to listen and take notes and only conveys the intended message after the speaker is finished. According to Jones (1998: 66) the difference between simultaneous (SI) and consecutive interpreting (CI) is that in the case of consecutive interpreting when interpreters open their mouths they have heard the whole speech and they know where they are going, sometimes points that were unclear or even words that were unknown at the moment at which they were pronounced by the speaker become clear to the interpreter in the overall context of the speech. Due to the inherent difficulty of simultaneous interpreting, research into the standard of the interpreting process make sense within such a demanding context the national parliament.

1.7 The Organisation of the Study
This thesis has been organised into five chapters. **Chapter one** introduces the study. **Chapter two** gives a review of the relevant literature. **Chapter three** provides the legislative framework. **Chapter four** presents the research methodology and design. **Chapter five** gives a conclusion of the research as well as recommendations.
Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is, among others, to review relevant interpreting literature from abroad as well as interpreting literature from the South African Parliament.

To understand the origins, importance and difficulties involved in simultaneous interpreting, one first needs to answer the question of why there is a need to render interpreting services in the first place.

This chapter shall also attempt to define simultaneous interpreting for the better understanding of service users and beginner interpreters. Therefore, it will critically consider the meaning of the concept of simultaneous interpreting. An overview of the theory of interpreting will also be discussed in this chapter, especially simultaneous interpreting and the aspects of quality in simultaneous interpreting, as well as factors determining and influencing quality of simultaneous interpreting.

2.2 The origins of simultaneous interpreting

To understand the origins, importance and difficulties involved in simultaneous interpretation, one first needs to tackle the question of why there is a need to provide interpreting services in the first place. The Nuremberg War Crimes Trials of 1945-1946 are the answer in this regard. The Nuremberg Trials are the first official international gatherings at which simultaneous interpretation was used.


Mr Uiberall points out that the miracle of simultaneous interpretation did not receive any attention from historians. Thousands of volumes have been written about the trial, about its legal, political, historical aspects, but, he further states, “if we were to add all the parts dealing with the interpreting system, they would amount to about a dozen pages”. In these books, interpreters received as much attention as court stenographers,
police officers, or press correspondents. And yet, a reading of this book reveals that the Nuremberg Trial would not have been possible without the provision of simultaneous interpreting.

Gaiba (1998: 112) claims that the success and smooth working of the Nuremberg Trial was in no small measure due to the system of interpretation and the high quality of interpreters who were assembled to operate in it. Baigorri (1919: 165) states that simultaneous interpreting reached its coming of age at the Nuremburg Trial, although it had already been tested successfully and with certain continuity since the 1920s. Therefore, contrary to the title of Gaiba’s book, *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation*, interpreting at the Nuremberg Trial should be considered “the coming of age” (Baigorri ibid.: 34) of simultaneous interpreting, or, to put it more explanatory, “the first time that simultaneous interpretation was used consistently and for extended periods of time” (Moser-Mercer 2005: 208).

2.3 The Interpreter’s role

Jones (1998: 4) states that interpreter’s role is to bridge the cultural and conceptual gaps separating the participants in a meeting. This implies that interpreters facilitate communication gaps that may possibly separate participants in a social discourse. Jones (1998) further says that interpreters should have something of a pedagogical streak as their work involves continuous explanation and explication. Unlike a teacher, however, interpreters do not express their own message, but, like a teacher, their task is to make sure that the message is genuinely assimilated by the audience. The statements above clearly outline the crucial role played by interpreters in the communicative discourse.

Pöchhacker (2004: 147) acknowledges that interpreters are subject to certain expectations held by participants in the interaction and by society at large and, as such, the issue of role is pivotal to the analysis of interpreters. In fact, it has now become ‘an integral part of professional code of ethics and practice. This implies that participants and the society in general have different expectations about the interpreting role. Some expect interpreters to interpret like self operating machines that never get tired.
On the other hand Angelelli (2004: 20) conceptualises the interpreter as a ghost or invisible participant. This fits the known conception of the interpreter, especially the simultaneous interpreter; as such an individual interprets from a booth where he could possibly view the speaker, whereas the speaker is unable to see the interpreter. However, the key notion of Angelelli (2001: 5) is that interpreters in all settings perceive themselves as visible, and this perception is heavily constrained by the settings in which they work.

Angelelli (2004: 18) refers to interpreters as being gatekeepers for the minority-language speakers for whom they interpret, stating that these interpreters’ work aligns with that of health care providers, in that they are active participant in the diagnostic process. Kurtz (2001: 1) points out that interpretation should always be judged from the listener’s perspective, and further states that the chain of communication does not end in the booth. This implies that an interpreter may still communicate with his clients at a personal level outside the booth.

Jones (2002: 4-5) describes the interpreter’s role as being able to provide an exact and faithful reproduction of the original speech. Jones further states that an interpreter may only deviate from the original speech when he enhances the audience’s understanding of the speaker’s meaning. More importantly, Jones emphasised the fact that an interpreter always speaks in the first person – just like the original speaker – which means that interpreters put themselves in someone else’s shoes and espouses their cause. This implies that an interpreter should, at no stage, interpret in the second person as if he is reporting the speech – for an example, “he says that...” Instead the interpreter should use “I say...”.

Torikai (1945: 153) acknowledges that ‘interpreters are subject to certain expectations held by participants in the interaction and in society at large. He further says the notion of ‘role’ is pivotal to the analysis of interpreters and that it has now become ‘an integral part of professional code of ethics and practice’. Therefore, conceptualising an interpreter as a ghost or invisible participant is an understatement of the role of the interpreter, since it portrays the interpreter as someone who is always working in the background, invisible to his clients, whereas it is so that interpreters do meet their
clients before and after the interpreting session. In other words, it is so that
communication neither starts nor ends in the booth. It is clear that the issue of the
interpreter’s role still needs to be debated by practicing professional interpreters.

2.4 Interpreting in South Africa
Consecutive interpreting started in the 1970s. It was only provided in courts for the
accused persons who were not conversant with Afrikaans, since the language of legal
proceedings in South African courts used to be Afrikaans. In rendering this type of
interpreting the interpreter would listen and take notes while the state prosecutor put a
charge to the accused person. After the entire charge or charges have been read, the
interpreter would interpret that into the language of the accused person and the
presiding officer (magistrate) would ask whether the accused understood the charge(s)
against him. At this point the interpreter would interpret that and interprets the
accused plea back to the presiding officer.

However, the focus of this study is on simultaneous interpreting.

During April 1996 to February 1998 simultaneous interpreting played a major role at
the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The Promotion of
National Unity and Reconciliation Act, Act No 34 of 1995, directed the activities of
the TRC.

This Act contains two important language-related provisions. Section 11(b) (Chapter
2) of the Act stipulates the following: “Victims shall be treated equally and without
discrimination of any kind, including race, colour, gender, sex, sexual orientation,
age, language, religion, nationality, political or other opinion, cultural beliefs or
practices, property, birth or family status, ethnic or social origin or disability”.

Section 11(f) (Chapter 2) stipulates that: “Appropriate measures shall be taken to
allow victims to communicate in the language of their choice” (du Plessis & Wiegand
1996: 25). Therefore, the two important language-related provisions clearly direct the
activities of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, especially as regards language
use and the implication that interpreting is necessary.
Hung (1984: 84) says that, in many countries, especially European countries, interpreting is a clearly defined and well-established profession. However, in South Africa, the situation is somewhat different. According to Du Plessis and Wiegand’s article (1996), many issues, such as the nature of the profession and its role in the new South Africa in the light of the changed language policy, still lack clear definition.

Du Plessis and Wiegand (1996: 25) state that the reconciliation process in South Africa necessitated the establishment of the TRC in terms of Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, Act No 34 of 1995. The TRC, in turn, brought about the beginning of simultaneous interpreting service in South Africa.

The Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment (ULFE) commonly known as the Language Facilitation Programme, (LFP) was contracted by TRC to select, appoint, train and manage the interpreting service for the TRC at the different hearings. The LFP was to make provision for interpreters in all 11 official languages and cater for a maximum of five simultaneous hearings at a time (du Plessis and Wiegaand 1997, in Hung 1984: 85) This was the beginning of a comprehensive simultaneous interpreting in South Africa, and led to its comprehensive introduction at the Parliament of South Africa in 2004, after the approval of the National Language Policy Framework by Parliament in 2003. (See addendum A, copy of the language policy of the National Parliament).

2.5 Interpreting according to international researchers

Baker (1998: 40) defines interpreting as the oral translation of oral discourse, as opposed to the oral translation of written texts. Numerous interpreting researchers e.g. Gile, Jones, etc. state that interpreting is a highly stressful occupation that places special demands on those exercising the profession. Herbert (1952: 6) says more often than not the interpreter is very highly strung and must in the course of discharging his professional duties; endure a long and continuous strain which is hard to bear.

Gaiba (1998: 49) argues that interpreters at Nuremberg were selected because they could speak two languages or had a language degree but, once at Nuremberg, they
could not do simultaneous interpreting. Some of those interpreters were then employed to perform written translation. Gaiba’s statement implies that even if one is bilingual or possesses a language degree that does not necessarily guarantee that one will be able to render quality interpreting services if one does not have interpreting skills i.e. the strategies and techniques of interpreting itself.

In order to prove the difficulties and stress involved in interpreting, Bochum (2006: 26) quotes the following interpreting researchers Gravier (1978:4) saying “interpretation requires that one have nerves of steel”. Longley (1989: 106) claims that interpreters must have the ability to work under stress for long periods. Bochum (2006: 27) further quotes Roland (1999: 13) who says that interpreters must possess a quality perhaps best define by the modern word ‘unflappability’, or coolness under pressure. Bochum (2006: 27) also quotes (Coughlin 1989:359) saying interpreters should be programmed to be winners under adverse circumstances. These statements precisely describe the personality of an interpreter. It is important that this be brought to the attention of practicing interpreters for them to be aware that interpreters are not just expected to provide some or other kind of interpreting, but that it is crucial for them to provide a high quality interpreting service in order to meet client’s expectations. By the same token, managers of interpreting staff need to understand clearly that interpreters should be intensively trained in order to deliver an interpreting service of good quality.

2.6 Conference interpreting

Herbert (1978: 6) says conference interpreting came into existence during World War 1. Until then, important international meetings were held in French, the international language at the time. During World War 1, some high ranking Americans and British negotiators did not speak French, which made it necessary to resort to interpreters.

Herbert (1978) further states that what distinguishes conference interpreting from other forms of interpreting are its modes, i.e. (consecutive and simultaneous interpreting), and its high performance level. This implies that conference interpreting is the umbrella term for consecutive and simultaneous interpreting.
According to Tommola and Hyona (1990: 180) simultaneous interpreting is a highly complex discourse performance, where language perception, comprehension, translation and production operation are carried virtually in parallel and under time pressure and the task is likely to create a heavy processing load.

In terms of Gile’s Models of Processing capacity and interpretation Efforts, Gile (1995: 161) says interpretation requires some sort of mental “energy” that is only available in limited supply. Gile further says interpretation takes up almost all of this mental energy, and sometimes requires more than is available, at which times performance deteriorates.

In his effort models, Gile (1995: 154) says one of the most striking challenging phenomena in interpreting is its difficulty for the interpreter. Gile (1995) further says performance problems occur not only in fast, informationally dense or highly technical speeches, but also in clear, slow speech segments in which no particular obstacle can be detected due to insufficient extra-linguistic knowledge. Gile (1995: 35-36) states further that in consecutive interpreting the sender (source language speaker) is able to listen to the target-language speech, and, given sufficient understanding of the target language, be in a good position to assess the quality of interpretation. However, in simultaneous interpreting, senders cannot hear the target-language speech, and can therefore only check it to a very limited extent through the reaction of the receivers (the delegates) if any.

According to Chernov (2004: 6) conference interpretation is a complex type of bilingual verbal communicative activity, performed concurrently with audio perception of an oral discourse offered once only, under conditions imposing limits on available processing time and strict limits on the amount of information which can be processed, its object and product to be observed in the semantic structure of the verbal communication process. The above definition implies that the simultaneous interpreter does not have the advantage of sitting together with the source-language speaker, as is the case in consecutive interpreting. In this case the simultaneous interpreters operate from the booth, listening only through headphones and viewing the speaker either on a monitor or live in a conference room. Therefore, he/she does not have the opportunity to request the source-language speaker to clarify or repeat
what was already said. This is most probably why simultaneous interpreting is the most difficult and stressful mode of interpreting.

Herbert (1978 5-10), in also describing the history of conference interpreting from the World War 1 era, including the development of simultaneous interpreting, largely draws on his own experience as a pioneer conference interpreter. The contribution in the special issue of the Interpreting News Letter (4:1, 1999) dedicated to history of interpreting in the 20th century, covers various topics, such as the history of simultaneous interpreting in Russia, the teaching of conference interpreting, and the historical aspects of courts and community interpreting. Herbert further states that during 1978, when conference interpreting and the development of simultaneous interpreting in the European countries took place, only consecutive interpreting was being used in the South African courts. However, the majority of people did not know about this type of service; only those who happened to contravene the laws of the country and those few individuals who visited the courts got to know about the interpreting service.

2.7 The Nature of Simultaneous Interpreting (SI)

Gile (1995: 161) outlines the interpreter`s processing capacity and interpretation efforts in a model which is divided into two ideas firstly that:

- Interpretation requires some sort of mental “energy” that is only available in limited supply; and
- Interpretation takes up almost all of this mental energy, and sometimes requires more than is available, at which times performance deteriorates.

The two abovementioned ideas imply that interpreting demands more than anticipated mental energy. It therefore means that if the interpreter does not have that energy to provide an interpreting service of good quality, the interpreting service will be compromised. In the National Parliament of South Africa interpreters interpret for very long hours due to staff shortages, which could cause them to lose the energy required to render a high quality interpreting service.

Gile (1995: 162) further outlines three main components or efforts of interpreting as:
• The listening and analysis component,
• The speech production component, and
• The short-term memory component.

Suggesting that interpreting, as an activity, consists of components, is to imply that an interpreter should be proficient in all the components in order for him to deliver a high-quality interpreting service. If the interpreter lacks proficiency in the abovementioned interpreting components, such an interpreter will not be able to deliver quality interpreting services.

Gile (1995) further says that the Listening and Analysis Efforts are defined as consisting of all comprehension-oriented operations, from the analysis of the sound waves carrying the source-language speech which reach the interpreter’s ears, through the identification of words, to the final decision about the “meaning” of the utterance. These processes require the interpreter to monitor, store and retrieve the input of the source language continuously in order to produce the oral rendition of this input in the target language. From this explanation one can see that the interpreter’s mind is constantly overloaded. Therefore, thorough training is vital for interpreter to be able to handle his job professionally.

2.8 Recruitment of Interpreters

Recruitment of interpreters, especially simultaneous interpreters, has been generally viewed as a problem for many decades in the world. It is already indicated in Chapter 1, that the Parliament of South Africa usually recruits educators from the departments of Education and court interpreters from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. Most educators have language qualifications and experience in language teaching and some have a working knowledge of translation practice, but they do not have the qualifications, experience and skills relevant to interpreting, especially simultaneous interpreting (Parliament of SA, 2004).

The recruitment criterion for simultaneous interpreting is still a cause for concern in South Africa. Simultaneous interpreting recruitment tests pose a great challenge to the ultimate quality of interpreting services that will be rendered by those appointed to
interpreting posts. Gaiba (1998: 49) states that linguistic ability by itself does not prove interpreting proficiency. Therefore, it should be coupled with high level of culture, education, self-composure as well as mental agility. In recruitment criterion of simultaneous interpreters in the National Parliament of South Africa, language culture, self-composure and mental agility is not taken into account because the interviewing panel does not necessarily have the specific language specialist representing the language for which the candidate is being interviewed.

Lotriet, in Hung (1984: 85) states that three recruitment, selection and training rounds were held for the TRC interpreters. The first recruitment round was conducted in April 1996, the second in August 1996 and the third in January 1998. According to Lotriet these recruitment rounds were prompted by the increase in the number of hearings and certain language combinations. This implies that simultaneous interpreters were in high demand during the TRC hearings.

Recruitment of simultaneous interpreters was a big challenge as there were few simultaneous interpreters in South Africa working in Parliament and Provincial legislatures as freelance interpreters.

Du Plessis and Wiegand (1996: 27) outlined the criteria which the Language Facilitation Programme of the University of Free State agreed on, such as tertiary background, age, language combination, etc. and interpreters were interviewed around the country according to the agreed criteria. The interviews were structured according to the profile of an interpreter: language combinations and proficiency, background information and insight into topical matters, coping with pressure and controversial issues, voice quality and personality; among other things.

Du Plessis and Wiegand (1996: 27) further state that the selection process had a written and oral component. The written component tested formulation, paraphrasing, translation and language use, and the oral component tested the candidates’ training potential.

According to du Plessis & Wiegand (1996: 27) TRC interpreters did not undergo comprehensive training, but instead underwent a 10-day orientation course, during
which aspects of the interpreting profession were discussed. During the orientation course simultaneous interpreting was practiced, and particular attention was paid to proficiency in English while some time was spent on the activities of the TRC as well as hearing procedures.

Baigorri (1998: 26) says that while little is known about the interpreter’s working conditions in general, it could be assumed that they were rather strenuous during the Nuremberg Trial, as interpreters were too few for the number of meetings and in all likelihood also had to do written translation work. There was a chief interpreter, in charge of the secretariat interpreters’ assignments, but it is not known for certain whether the chief interpreter was Peirce or Velleman. For many of the interpreters, Washington was their first opportunity to actually interpret in a conference and their training took place on the job.

Baigorri (1998: 26) further says that the detection of differences in interpreting knowledge and skills between professionals and students may be a starting point for explaining failures, omissions or errors in SI and may indicate specific areas on which SI-training and study should concentrate, since better knowledge and skills closely correlates with reaction times and results in more rapid access to knowledge already at the level of word recognition. Studies from Moser-Mercer (1997; Moser-Mercer, et al. 2000) investigating knowledge and skills in novices and experts, interpreting students and professionals, point to the differences in their organization of declarative and procedural knowledge which would explain differences in performance.

2.9 Training of simultaneous interpreting

Sawyer (2004: 1) states that communication is increasing on a daily basis as the population is growing on daily basis, therefore language and culture barriers also increase, because the growing population uses more diverse languages and cultures in their communicative discourse. In order to overcome this, the services of language professionals who are well trained to mediate between languages and cultures are required.
Sawyer (2004: 1) further states that these language professionals should be educated in institutional settings that are shaped by highly specific political, cultural, legislative, and market-specific constellations in their country and region of the world. This statement that professionals should be “educated in institutional settings” does not necessarily imply that they should be trained in-house or just be mentored; it means the training programs should be tailor-made for a particular institution.

Currently interpreters have relevant qualifications but this profession is still being undermined especially by people who do not know how important and difficult it is to be an interpreter. Training of interpreters should be an ongoing process and not a once-off process in order for interpreters to keep up with developing trends of language interpreting.

In introducing the interim report of, Noel Muylle, Chairman of the Working Group of the Conference Commissions, in the Inter-agency meeting on language arrangements, documentation and publications, held at the Vienna International Centre Vienna, Austria, 3 and 4 July 2002, emphasised the points of convergence that had emerged from the subgroups’ reports: the importance of quality; the difficulties faced in recruiting qualified staff; the need to update the skills of new and older staff alike, especially in the light of constant technological innovation; the increasing prevalence of poor English in the organisation despite multilingualism policies; the lack of recognition of language professions and qualifications; and, finally, insufficient matching of academic courses to workplace needs (pg. 5 of the report). According to this statement from the report it is evident that quality is very important when rendering an interpreting service.

Quality is, however, affected by the challenges faced in recruiting qualified and skilled staff. It is generally known to those involved in language practice that in South Africa to date interpreting, especially simultaneous interpreting is still a scarce skill and not many interpreters are qualified in it. Some of those who are said to be qualified do not update their skills in line with the development in this discipline as we generally know that language and technology is dynamic and not static. Not updating skills leads to poor interpreting performance. On the other hand, the efforts and qualifications of qualified professionals who always update their skills in order to
render quality interpreting services to their clients are not recognised by their employers despite the provisions in the South African Language Policy Framework.

The following statements were made at the first Pan-African Conference on the training of translators, conference interpreters and public service interpreters held at Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya from 23 – 25 February 2009:

Cosmidou (2009: 23) emphasised the crucial importance of **pivot interprets** – this refers to an interpreter who is interpreting directly from the source language, and whose interpreting will therefore serve as the basis from which other interpreters may interpret into other languages. Cosmidou further outlined some problems common to interpreter training which she called the “seven deadly sins”.

Cosmidou (2009) further identifies the following as additional bad practices:
- Fixing a minimum enrolment threshold for courses
- Not permitting poor students to fail the course
- Basing appointments purely on academic distinction and not taking due consideration of practical skills
- Restricting the access of teachers to freelance interpreting work – (e.g. non practicing doctors)
- Maintaining interpreting programmes within another department, e.g. Philology.
- Confusing conference interpreting with other types of linguistic mediation. This statement clearly implies that interpreters training do not only affect South Africa but the whole world is still grappling with this problem.

Cosmidou (2009) further said, if the principle of quality could be guaranteed, the EU Parliament stood ready to:
- Provide assistance with training;
- Provide representation on examination panels; and
- Offer internships for graduates with EU languages.

Cosmidou (2009: 23) emphasised that the intention of the EU Parliament was not to impose its own models but to share its experience. This is really a step in the right direction.
According to Deolinda Casimiro (2009: 26), from the Pan African Parliament “the qualities that made a good interpreter should be identified and that the training programmes should be designed accordingly”. He added that the programmes should be orientated to the needs of the African continent.

Tshabalala, from the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, expressed agreement with the position that professional training should be moved out of language departments, citing the example of the University of Free State which had a stand-alone Unit for Language Facilitation. Tshabalala further says University of Free State does not teach language but focuses on the development of interpreting skills. He further commented on the shortage of language practitioners in South Africa. He identifies the proliferation of language units in government departments as a significant cause, as the greater availability of posts makes it extremely difficult to attract and retain suitable staff. Tshabalala expressed regret that there was an insistence on hiring people with language majors, arguing that it would be better to take people with proven aptitude and give them training on the job, after passing a rigorous language proficiency test. He further emphasised the importance of input by professionals during training at universities (Unpublish Report 2009: 2).

In her paper, Clare Donovan (2006: 1) states that one of the main concerns of interpreting courses is to ensure that the training provided really does prepare graduates for the interpreting market. Graduates have to be ready to work immediately in a proficient and professional way. Thus, course content is usually organised with the view to matching skills learnt with skills needed in the market. Donovan (2006) also states that this objective is being challenged by emerging trends.

Donovan (2006: 5) in her article states that, given the rapid pace of change, it is more important than ever that courses be run and taught by practicing professionals who are in touch with the profession. If possible, the teaching team should be made up of practicing interpreters with a wide range of experience on different markets. However, this is only valuable if they get together regularly to pool views and discuss emerging trends and their significance for training.
2.10 Quality of Simultaneous interpreting

According to Gerver (1976: 188-189) not much research has been carried out in the field of simultaneous interpreting. Therefore, the researcher believes that it would be correct to state that no one has, as yet, attempted to carry out a comprehensive research on the quality of simultaneous interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa, except Lesch (2010) who has written an article on a descriptive overview of the interpreting service in Parliament.

“Quality assurance has become a matter of the profession’s reputation as well as a basis for assuring good working conditions and adequate pay since those who pay for interpreting services have a justified interest in getting good quality” (Kalina 2005: 769). Both professional interpreters and clients should therefore be interested in Quality Assurance (Pöchhacker 1994: 246). As to the concept of quality in interpreting, there are various references to its elusiveness. Bochum (2006) supports Pöchhacker in this regard.

In his article, Lesch (2010: 40) aims to review the reality as well as the underutilisation of the interpreting service within the context of the Parliament of South Africa, and to critically characterise the role to be fulfilled by interpreters in Parliament. This implies that the reality and underutilization of interpreting service in Parliament should be critically looked at, in order to improve interpreting service delivery in the Parliament of South Africa.

Marrone (1993: 35) further says that, research into audience expectations and preferences with special regard to the definition and evaluation of interpretation quality is of crucial importance for a profession whose purpose is to render effective communication between the speaker and audience.

Bochum (2006: 6) says that, if Reiss’s theory of translation, Reiss (1986) – which states that an interpreter’s performance is good if it serves its purpose and if it applies adequacy as a decisive criterion – could be adopted, it could have a positive impact on the quality of interpreting. Bochum (2006) further states that Bühler (1996) supports this idea by claiming that an ideal interpreter is one who supplies an ideal interpreting
in a given situation for a given purpose, to enable the parties involved in a communicative discourse to understand each other.

Bochum (2006) states that interpreting is a service to those who do not understand a message delivered in the original language. “Therefore, quality must not be seen in the narrow and abstract sense as something only inherent in the message delivered” (Moser-mercer 1996: 45) Pöchhaker (2001: 413) thus suggests taking a product and service-oriented approach interpreting services.

According to Garzone (2000:110) the concept of quality in interpretation can be defined as a construct embodying the norms which are deemed appropriate to guarantee the intrinsic and extrinsic properties considered ideal for an interpretation performance in a given social, cultural and historical situation. Therefore, this research seeks to investigate whether this is the fact with Parliament’s simultaneous interpreting services. It is appropriate that the manner in which simultaneous interpreters are recruited and trained is investigated to verify the possible influence they might have on quality.

According to Garzona (2002: 107) the basic problem of quality is the sum of several different, heterogeneous aspects, some of which involve different subjects i.e. interpreters, clients, users and speakers. Each of these has a different view and perception of quality. This implies that quality means different things to different people and in different settings. However, its main focus is to meet customer needs and organisational objectives.

There is a general agreement among interpreting researchers that the interpreter’s working conditions, to a large extent, determine the quality of a given simultaneous interpreting. Mack (2002:117) and Kalina (2002: 124) point out that there is not necessarily a direct correlation between the interpreter’s skills and qualifications and the actual performance in a specific situation. Interpreting thus has to be regarded as a dependent variable.
2.11 Conditions affecting quality

According to Moser-Mecer (1996: 44) the conditions affecting quality are physical environment, complexity of subject matter, change in subject matter, adversarial nature of meetings, discourse characteristics, delivery, interpreter preparation, availability of speech manuscripts, team size, lag time, load during working day, number of meetings, speakers speaking simultaneously, interpreter’s emotional response, competence and the availability of technicians.

Bochum (2006: 36) says the quality of the source language is a crucial factor affecting interpreting quality, as it involves the importance of delivery characteristics such as segmentation and speed. This implies that certain factors – for example monotony of speech, noise, disturbances by people passing the booths, hesitations and non-native accents – do have impact on interpreting quality.

2.12 Preparation for interpreting

Kalina’s (2004: 4) study did not only examine the impact of visual conditions but also the question of whether interpreters perform better when prior information about the content of the message is made available to them. The parameters ‘intelligibility’ and ‘informativeness’ were measured, and the resulting data showed no significant effects for prior information on either performance. The study thus suggested that interpreters did not perform better when preparation material was available.

Kalina (2004) further states that if that study could be repeated today, it would most likely bear totally different results. Kalina’s latter statement implies that currently the situation has changed regarding preparation of interpreters prior to interpreting assignment. “The fact that interpreters did not feel that preparation material had a positive influence on their performance may have been due to the fact that they saw themselves as generalists who could cope with any difficulty and even specialised subject, even unprepared” (Kalina 2004: 4).

Gile (1991:194) concurs with Kalina’s first statement that, even today, this is still happening, especially with unqualified interpreters. Gile further says conferences and sitting of parliaments houses are highly specialised, and good preparation is of
paramount importance since interpreters are in the position of ‘outsiders’ who know less – generally much less in technical and scientific settings – about the subject. This implies that preparation prior to render interpreting services is likely to produce quality interpreting services.

Gile (1984: 79) demonstrated that the generally held perception that preparation documents play a pivotal role in the quality assurance process is justified. Gile’s 1984 study reveals that an error rate of around 50% in the interpretation of names was not infrequent, showing that preparation documents are indispensable. Vuorikoski’s (2004) findings also supports this claim.

### 2.13 Interpreting with text

Simultaneous interpreters prepare themselves better when member’s speeches are made available to them before hand. Lamberger-Felber (1998: 44) investigated four hypotheses with regard to simultaneous interpretation with manuscript, namely that interpreters would make fewer mistakes regarding names and figures, fewer omissions and errors in general, fewer meaning errors, and work with a longer ear-voice span (not adhering to proper lag-time behind the speaker) because they concentrate on the written text. All four hypotheses were confirmed. Interpreters with texts made fewer errors and omissions, both generally speaking and with regard to numbers and names. The number of serious errors in meaning was also lower.

However, the conclusion that the availability of speeches ultimately leads to higher interpretation quality is only partially valid, because it depends on when the interpreter received the speech and whether he/she had reasonable time to prepare. Interpreters showed a tendency to interpret with an excessively long ear-voice span which led to more omissions. This implies that, while a speech helps interpreters to produce a more accurate output, it might also have a negative impact on quality, albeit only to a limited extent (Lamberger-Felber: 1998; Lamberger-Felber 2003:151f).

Riccardi (1998: 172) states that practicing simultaneous interpreting induces a dynamic modification of cerebral attentive strategies regarding the language pair involved. SI training leads, therefore, to an unconscious process of cerebral
reorganization not only of linguistic but also of attentive strategies. Riccardi (2005: 172) further states that, in addition to linguistic factors, non-verbal factors affecting performance should be taken into account in order to reach the objective of the application of cognitive and linguistic strategies. For example, Riccardi advocates a gradual approach to the acquisition of SI-skills, beginning with exercises training one skill at a time, such as text analysis, abstracting, paraphrasing, and moving subsequently over to the whole task.

At a later stage, training will be devoted to particularly difficult or complex parts of the interpreting process – speakers’ pronunciation, speed, density of information, specialised terminology, and rhetoric. Gran (1998: 55) further stresses that text analysis, conceptualization and reformulation mechanisms are too complex to be carried out at a conscious level and all at the same time; nevertheless, they may become automatic through practice and will then be assimilated as procedural knowledge. Therefore, automatic reactions are of paramount importance for interpreting as they are likely to intervene to a much greater extent than is usually believed. It is important for managers and users of interpreting services to know of abovementioned interpreting mechanisms for them to be able to appreciate the efforts made by interpreters.

As with any other skill, learning SI proceeds gradually and because its procedural character hinders conscious detection of underlying mental operations, studies are needed to shed light on its development.

2.14 Quality from the interpreter’s perspective

According to Déjean le Féal (1990: 154) interpreters’ evaluation of their own output is usually not reliable. This is likely to be the fact, since some interpreters regard themselves as professionals even if they do not have the skills and qualifications which make them professionals. During instances of assessment, they rate themselves very high since they believe that they render quality services. For example, interpreters in the Parliament of South Africa are evaluated by their SLPs of their specific language groups and assessed by their CLPs. Thus far, such evaluation and assessment cannot be guaranteed as a tool that brings about an improvement of
interpreting performance in order to achieve quality interpreting services objective. For this reason, SLPs are competing with CLPs when evaluating the LPs. SLPs are home language speakers of their own languages and most of them have hands-on experience and skills in both languages they also have technical interpreting skills, contrary to some of the CLPs who have neither relevant language nor technical skills in interpreting.

Gile (1983: 236) states that interpreters dislike being listened to by colleagues while interpreting because economic competition heightens their vulnerability. Some interpreters are even against the principle of being paired in the booth. They feel threatened by their colleague’s presence because of the feeling that they might not be interpreting according to what is expected of them. When they are informed by their seniors that their interpreting will be evaluated on particular day, they become more nervous and hence make many mistakes in their interpretation since they know that they are being listened to.

According to Pöchhaker (1994a: 124) the evaluation of an interpreter’s output by a colleague is not objective, regardless of expert knowledge and shared situational. This assertion by Pöchhacker seems to be reasonable, since the colleague-evaluator himself is aware of the difficulties his colleague is subjected to. This bias will cause some of the critical omissions to be ignored. The colleague-interpreter as evaluator can thus fall into the trap of sacrificing quality interpreting.

This was confirmed by Altman (1990: 29) when he says that many interpreters are reluctant to correct their colleagues’ mistakes as they do not want to sour their working relations with their colleagues. for example, on the contrary, it might be argued that if the interpreters’ evaluators evaluate with the objective of improving quality, why are they afraid to take an objective position in order to assist their colleagues by coming up with corrective measures. It is of course understandable that conflicting relationship with colleagues might have detrimental effect on performance.

Shlesinger (1989: 114), in reference to interpreters, states that knowing that one is being monitored and/or recorded can affect an interpreter’s performance. Unlike
translators who know that their product is subject to later inspection, interpreters believe their output to be evanescent. This implies that interpreters become nervous when they are aware that one is listening to their interpreting because if they commit error one will be able to confront them with proof. If no one is listening they know that there is no proof of inaccurate interpreting as in translation, because interpreting is not documented it does not last for a long time. Once interpreters know that someone other than their clients who is an expert in the same field is listening to their interpretation, they panic and end up making many mistakes. It becomes even worse if someone experienced comes into the booth while the interpreter interprets. He/she becomes more terrified, hence the quality is compromised. The researcher is saying this from his 19 years personal experience in the field of interpreting.

2.15 Quality from the user’s perspective
Interpreting should always be judged from the perspective of the listener and never as an end in itself; as the chain of communication does not end in the booth (Seleskovitch 1986: 236). It is therefore indisputable that interpreting is intended for those who are not conversant with the source language. For such persons to follow and understand the proceedings, interpreting should be provided. It goes without saying that the listeners’ needs as well as their expectations plays a vital role and it is crucial that quality interpreting service is rendered. For practitioners, who view interpreting as a communication service, the concept of quality is seen as attached to that service as provided to users (Gile 2003: 109).

2.16 Quality from the speaker’s perspective
Bochum (2006: 49) states that, as a mediator between the source and the target, the interpreter is expected to render the speaker’s message as accurate as possible. In other words, he should be an honest spokesperson. This implies that the interpreter should by all means try to take the speaker into his confidence, for the speaker to have confidence in him. This is the most important way of encouraging speakers to speak their own languages. Most speakers, especially in the South African national Parliament, are reluctant to speak in their mother tongues because they have the perception that interpreting in Parliament is not up to standard and that interpreters are not going to convey precisely what they intend to convey. Bochum (2006) further
says that interpreters are experts in several languages and cultures and thus have a
tendency to intrude. By trying by all means to impress their audience, all interpreters
are likely to embellish, enrich and generally raise the tone to project a positive image.

Bochum (2006: 49) further states that Schjoldager (1996) holds a different view from
the source language speaker’s perspective. According to Schjoldager (1996: 189) the
speaker is mostly interested in the interpreter’s loyalty to him while the listener is
mainly focused on the interpreter’s skills as a speaker and on his succeeding in
faithfully rendering the speaker’s message.” The Translator is working for the Sender
but also for the receiver and the Client, the interest of whom may not coincide” (Gile
1991: 192). Gile here raises issues of loyalty. It is clear that the interpreter has to play
a role of a centre bearing in order to satisfy the needs of all stakeholders involved in
the communicative discourse. When interpreting the interpreter should put himself in
the shoes of the speaker or act in the interest of the speaker, even against the
expectations of the listener or client. Because, once the message of the speaker is
misconstrued, the listener and the client will automatically be affected.

The client is not actually directly part of the sender-to-receiver communication
process. In all fairness his interests should not be taken into account, for practical and
psychological reasons. All in all, the interpreter’s livelihood depends on the client. In
the case of Parliament, the client is the employer “Parliament” and the primary clients
are users (Members of Parliament) and the interpreter must satisfy the needs of
Members of Parliament. “It is the same reason why many conference interpreters who
are recruited by colleagues more often than by clients attach the highest importance to
their reputation in the profession, as opposed to users’ feedback” (Gile 1991: 192 f.).

2.17 Quality from the employer’s perspective
Bochum (2006: 50) quotes Seleskovich (1986:236) who says that employers are not
competent judges since most of them never had an occasion to actually use
interpreters’ services and most of them were never interpreters themselves. Contrary
that the observation whether a discussion went smoothly may very well give the
employer a certain idea of interpreting quality, possibly complemented by users’
feedback that the employer will try to obtain. This implies that the employer need not be an expert in interpreting in order to judge quality.

Bochum (2006) further quotes Feldweg (1996:151), saying that it should be taken into account that someone who is not an expert in a certain discipline will not always be a good judge of the quality of the service rendered. Mostly, people who select interpreters do not do that on the basis of the quality of the interpreting provided, but rather on the basis of their budget compliance.

2.18 Conclusion

It is obvious that interpreting, particularly simultaneous interpreting is very important in bridging the communication gap between people who speak different languages. All researchers have consensus on the difficulties involved in this type of discipline. And it is not disputed that not everyone appointed in the post of an interpreter can perform interpreting work. Some individuals were employed for interpreting but when they assume their duties it becomes clear that they do not have the skills to interpret.

This Chapter asserts that quality plays a vital role in interpreting as it enables the stakeholders to follow and understand the proceedings. Quality has been defined as user-satisfaction, where satisfying users implies meeting their service-quality expectations. It is clear that quality does not start when one starts rendering interpreting service, but there should be proper recruitment system in place. An ongoing theoretical and practical training will also ensure quality in the delivery of interpreting.
Chapter 3

Legislative Framework for Language

3.1 Introduction

There are various sets of legislation that govern language services issues, which include the equitable treatment of all 11 official languages of South Africa including sign language. These mainly include the National Language Policy Framework and other sets of legislation that govern language use in the Parliament of South Africa and how to implement systems and language related policies in order to operate within the parameters of the requirements of the Constitution of the country.

The following sets of legislation and policy guidelines will be reviewed in terms of their influence on language use in the operation of the Language Services Section in the Parliament of South Africa:

- South African Languages Bill (2000)
- The role of multilingualism in Democracy in the Parliament of South Africa
- Parliamentary Language Policy (2003)

3.2 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Section 6 (1) of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) states that the official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Subsection (2) further states that, recognising the historical diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. Subsection (4) (a) states that all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably.
What needs to be determine is whether Parliament of the RSA has fully acted upon the requirements of the Constitution in terms of language management and development?

Parliament of the RSA and the European parliament share linguistic similarities. According to the Official Journal of the European Communities, No. 4-473, Report of proceedings from 15 to 19 January 1996, the European Parliament is the biggest multilingual legislative organisation in the world, while South African Parliament is arguably the biggest in Africa. This Journal further states that European Parliament and the Parliament of South Africa have somehow similar challenges, however, the European Parliament is advanced in developing languages. The Parliament of South Africa is still far behind in developing indigenous languages due to the lack of the language Act, South Africa still has languages Bill which still needs to be passed into Act. The absence of languages Act leads to National Language Policy Framework not to be fully implemented, and that also led to partial implementation of Parliament Language Policy Implementation Project (PLPIP).

3.2.1 Language and culture

Section 6 (1) of the Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, is supported by the Bill of Rights which recognises language as a basic human right by stating that: "Everyone has the right to use the language and participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights" (Constitution Sect. 30: 15). Section 31 (1) of the Constitution further states that persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community (a) to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language; and (b) to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society (Constitution sect. 31: 15). The latter Constitutional provision is not complied with in the South African Parliament language services section, because when Parliament Committees conduct public hearings or oversight visits, only certain languages which are thought to be dominantly spoken in that area are provided for and it often happen that few individuals speak a language that is not catered for in that meeting. When that happens, such people are denied their right to speak in their own language, this was researcher’s personal experience during Committee’s oversight visit to Limpopo in 2008.
3.2.2 Education
The Bill of Rights clearly echoes the Freedom Charter's position on language. The Freedom Charter was adopted more than 50 years ago during the struggle for liberation. It states clearly that "All people shall have equal rights to use their own languages". Therefore poor quality of interpreting services is tantamount to denial of language rights.
In line with the liberal, rights-based paradigm of the South African Constitution, the Constitution furthermore –
• prohibits discrimination against anyone on the grounds of language;
• prescribes that everyone has the right to education in any official language(s) of their choice;
• enshrines the right of linguistic communities to use their cultures and languages;
•prescribes that every person has the right to access to interpreting during a trial, and arrested and accused persons to information in a language that they understand (Beukes 2004: 6).

This implies that the Constitution provides for everyone the right to proudly use his own language and culture freely. Even an accused person has to be tried with his own language or provided with interpretation.

3. 3 Pan South African Language Board Act No. 59 of (1995)
Section 6 subsection (5) of the Constitution regulates the establishment of the Pan South African Language Board and its role. Paragraph (a) states that PanSALB must promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of –

(i) all official languages;
(ii) the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and
(iii) sign language; and

(b) Promote and ensure respect for –
(i) All languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portugues, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and
(ii) Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrut and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996).
In addition to providing for the status of the 11 official languages, Beukes (2004: 5) states that the Constitution also addresses the transformation of the historically marginalised languages. Language development is afforded high priority: "practical and positive measures" are to be put in place to advance these languages. The high priority is reflected in the provision for the establishment of a dedicated language development agency, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) which is charged with developing and promoting the use of all languages of South Africa, including the ancient indigenous languages of South Africa's "first people", the Khoe and San.

Beukes (1994: 5) further states that Section 6 (1) of the Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, is supported by the Bill of Rights which recognises language as a basic human right. Therefore, “Everyone has the right to use language and participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights” (Beukes 1994: 5).

Beukes further emphasises that the Bill of Rights clearly echoes the Freedom Charter’s position on language that was adopted some 50 years earlier during the struggle for liberation: “All people shall have equal rights to use their own languages” (Beukes 1994: 6). She further mentions four most important aspects regarding language rights, in line with the liberal, rights-based paradigm of the South African Constitution, and of which the Constitution further-

(i) prohibit discrimination against anyone on the grounds of language;
(ii) prescribes that everyone has the right to education in any official language(s) of their choice;
(iii) enshrines the right of linguistic communities to use their cultures and languages;
(iv) prescribes that every person has the right to information in a language that they understand (Beukes 1994: 6).

Even though the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which is regarded by other countries and South Africans as the best Constitution in the world, guarantees the full development, promotion and advancement of multilingualism in our country, there are still challenges in terms of implementation of National Language Policy Framework due to the lack of formal legislation. According to the Annual report delivered by PanSALB Acting CEO in Parliament during October 2009 financial year, the following were some of the challenges faced by the Board:
- Funding. This is perceived to be the Board’s biggest challenge as a lack of funding means that service delivery would face dire consequences.
- The lack of a language Act. Having a language Act would aid in the execution of the Board’s mandate and to allow them to enforce compliance.

Some of the Board’s future plans include:

- considering appointing an official fundraiser to help them with capital projects.
- developing more policies for improved governance.
- developing improved proactive monitoring and case handling of linguistic human rights violations.
- Reviewing systems for monitoring of government departments (Swepu 2009) (Electronic version access 24/10/2010).

3.4 South African Languages Bill (2000)

The South African Languages Bill seeks to regulate and monitor the use of official languages to ensure compliance with Section 6(2) and 6(3) of the Constitution, and to advance the constitutional imperative of multilingualism. It was drafted in 2004 but the Cabinet returned the Bill to the Department of Arts and Culture with the request to ‘advance multilingualism though non-legislative means’.

The court ruling in the case of Lourens v The President of the Republic of South Africa and Others of 16 March 2010 obligated the Minister of Arts and Culture to comply with the judgement within two years by among others fully implement the National Language Policy Framework (South African Languages Bill 2000: 1).

The guiding principle of this Bill is very clear in Section 3(1) (b). It emphasises the promotion of the use of all indigenous languages. South African Sign Language is fully promoted and used in all Parliament’s events, but other languages such as Siswati, isiNdebele, Xitsonga and Tshivenda are still reluctantly promoted especially when it comes to events taking place outside Parliament, Parliament’s language service section uses interpreters who claim to be multilinguals, to the detriment of first language speaker interpreters of these languages. This is contrary to language
rights conferred by the Constitution of this country (South African Languages Bill 2003:3)

Members of Parliament were gratified that the Department of Arts and Culture’s presentation about the High Court Judgement represented partial delivery on pending legislation. They also noted that the South African Language Practitioners’ Council Bill and the South African Languages Bill had been pending for more than ten years now. Members of Parliament were concern about insufficient consultation on the language development issues. Members urged that attention be paid to the needs of rural areas and to equal access to libraries and Members of Parliament stressed that no part of South Africa should be marginalised. Members were interested to know how the languages Bill addressed the lacuna of the status of South African languages such as Khoisan that were not part of the 11 official languages but were protected by Section 6(5) of the Constitution. This implies that even if Khoi and San languages are not part of the 11 official languages in South Africa, but they are covered in the Constitution therefore they should be catered for in the South African Parliament.

3.5 South African Language Practitioner’s Council Bill

(2000)

This bill seeks to establish the Language Practitioners’ Council of South Africa; to provide for control over the training, accreditation, and registration of language practitioners; and to provide for matters incidental thereto (SA Language Practitioners Council Bill 2000: 1).

3.5.1 The main objectives of the Council in respect of the language practitioners shall be to:

(a) Accredit language practitioners;
(b) Register language practitioners;
(c) Scrutinise and maintain standards;
(d) Develop, implement, revise or amend a Code of Ethics to govern the conduct of language practitioners;
(e) Protect the professional interests of language practitioners; and
(f) Protect the members of the public who make use of services provided by language practitioners (Language Practitioners’ Council Bill: 2000).

3.5.2 The Council shall also advise the Minister on the
(Language practitioners’ Bill 2000)

(a) Accreditation and competency levels in the language profession(s), to improve the provision and the quality of services rendered by language practitioners, through adequate education and training;

(b) Standards, competency testing and accreditation in the language professions;

(c) Relevant international standards;

(d) Any matter falling with the scope of this Act.

The passing of the Language Practitioners’ Bill and Language Practitioners’ Council Bill is keenly anticipated as it will protect both language practitioners and their clients. It will also improve language practitioners’ skills and enable them to render satisfactory services to their clients as they will have to be accredited as professionals in their field of specialisation. When these Bills are passed into Acts, language practitioners will be able to receive quality training as compared to the current situation (South African Language Practitioners’ Council Bill: 2000).


3.6.1 The Purpose

This policy as the subject of our Constitution is intended as an enabling framework for promoting South Africa’s linguistic diversity and encouraging respect for language rights within the policy framework of building and consolidating a united democratic South African nation (National Language Policy Framework 2000: 2).

The purpose of this policy document is to set out a coherent language policy and implementation plan for a multilingual dispensation within the parameters of the Constitution and in concert with broad social planning and transformation in South Africa. In line with its mandate, the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) is to oversee the implementation of the policy and the plan (national Language Policy Framework 2000: 2). However, the most significant move of all is the South African
Languages Bill, 2000, which was ratified by Parliament in 2001, but has yet to be accepted by Cabinet and signed into Act by the President of South Africa. Nevertheless, due to the National Language Policy Framework (NLPF) containing a number of provisions contained in the South African Languages Bill, which was approved by Cabinet in 2003, some progress has been made.

3.6.2 Strategic goals
The language policy sets out to achieve some of the following strategic goals: National Language Policy Framework (2000: 4) seeks to facilitate individual empowerment and national development by promoting the equitable use of the official languages and thus ensuring that all South Africans have the freedom to exercise their language rights by using the official languages of their choice in a range of contexts. This applies in particular to equality of access to government services and programmes, and knowledge and information. This clause implies that language services managers must always adhere to this policy by ensuring the equitable use of all the official languages, especially when Parliament is going to conduct its business outside the precinct of Parliament. Language service management should ensure that all South Africans enjoy the freedom to exercise their language rights by using their own languages. They should also enable them to comprehend Parliamentary processes for effective engagement purposes. South Africans should not be excluded by language services management on the basis that some languages do not exist in certain areas or that people speaking a particular language are in the minority. Even if there is only one person in a particular area that person has the right to use his home language and that right is protected by the Constitution.

3.6.3 Language Policy Requirements
Section 3(a) of the language policy requires language services authorities to support the development of human resources through the official use of all South African Languages in terms of the Constitutional obligation to promote multilingualism. This implies language services management must not favour languages which happened to be theirs to the detriment of other languages.

Section 3(b) obliges authorities/language management to promote the professionalisation of language practitioners through legislation and other means. This
section implies that, for language practitioners to be able to deliver better quality interpreting services, the field of language practice should be professionalised. The pending legislation should be fast tracked. Language practitioners should also be accredited by professional language bodies for them to be professionals in their field and be able to deliver better quality interpreting services (National Language Policy Framework 2000: 4).

3.7 The role of multilingualism in Democracy in the Parliament of South Africa

Wiegand (2008: 1) in his Language Policy Implementation Project Report states that, in a truly democratic multilingual society, the favoring of any language cannot be permitted. He further indicates the necessity of asking ourselves why the language clause was used as one of the founding provisions in our Constitution and also whether Parliament is contributing sufficiently towards language development in order to deepen democracy in South Africa.

Language is not only viewed as a fundamental founding provision in the Constitution, but it is also entrenched in Section 30 of the Bill of Rights that: Everyone has the right to use the language and participate in the cultural life of their choice, but not one exercising these rights may do so in manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights (Constitution 1996: 15). Flowing from this provision, in the spirit of empowering South Africans with information, it is crucial, amongst other things, that when government communicates with the people of South Africa, it should use the language which will be understood by people. Language services should not be selectively provided only to the majority while a minority is discriminated against. Such a situation will clearly be contrary to the Bill of Rights.

According to Wiegand (2008: 1) the tendency towards unilingualism is still prevalent in the country and is evident in Parliament too. Wiegand (2008:1) states, with reference to a published Chapter 9 review report that it is clear that a structure such as PanSALB, which is a statutory body established in terms of Chapter 9 of the Constitution, has failed. This was evident on SABC 1 Asikhulume programme broadcasted on 17 October 2010 from six o’clock to half past seven in the evening,
when the acting PanSALB CEO was asked whether PanSALB has enough teeth to bite when government departments do not comply with the implementation of multilingualism. The CEO said that PanSALB is trying but that, since there is no formal legislation to enforce compliance, they have limited powers to deal with non-compliance.

Wiegand (2008:1) gives reasons why, after 14 years of democracy, South Africa still has these tendencies: He says it is because people who are in positions of authority to remedy the situation are either unwilling or unable to do so, even if they might understand the meaning of the language mandate in terms of the Constitution.

3.7.1 Parliamentary Mandate
Wiegand (2008: 8) further states that in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Parliament has a mandate to:

- a. Pass legislation;
- b. Conduct Oversight;
- c. Public participation;
- d. Cooperative governance, and
- e. International participation

It is this researcher’s position that, in order for the Parliament of South Africa to achieve all the abovementioned objectives, language interpreting plays a vital role.

3.8 Parliamentary Language Policy (2000)
This policy describes the use of the official languages in the business of Parliament:

1. House debates and Committee proceedings.
2. Official record of parliamentary proceedings (Hansard) and committee reports.
3. Daily papers.
4. External communication (Parliamentary Language Policy 2003: 1)

1. House Debates and Committees

Language Policy for Parliament (2003: 1) gives Members of Parliament the right to use any of the 11 official languages as well as South African sign language, in the
National Assembly (NA), the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) as well as in Committee meetings. This policy requires that speeches be simultaneously interpreted into all 11 official languages plus sign language. This language policy also requires that interpreting services be available in the public gallery for visitors, visiting Members of other Houses and the media. However, Committee Proceedings are not fully interpreted currently; interpreting services in Committee meetings are only provided if one of the Members prefers to speak his own language and it is only consecutive interpreting that is provided since simultaneous interpreting is not yet taken to the Committees.

2. Official Record of Parliamentary Proceedings (Hansard, Committee Reports, Questions and Replies, Motions and Statements)
Language Policy for Parliament (2003: 3) states that all Parliamentary records will be published in the original language in which they were presented or submitted. The Policy further states that these records will be translated and made available electronically in all other official languages. This implies that the full implementation of language Policy for Parliament will realise the publication of Hansard, Committee Reports, Questions and Replies, Motions and Statements in all 11 official languages of South Africa. The question is how far is this policy implemented to date?

3. Daily papers
Language Policy for Parliament (2003: 2) states that each Member of Parliament will exercise his/her preference for the official language of his/her Daily Papers such as Order Papers, Announcement, Tablings and Committee Reports, Minutes of proceedings of the House debates etc. The Policy further says Members of Parliament will receive these Papers in the language registered as the language of their choice. Since the researcher is the employee of Parliament in the Language Services Section, he would like to indicate that to date all Daily Papers, Committee Reports and Minutes of proceedings of the House debates are still in English and Afrikaans.

4. External communication
Clause 4.1 of the Language Policy for Parliament (2003: 1) states that any member of the public or any institution or body will address Parliament in the official language of their choice.
Provided that:

a) The Parliamentary Service will make available to Members translated versions of the written submissions in the registered language of preference in terms of clause 3(b) and such copies to be available to Members dealing with matters relevant to such submission. This implies that, for an example submissions written in isiNdebele should be translated into a universal language which is English in this case for them to be accessible by all Members dealing with such submissions.

b) Clause 4.1 (b) states that the written submissions by the public will be received by Parliament 21 days in advance of presentation to enable translations and formatting for electronic distribution. This implies that these submissions have to be translated, edited and proofread into a universal language accessible by all Members of the Committee dealing with the submissions.

c) Clause 4.1 (c) states that any person submitting oral evidence will indicate language of use within 48 hours to enable efficient interpretation service. This implies that any person who will make oral submission, question, motion, statement and report in his/her language of choice should indicate within 48 hours. However, in the researcher’s experience it is not practically possible to comply with this clause, since people speak in their language without even indicating that they will do so.

3.9 Scope of the Language Policy Implementation Project

Nelson Rhohlahla Mandela wrote: “If you talk to a man in a language that he understands, that goes to his head, but if you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart”. This shows that people will understand more if they are engaged in their own languages.

Wiegand (2008: 1) indicates that the Parliamentary language policy was approved by the Joint Rules Committee in August 2003 (see again addendum A). This policy effectively provided Parliament with a systematic way to activate a strategic language
project called the Language Policy Implementation Project (LPIP), to proceed with the implementation of the language clause in the founding Chapter of the Constitution. In his language project report, Wiegand (2008) states that the implementation of the Language Policy Project (LPP) commenced on 1 April 2004, with the recruitment of 44 language practitioners, with the broad aim of building sufficient capacity to ensure that Parliament has adequate internal capacity to deliver all language services in all official languages as well as sign language.

During the project business case planning phase, Wiegand was supposed to complete the project over an envisaged period of six years. This implies that the project should have been completed in 2010.

Wiegand (2008: 2) states that, for the project to have been implemented successfully, 453 language practitioners would have been appointed by 2008, both at sessional and permanent level, to ensure the simultaneous interpreting of all Parliament meetings and to provide sufficient linguistic capacity to deliver Parliamentary content in all the official languages. The projected growth in the annual expenditure of the Language Services Section was estimated to be 10-fold more than prior to the policy. However, Wiegand states that, after the first phase of implementation (this report was compiled in 2008), the project was estimated to be implemented at only 25%.

During the first part of 2008, sixty sessional language practitioner positions were advertised and interviews were conducted in July and August of the same year. It is this researcher’s opinion that that was done with the intent to implement the second phase of the project. Suitable candidates for the positions were identified from all nine provinces, but this phase was halted at the appointment stage.
Wiegand (2008: 4) says “Multilingualism thus not only requires a focused long-term vision but serious institutional commitment”. This statement implies that Wiegand realised that there is no serious institutional commitment as far as multilingualism is concerned.

3.9.1 Challenges

Wiegand (2008: 5) describes the failure to fully implement the language policy as a major challenge facing Parliament as it decreases the capacity to deliver Parliamentary services in all official languages. Wiegand suggests that overcoming internal change resistance and ensuring that sufficient resources are made available will ensure the optimisation of multilingual output. The internal tangible variables that influence the process are financial, spatial and human resources. Intangible constraints are multilingual marketing and innovative problem solving to deal with the changing environmental culture.

Wiegand contends that partial implementation of the language policy leads to a bottleneck for language services delivery in Parliament, since some languages are not well capacitated and quality services delivery in such languages thus suffer. Hence the complaints from some Members of Parliament. Financial, spatial and human resources are other constraints.

The Language Service Section has no strategy to market multilingualism, for instance, hosting multilingualism events in order to develop and promote multilingualism. This is because Parliament’s Language Services Section has its own interpretation of multilingualism. The LSS at Parliament interprets multilingualism as an individual
person who can speak different languages. This is the reason why Section management usually sends interpreters who claim to be multilingualists to events such as Taking Parliament to the People, where Parliament conducts public participation on legislative process and oversight visits. Language culture is totally not taken into account in this regard. Parliament Language Services Section lacks a problem-solving strategy. This shortfall causes language practitioners to work under stressful situations and they end up resigning from the Parliamentary services.

Wiegand (2008: 5) cites the lack of formal legislation to support the language mandate, the non-availability of appropriate linguistic skills and the lack of a centrally coordinated national approach to terminology development as external constraints to the promotion and advancement of multilingualism. This means that in Parliament, at both high-level political and administrative support, co-operation among all three spheres of government should be increased and the essence of the multilingual culture of the Constitution actively promoted. The researcher views multilingualism as a very essential vehicle to broaden the consultative approach in an open democracy like ours in South Africa, and it must be optimised to increase the effect and impact of discussions on culture which will lead to an increased understanding of the processes involved in nation – building.

3.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter points out that, for the Constitutional mandate regarding language to be successfully implemented, formal legislation needs to be in place, since people who possess the authority to implement this mandate are reluctant to do so. The Pan South African Language Board was specifically established in terms of Section 9 of our Constitution. However, a lack of formal legislation renders PanSALB toothless and they have become unable to enforce the language policy in
cases of breach. Therefore, people who are in charge of language development (language services managers) still marginalise some languages, knowing that no actions will be taken against them.

However, there is hope that politicians will move swiftly to pass the language practitioners’ Bill into Act, for Members of Parliament to be provided with a good quality language services rendered by well-trained, qualified, skilled and accredited professional language practitioners. The current allegations of unsatisfactory interpreting services will be a problem of the past once the South African Languages Bill is passed into Act.

From the report of the meeting of the 13th National Language Forum, held on 25 May 2011 in Pretoria, the government, through the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), fortunately seems to be taking the necessary steps to comply with the High Court ruling that ordered the government of South Africa to legislate on language by 16 March 2012.
CHAPTER 4

Methodology and analysis of data

4.1 Introduction

For the purposes of this Chapter, the researcher identified qualitative research as the most appropriate approach in an attempt to answer questions in this study as stated earlier in Chapter 1. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 270) describes qualitative research as “a collection of methods and techniques which share a certain set of principle or logic”. They further state that qualitative researchers always attempt to study human actions from the perspective of human actors themselves and the primary purpose of using this approach is defined as describing and understanding. This chapter describes the research methodology and analyses data obtained during the study. It also describes the research design, validity and reliability of the data, reactivity and reflexivity, ethical issues, presentation and discussion of data.

This chapter aims to describe the research methodology for the empirical data collection, to analyse and interpret the empirical data as obtained during the study. As it is stated by Kurz (2001) that “questionnaires have been the most common means to determine user expectations and/or responses, as they are the most straightforward scientific way of collecting data on actual quality perception by delegates” (Kurz 2001: 397). This Chapter will also interpret the information obtained by recording and transcribing Control Language Practitioners (CLPs) interviews’ data. The observation of the interviews of Language Practitioners as well as the recording and transcription of the Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL) versions of the two practising interpreters will be analysed and interpreted.

4.2 Research Design

In this study the main focus was on the hypothesis regarding the quality of interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa (see 1.4). The researcher adopted a qualitative research design to conduct empirical research in this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 278-279) briefly discuss three main design types, namely ethnographic studies, case studies and life history. The design type which is most
appropriate to this study is a “case study design” as this is more often used when the researcher is interested in a more clearly delineated entity (such as a specific household, family, institution or organisation). In this case the entity being studied is the Parliament of South Africa, more particularly the Language Services Section (LSS) of Parliament as an Institution.

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 278-279) states that qualitative studies use qualitative methods to gain access to research subjects (e.g. theoretical selection of cases, snowball sampling); qualitative methods of data-collection (e.g. participation observation, semi-structured interviewing, the use of personal documents to construct life stories); and qualitative methods analysis (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 270).

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 270) contend that, what makes qualitative research unique from quantitative research is that, in qualitative research, the study is conducted in the natural setting of social actors and in this type of research the focus is on process rather than outcome; the actors’ perspective is emphasised; and the primary aim is in-depth descriptions and understanding of actions and events. The main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context rather than attempting to generalise to some theoretical population. A qualitative researcher is seen as the main instrument in the research process. It is important to note though that, for the researcher to be a main instrument does not necessarily means that a researcher should influence the research to the direction in which he wants it to go, by being biased and misrepresenting information. The researcher should rely strictly on the data furnished by the respondents for the success of the research project.

In this study the main focus is therefore on the actual users of interpreting services (Members of Parliament) and their interpreting service providers (interpreters) so that the researcher might be able to acquire a better understanding of the requirements of Members of Parliament, so that their real needs and wants could be taken into account in future business plans of the Language Services Section (LSS) of the Parliament of South Africa.

In the Parliament of South Africa simultaneous interpreting is very important for the immediate communicative discourse amongst Members of Parliament during
Parliamentary debates. Jones (1998: 66) outline the acoustic difficulties between simultaneous interpreting (SI) and consecutive interpreting (CI), Jones states that in simultaneous interpreting, the interpreter has to speak and listen at the same time, which is an unnatural activity and has to be cultivated. While in consecutive interpreting, the interpreter listens and take notes first, then interprets. This statement implies that in simultaneous interpreting the spoken word is for the immediate consumption of the listener and the simultaneous interpreter normally cannot pause to consult dictionaries, the internet, senior colleagues, etc. as emphasised in previous chapters 1 and 2. Quality in interpreting in the context of Parliament means that a Member of Parliament should, among other things, not notice that he is actually listening to a third person – the intermediary between the speaker and the listener must be without suspicion. (See again Chapter 2 regarding the quality of interpreting).

Therefore the interpreter should have an excellent capacity to listen, understand, reformulate and convey in an elegant language, messages, ideas, arguments, and criticisms as they are being said by the Source Language Speaker (SLS). This means that essential elements in the rendering of quality interpreting are concentration on listening, analytical skills in reproducing ideas coming from others, communication talent and finding the correct register. In other words, the interpreter should always interpret from the first person or be in the shoes of the source language speaker while conveying the source language message into the target language message.

4.3 Description of research method for empirical study

I have chosen a combination of instruments for data collection in this study. The following are used:

- **Questionnaires for Members of Parliament**: I deliberately selected a user-centered approach in order to achieve thorough knowledge and understanding of the real needs of MPs as they are primary clients of the Parliament’s LSS. I believe it is advisable to involve the specific user group concerned in order to find out from them exactly what it is that they want, in order to come up with appropriate recommendations that will meet their specific needs. (See addendum B copy of questionnaires for Members of Parliament).
• **Questionnaires for interpreters:** I have chosen interpreters because they are responsible in rendering interpreting services to MPs as their primary clients. Therefore interpreters will be able to give relevant information and knowledge regarding their experience and skills in simultaneous interpreting. See addendum C, for copy of questionnaires. See Addendum C copy of questionnaires for interpreters.

• **Passive observation:** I have chosen this method of sitting and observing in the recruitment panel interviews for beginner interpreters, because I intended to collect data on the procedure followed by recruitment and selection panel for beginner interpreters, and find out how does the panel go about selecting the most suitable candidate for the given position in order to achieve quality delivery in interpreting performance.

• **Semi-structured interviews of two (2) controllers:** I chose to interview controllers because they oversee the delivery of interpreting services at operational level and they have experience in interpreting. As such, they will be able to provide me with more information relating to the quality of interpreting delivered by their subordinate interpreters i.e. the strength and the weaknesses of the interpreters and also the main problem from Members of Parliament. I did not want to use the Unit manager or Section manager in this particular study, since they are not directly involved with the actual interpreting service at an operational level, and would therefore not have assisted this study. See addendum D copy of transcriptions of Controllers` interviews.

• **Recording of at least one instance of speakers` speech and the interpreting thereof:** In an attempt to effectively respond to the research question, I have recorded a speech and the interpreting thereof and transcribed both the speech and interpretation in order to compare the speech to the interpreted version to shed light on the hypothesis. See addendum E for speech
and interpreting transcriptions. I used my own device to do the recordings, since Parliament has no dual recording equipment. The recording machine used at Parliament only records the speakers’ voices for the purpose of Hansard transcriptions. According to Parliament’s Sound and Vision unit, dual recording machines will only be available when the project “Taking Interpreting to the Committees” is implemented as currently there is no provision of or for interpreting services in Committees. Through this project Parliament aims to extend the interpreting services to the sittings of Parliamentary Committee meetings.

The Interpreting Unit (IU) has its own recording machine which records the interpreter’s version only and not the source language speaker’s version. I then enquired from a Sound and Vision Unit official whether they could record the source language text (SLT) and the target language text (TLT) on one CD. But he said it was impossible to record the two versions on one CD, since the Hansard version has to be verbatim, meaning what the speakers say at that point in time, and not the interpreted version. This is why I decided to make use of my own device to do the recordings of both SL message and TL message. See addendum E recording of source and target language.

4.4 Sampling

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 288) sampling of few members of the population is purposeful and directed at a certain inclusive criteria, rather than random. Therefore for the purpose of empirical research in this study I have used purposive sampling, which allowed me to select specific people to participate based on the research objectives and the qualities of respondents a study requires. In this case the direct involvement of Members of Parliament, interpreters and control language practitioners (CLPs) since the substance of the issue being researched dictated that they be the respondents.

- **Members of Parliament**: Since I had no intention to generalise, I intended to acquire specific information or knowledge about the actual needs of Members of Parliament themselves as they are primary clients of the interpreting unit, in other words they are the ones who always listen to interpretation of the
interpreters. As such, they are the most relevant respondents to answer my research questions.

- **Interpreters**: Interpreters are directly involved in rendering interpreting services to Members of Parliament. As such, they will be able to provide a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses regarding interpreting services.

- **Recruitment panel for interpreters**: By sitting in on the interpreters’ interview panel I managed to get a sense of the criteria followed in order to appoint the candidates for the job of an interpreter.

- **Controllers for interpreters**: Controllers are first-line management or supervisors. The ongoing complaints of poor quality of interpreting from clients (Members of Parliament) come through the Division Manager and are cascaded down to the Section Manager, Unit Manager and then to the controllers. The controllers communicate the complaints to all interpreters that interpret in the Parliament of South Africa. Interviewing them would give me an accurate sense of their view of quality of interpreting in the National Parliament of South Africa. Their views will also be dealt with later in this chapter.

- **Recording of interpreting**: The recording of live interpreting enabled me to compare the SL message to the TL message and analyse the text in order to verify the quality of interpreting that is being rendered by interpreters of the Parliament of South Africa. This would enable me to respond effectively to the complaints of poor quality interpretation from Members of Parliament. (See addendum F, transcription of recorded interpreting).

### 4.5 Description of field work

I distributed 40 questionnaires to both Houses of Parliament. I did so as follows: 20 questionnaires to the NA and another 20 to the NCOP. Despite the challenges (i.e. obtaining permission, response of respondents to the questionnaires, etc.) experienced the researcher managed to receive back 12 questionnaires from the NA and 10 questionnaires from the NCOP. The method followed to distribute these questionnaires to Members of Parliament – particularly in the NA – was to identify
one or two Members who are known to me and requesting them to distribute the questionnaires to their colleagues. I decided to follow this method because Members of Parliament are not easily accessible since they are always busy in Committee meetings and other Parliamentary businesses. Approaching them on my own would not have been successful, as they are not in their offices most of the time.

In the NCOP I identified a manager who agreed to assist me to distribute questionnaires to Members through a secretary who works closely with Members. I then handed over 20 questionnaires to the manager for possible collection within a week and the manager handed over the questionnaires to the secretary. When I returned to collect at the end of the week I could not find the secretary. The manager told me that the secretary had said that there were about 6 questionnaires completed. As time passed those completed questionnaires were lost. I had to redistribute another set of ten questionnaires which were given to another secretary who managed to obtain all 10 questionnaires completed by Members of Parliament and return them for me to complete this study. I must mention that distributing questionnaires to Members of Parliament is always a good way to go, because trying to get Members of Parliament for an interview is problematic since they have a busy schedule, that is why I have opted for questionnaires.

The data collected from Members of Parliament will be discussed during the interpretation of data. The drafted questionnaires were disseminated to the Interpreters and Members of Parliament. I chose interpreters who belong to the Interpreting Unit as my respondents as opposed to interpreters employed in the Translation Unit because most of the Translation Unit interpreters are still beginners in the field of interpreting and the majority of them are still being mentored. As such, they would not assist this study.

The Interpreting Unit also has 4 sign language interpreters, but I decided not to include them in this study since its hypothesis excluded them. I then distributed 40 questionnaires to interpreters in the Interpreting Unit. I distributed four questionnaires per language group. Out of the 40 questionnaires distributed to interpreters, I managed to get back 31. This was an appropriate data collection method as I managed to elicit many responses from the majority of respondents.
The researcher also attended language practitioner recruitment interviews as a passive observer in order to observe the criteria and procedures followed by Parliament’s Language Services Section during the recruitment of beginner language practitioners. It is fitting to mention that it was not an easy task to obtain observer status on this panel. Details will be given later regarding the ethical issues and how I dealt with them practically. I only managed to observe on the Afrikaans language practitioner recruitment panel due to the fact that the Division Manager recommended that I should only observe the interviews which are conducted at Parliament. This, despite her knowledge that only Afrikaans and sign language interviews are conducted at Parliament while the interviews for African language practitioners are conducted in the different provinces.

The fact that I did not manage to observe the interviews conducted by the African language practitioners’ panel denied me an opportunity to gather precise information related to MPs’ complaints about interpreting from African languages into English. The MPs clearly indicated in their questionnaires that they have no complaints about interpreting from Afrikaans into English. However, this does not imply that I failed to achieve my objectives that I have set for myself in the completion of this study.

The interviewing panel comprised of the Section Manager, three SLPs from each unit i.e. the Interpreting, Translation and Reporting Units, an HR representative and a union representative. More importantly, these SLPs are selected randomly and some of them are not language-specific. For an example, the panel is supposed to interview isiXhosa and Siswati language practitioners, but the panel co-ordinator selects isiNdebele and isiZulu SLPs to be on the interviewing panel, while isiXhosa and Siswati SLPs are available, but are not invited to form part of the interviewing panel. This is not correct because each language has its own culture which another language speaker would not clearly understand.

During the questioning of the candidates I managed to detect that no question relating to interpreting was asked by the panel to candidates, even though two positions to be filled were for translation and one was for interpreting. The main emphasis of the
panel was on translation. It became crystal clear to me that interpreting is not being taken seriously by the Section Management.

Another aspect which I have observed as not being taken seriously by this panel is the interpreting testing method used by this panel. Candidates are being tested for interpreting skills right in front of the panel by means of a small recording device and ear-pieces. I have noticed that this method is too intimidating for candidates. It is also not true to what happens in practice. The translation test is not done in front of the panel; the candidates sit alone in another room and translate the test.

The interpreting testing method used to test the first group of interpreters in 2004, was the best method to test interpreters, as it was performed in a mock-sitting. In that situation, the candidate sat in the booth and a practising interpreter would formally and professionally explain everything to the candidate about what is going to happen. The candidate would be alone in the booth and another practising interpreter would read a speech from the floor in the House. The practising interpreter would, for instance, read the speech in English and the candidate would interpret into isiNdebele and when the practising interpreter reads another speech in isiNdebele the candidate would interpret into English. This is ideal method of testing interpreting in order to appoint best suitable candidates for interpreting position, unlike what is currently happening, with testing taking place in front of the panel by means of a small recording device and ear-pieces and only English interpretation is tested and not the source language. I would strongly suggest that this current method be reviewed and that the LSS reverts to the previous method in order to appoint the best-suited candidates for interpreting positions.

Reviewing of an advertisement for the recruitment of Language Practitioners (LPs). To attract the most suitable candidates, the structure of the advert (see below) should be specific. Put differently, if the appointee’s core-function is interpreting the advert should clearly state that fact. Language Practitioners are specialists in their own right, as they possess special skills and render specialised services. Even so, interpreters are specialised language professionals in their own right, as correctly pointed out by Lesch (2010: 40). Therefore, they should not be treated as generalists by compelling
them to perform all three core functions, while reporters and translators are given latitude to choose whether they want to do interpreting or not.

In other words, when there is a vacant position for an interpreter the advert should be specific that the vacant position is for an interpreter. The advertisement should state specific job requirements unique to an interpreter position as opposed to the successful candidate will be responsible for providing Hansard reporting, Interpreting and Translation services to Parliament as stated on the advertisements displayed below. This is said because in the real world of work it does not happen as advertised, for an example, the translator does translation as a core function and either interpreting or reporting as second KRA, not all three core functions.
For the purpose of the interviews with Control Language Practitioners, I drew up five questions relating to Members of Parliament’s claim that the quality of the interpreting service in the Parliament of South Africa is poor. I then made an appointment with two CLPs in the Interpreting Unit. Both CLPs were interviewed on the same day but at different times. I interviewed the first CLP from eleven o’clock to eleven fifteen and the second CLP from eleven thirty to eleven forty five. Both CLPs were interviewed for fifteen minutes each. Both interviews were successful, since both CLPs attended the interview. I did not furnish the CLPs with questions to be asked in the interview simply because I did not want them to discuss the questions prior to the interview. I did this because I wanted to check whether their responses would complement each other in all five questions asked.

I then explained the procedure we would follow, as well as their rights in terms of confidentiality and of their identity and also that the proceedings would be recorded. I then completed the interviews in the time frames mentioned before. I immediately started with transcriptions of the interviews while the information was still fresh in my mind. The data will be analysed thematically.

I also recorded the speakers’ and interpreters’ voices simultaneously as a requirement for me to complete this study. I did this in order to evaluate whether an interpreter is able to accurately convey the speakers’ messages. This exercise was a big challenge because the researcher discovered that Parliament’s Sound and Vision Unit could only record the source language version (speaker’s voice) and not the target language version (interpreter’s voice). The reason given to me by Sound and Vision was that currently Parliament does not have dual recording system; the system will be installed in future when interpreting is extended to Parliament Committees. Currently no interpreting is provided in the Committee meetings, as envisaged by Parliament Language Policy.

However, I managed to listen and record both SL and TL versions simultaneously by means of my own recording device. After the completion of this research, I hope Parliament will realise that it is important to have a dual recording machine to enable interpreters to listen to the SL and their own interpretation for self-improvement purposes with the aim of delivering interpreting services of good quality.
To execute this exercise successfully, I had to sit in the gallery. I used a recording device to record both the speaker’s voice and the interpreter’s voice. I did this by using ear-pieces from two listening devices. One listening device was programmed into channel 3 – isiNdebele – and the other into channel 1 – English. I attached both ear-pieces to the recording device and began recording. I then programmed a third ear-piece into channel 3 – isiNdebele – and listened to the interpreter. Since I was in the gallery I was able to listen to the source language speaker on the floor and the interpreter’s version from channel 3 – isiNdebele.

It therefore became possible to record live debates from channel 1 – English – as well as the interpreter version from channel 3 – isiNdebele. Since I had another ear-piece also programmed into channel 3 – isiNdebele – I was able to hear the speaker from the floor clearly, and was able to compare the message of the speaker to the message that the interpreter conveyed in the target language. This put me in a position to determine the quality of the interpreting rendered in that instance.

Regarding the questionnaires and interviews, I was aware that the validity and reliability of questionnaires cannot be 100% guaranteed. Due to the attitude people have on the survey documents; most people do not bother themselves by completing survey documents as well as the time constraints respondents – especially Members of Parliament – are subjected to. On the other hand, during interviews respondents tend to defend their positions. For instance, no interpreter respondent would agree that the interpreting that he renders is of a poor quality or not up to standard and no interpreter respondent would agree that the services that he supervises is of a poor quality. This is more especially true of a situation in which the respondent is aware that quality management falls within his remit.

As argued by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 172), combating reactivity through reflexivity requires researchers to closely and continually monitor their own interaction, roles biases, and any other matters that might affect the research. This implies that the researcher must at all time refrain from influencing respondents to provide the data he wants. As a practising interpreter researcher, when my colleagues enquired as to the field of my research, I would tell them that my topic is about the
quality of simultaneous interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa. However, I could not divulge the full scope of the study as I was aware that such information might impact on what they were prepared to tell me.

As an interpreter by profession and as a researcher studying my work environment, I have tried by all means to distance myself from this study so as to allow it to take its own direction. I tried not to predict the results of the study and relied on data collected from the respondents. In other words, I took the view that the collected data would drive the study to its logical conclusion. I have also tried to be unbiased in order to avoid the representation of my values and experiences as an interpreter studying interpreters.

4.6 Ethical issues involved

In order to be able to proceed with the research, I had to obtained permission from the Secretary to Parliament (Parliament’s CEO) to conduct research at the Parliament of South Africa. As the Secretary to Parliament was absent from work at that time, the letter was referred to the office of the Deputy Secretary to Parliament and my request received approval within three days. I then began with my research. (See addendum F, copy of a letter for permission to research).

As stated in my research proposal I had to attend an interview panel for observation of the recruitment processes and criteria followed to recruit interpreters for the Parliament of South Africa. Although I was already given permission to conduct research in the Institution, I decided to write a letter of request to observe in the beginner interpreters’ panel interviews. There were upcoming interviews which I intended to attend in November 2010, in fulfillment of my thesis requirements. I sent the letter of request two weeks before these interviews were to be conducted. I asked the panel co-ordinator how long it would take for the request to be approved by the Secretary to Parliament. He said that it would take about three days. I was convinced that I would be able to attend the upcoming interviews so that I could complete my study. Unfortunately, the manager kept my letter of request in his office until the day of their departure for interviews in Johannesburg. He then sent it to the Division Manager’s office after which it took a month for my request to be approved.
The recommendation from the Division manager’s office to the office of the Secretary to Parliament was not what the researcher requested. This recommendation reads that the researcher “requests to observe in the interviews which are conducted at Parliament for beginner interpreters”, which implies that I would not be allowed to attend interviews that are conducted outside the precincts of Parliament. However, the Division Manager had prior knowledge that no interpreter interviews are conducted at Parliament except for Afrikaans and sign language, but still made such recommendations to the Secretary to Parliament. I must mention that it was a challenge to be part of the interview panel. Due to the aforementioned inconsistencies, I managed to observe interview processes for only the English and Afrikaans language practitioners. See addendum G, copy of a letter for permission to observe in the interviews.

5. Presentation of the research findings and analysis

5.1 Questionnaires for Members of Parliament

The table below describes the frequency of listening to interpretation by Members of Parliament during the sitting of Houses.

Table 1: Frequency of listenership by Members of Parliament to the interpretation during the sitting of the House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above shows how many Members of Parliament listen to the interpretation during the sitting of Parliament’s Houses. As already indicated in Chapter 4.5 that 40 questionnaires were distributed to Members of Parliament of which 22 were returned. These questionnaires were for both Houses i.e. the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). In analyzing the information furnished by Members of Parliament, the study reveals that 83% of respondents only listen to the
interpretation occasionally. While 18% of respondents always listen to the interpretation during the sitting of both Houses.

Table 2: Languages they usually listen to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IsiZulu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isiNdebele</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IsiXhosa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siswati</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setswana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above describes languages that Members of Parliament usually listen to during the sitting of both Houses of Parliament. English listenership constitutes 36% respondents, Afrikaans listenership constitutes 14% respondents, isiZulu constitutes 14% respondents, isiNdebele constitutes 14% respondents, isiXhosa constitutes 5% respondents, Siswati constitutes 5% respondents, Sesotho constitutes 5% respondents, Setswana constitutes 5% respondents, and Xitsonga constitutes 5% respondents. According to the data collected, the abovementioned languages are being listened to during the sitting of both Houses. The question of whether Sepedi and Tshivenda are not being listened to by MPs during the sitting of both Houses could be asked. The answer is, they are also being listened to, but there are questionnaires which were never returned, therefore listenership of these two languages could have been found in the questionnaires which were not returned to the researcher. The above information implies that Members of Parliament do listen to the interpreting services during the sitting of both Parliament Houses.

Table 3: Rating of interpreting services by Members of Parliament
Table 3 above describes the rating of interpreting services by the sample of Members of the National Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. From the total number of respondents, 27% of the sample of Members of Parliament rated the quality of interpreting services in the National Parliament of South Africa as “poor”, while 45% respondents rated the quality of interpreting as “fair” and 27% respondents rated the quality of interpreting services as “good”. The above information implies that the quality of interpreting services in the national Parliament of South Africa is, on average, neither good nor poor, as one can see that the highest number of respondents rated the quality as “fair”.

However, in order for the national Parliament to live up to its Constitutional mandate – as is clearly spelled out in Parliament’s Vision and Mission as:

*To build an effective people’s Parliament that is responsive to the needs of the people and that is driven by the ideal of realising a better quality of life for all the people of South Africa.*

– Parliament as the highest and respected legislative body in the country should set a good example to provincial legislatures and government departments by delivering “good quality” interpreting services and not quality of interpreting services that is only average.

**Table 4: Major problems with the interpreting services stated by the Members of Parliament**
Table 4 above describes the major problems that render the quality of interpreting average in the Parliament of South Africa.

From the total number of respondents 59% of respondents perceive interpreting in Parliament as inaccurate, while 27% of respondents say interpreters are not given sufficient training if any, and 9% of respondents say there are no major problems in the interpretation. Five per cent of respondents believe that these problems are caused by the non-provision of Members’ speeches.

Table 5: Input by the Members of Parliament on the improvement of quality of interpreting services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior provision of speeches</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive training</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve accuracy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive screening of interpreters profile</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 above describes inputs of Members of Parliament in terms of improving quality of interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa. From the total number of respondents, 18% are of the opinion that the provision of Members’ speeches to interpreters beforehand will bring about a tremendous improvement in interpreting
quality in the Parliament of South Africa, while 32% of the total number of respondents strongly believe that intensive training of interpreters in the Parliament of South Africa will enable interpreters to deliver good quality of interpreting services. Some respondents even recommend that interpreters actually be send for training before commencing interpreting duties. Eighteen per cent of respondents are of the opinion that if interpreters could strive for accuracy they will be able to render effective quality of interpreting, while 9% of the respondents were very concerned about the manner in which interpreters are recruited, that proper screening measures of the profiles of interpreters should be applied, in order to appoint most suitable candidates. Another 23% of respondents have concerns with sound as a contributor to poor quality. However, quality of sound is irrelevant to this study, as it is not the domain of the interpreters, but that of the Sound and Vision Unit. The above interpretation of data is what is based on Members of Parliament’s responses to the questionnaires.

5.2 Questionnaires for Interpreters

Table 6: Number of years of interpreters employed by the National Parliament of South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 above describes the number of years of interpreters who have been employed by the Parliament of South Africa. The number of respondents who have been employed by the Parliament of South Africa as interpreters between 0-1 year is 3, which represents 10% of the total number of the population. The number of respondents who have been employed by the Parliament of South Africa as interpreters between 1-5 years is 12, which represents 39% of the total number of the population of the study. The number of respondents who have been employed by the Parliament of South Africa as interpreters between 5-10 years is 16, which represents 52% of the total number of the population.
According to table 6, it is clear that currently no respondent has been employed by the Parliament of South Africa as an interpreter between 10-15 years. Taking into account the fact that the implementation of the first phase of the Parliamentary Language Policy (PLP) was in 2004, it is evident that interpreters employed in the Parliamentary Language Services Section establishment currently have between 1-7 years of work experience as simultaneous interpreters in Parliament. See addendum A again for copy of Parliamentary Language Policy (PLP).

Table 7: Highest relevant qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors/Btech</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No relevant qualifications</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 above describes the number of respondents who possess relevant qualifications in the field of interpreting. Qualifications are categorised in terms of diplomas, undergraduate degrees, honors/BTech degrees and Masters Degrees.

The number of respondents possessing diplomas which are relevant to the interpreting field is 6, which represents 19% of the total number of the population. The number of respondents possessing undergraduate degrees is 7, which represents 23% of the total number of the population. The number of respondents possessing honors/BTech degrees is 12, which represents 39% of the total number of the population. The number of respondents possessing Masters Degrees is four (4), which represents 13% of the total number of the population. Two respondents have no relevant qualifications in interpreting, and this represents 6% of the total number of the population in this study.

Table 8: Training of interpreters in the Parliament of South Africa
Table 8 above describes the number of the respondents who joined the Parliament with interpreting skills and those who had no skills when joining Parliament. Only 35% of respondents had interpreting skills before joining the Parliamentary services, while 65% did not have interpreting skills before joining the Parliamentary services. Only 35% of respondents received training immediately after joining Parliamentary services, while 65% of respondents never received any interpreting training since they joined the Parliamentary services. From the 35% of respondents who say they did receive interpreting training, only 6% said that the duration of the training was reasonable to boost interpreting work output and 29% of respondents said that the training duration was not reasonable to boost interpreting work output. Ninety per cent of the respondents consider training before assuming interpreting duties in the Parliament as ideal and only 10% do not consider training before assuming interpreting duties as ideal. Ninety-seven per cent of respondents are of the view that if an interpreter receives training before assuming interpreting duties, such an interpreter will deliver a better quality interpreting service output and only 3% hold a contrary view. From the 65% of respondents who are not yet trained, only 4% of respondents know when they are going to be trained and 61% of respondents do not know when they are going to receive any interpreting training.

Table 9: Working conditions of simultaneous interpreters in the Parliament
Regarding working conditions of interpreters in the Parliament of South Africa, 23% of the respondents are of the view that working conditions in the Parliament of South Africa are conducive for them to deliver quality interpreting services, while 77% of the respondents is contrary to the view that working conditions in the Parliament of South Africa are conducive to their delivery of a better quality interpreting services. Only 16% of the respondents are of the view that their managers are treating them as professionals, while 84% of the respondents are of the view that they are not being treated professionally by their managers. From the total number of the respondents, 19% of the respondents are of the view that communication between them and their managers is conducive to better interpreting service delivery, while 81% of the respondents are totally against that view. Thirteen per cent of respondents agree that their managers intervene immediately when there is a conflict and resolve the conflict amicably for better interpreting service delivery, while 87% of the respondents is contrary to that assertion. Only 16% of the respondents believe that the salary they receive from Parliament matches their expertise, while 84% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the salary they receive from the Parliament of South Africa.
Table 10: Interpreting experience of respondents before joining Parliament of South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No experience</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 above describes the number of interpreters who joined the Parliament of South Africa with previous interpreting experience. Sixty-eight per cent of the total number of respondents says that, when they joined the Parliament of South Africa, they had no previous interpreting experience whatsoever, which implies that only 32% of the total number of respondents had previous interpreting experience when they join Parliament. Respondents who joined Parliament with previous interpreting experience are classified as follows: 10% of the respondents joined the Parliament with previous interpreting experience of between 1- 5 years, while respondents who join the Parliament of South Africa with previous interpreting experience constitutes only 3% of the total number of the respondents. A further 10% of the respondents joined the Parliament of South Africa with previous interpreting experience of between 10 – 15 years, and another 10% of the respondents joined the Parliament of South Africa with previous interpreting experience of between 15 – 20 years.

The interpreters who joined Parliament with interpreting experience are those who were recruited from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. I am saying this because at the time there was not any other institution with trained and experience interpreters except the aforesaid department. These interpreters joined the Parliament with consecutive (court) interpreting experience. Some of them have already left the Parliament for provincial legislatures and UNISA respectively, because they say Parliament’s working conditions are not as favorable as those of the Provincial legislatures and UNISA. As I am writing this thesis another two interpreters who were originally recruited from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development have resigned from the Parliament services, to join the Gauteng Legislature, because they have been offered better salary package as compared to the National Parliament. This causes the National Parliament to always
operate with new staff that has neither experience nor trained in interpreting. Hence the negative impact on the quality of interpreting services.

Table 11: First languages and cases of languages they interpret into

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First languages</th>
<th>Number of respondents per language</th>
<th>Languages they commonly interpret into</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setswana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IsiZulu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IsiXhosa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IsiNdebele</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siswati</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshivenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepedi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 demonstrates that respondents who use Setswana as their first language constitute 9% of the total number of the population, and that 10% of the respondents indicated that they normally interpret into their first language which is from English into Setswana. Respondents who use Afrikaans as their first language constitute 13% of the total number of the population, and the same percentage of 13% of the respondents usually interpret from English into their mother tongue which is Afrikaans in this case. IsiZulu speaking respondents constitute 6% of the total population, and the same 6% respondents usually interpret from English into isiZulu. IsiXhosa first language speakers constitute 10% respondents, and the same 10% respondents usually interpret from English into isiXhosa. IsiNdebele first language speakers constitute 10% respondents and the same percentage of 10% of the respondents usually interprets from English into isiNdebele. The Siswati first language speakers constitute 13% of the respondents, however, only 10% indicated that they normally interpret from English into Siswati and 3% of the respondents interpret from Siswati into English. The Tshivenda first language speakers constitute 6% of the respondents and the same 6% of the respondents usually
interpret from English into Tshivenda. The Xitsonga first language speakers constitute 10% of the respondents, however only 6% of the respondents indicated that they usually interpret from English into Xitsonga, and 3% respondents indicated that they normally interpret from Xitsonga into English. The Sepedi first language speakers constitute 13% of the respondents, and the same 13% respondents indicated that they normally interpret from English into Sepedi. The Sesotho first language speakers constitute 10% of the respondents, however, only 6% respondents indicated that they normally interpret from English into Sesotho, and 3% respondents indicated that they normally interpret from Sesotho into English. According to the abovementioned information provided by interpreters respondents it is clear that the majority of interpreters in the Parliament of South Africa interpret from English into their respective mother tongues most of the time.

5.3 Recorded interviews of Controllers

Controllers in the LSS of Parliament are responsible for co-ordinating Hansard reporting, interpreting and translation services. The controllers’ Key Results Areas (KRAs) are: Reporting, Translation, Editing and Hansard Publication, co-ordinating Interpreting services, Terminology development and Staff Supervision. However, controllers in the Interpreting Unit also evaluate interpreting for quality purposes. I interviewed two controllers in order to get their opinions on the quality of interpreting, training of interpreters, and what can be done to improve quality. See addendum D Controller’s interview copy.

In response to the poor quality of interpreting services in Parliament respondent X mentions two important things. Firstly, he says:

*I think some of the complaints are frivolous because Members do not fully understand the interpreting process which is available to them and how it works.*

Secondly, respondent X gives the reason for the first statement:

*Members of Parliament (MPs) do not understand the interpreting process because MPs are not given workshops on interpreting services that would enable them to understand how interpreting works.*
Regarding the first aspect, respondent X implies that Members of Parliament have no valid grounds for saying that the quality of interpreting in Parliament is poor, because they do not understand the interpreting process. The question may arise as to who is supposed to workshop Members on the process of interpreting services? However, the researcher did not probe the respondent regarding that question.

Contrary to what is said by respondent X in the same question, respondent Y says:  

*Members of Parliament may have a point because one does not just say things; I mean Members of Parliament (MPs) are adults and not children; they cannot just thumb suck things.*

This statement implies that what is said by MPs is actually true; however, respondent Y does not want to state clearly that MPs are correct in their assertions. The respondent concurs indirectly with the Members of Parliament in their assertions.

However, respondent X concurs with respondent Y when he says: “on the other hand some of the complaints have merits”. Meanwhile, respondent X again used a defence mechanism by saying:  

*MPs do not use their indigenous languages because they do not have confidence in interpreters.*

The above quote implies that African language speaking MPs use English when presenting their speeches and the day they decide to use African languages to present their speeches, interpreters do not have the appropriate vocabulary in their disposal for them to smoothly flow into English because 95% of their interpreting is from English into their respective African languages. Respondents X further mentioned a very interesting point that:  

*A Member of Parliament (MP) will decide not to use an indigenous language to deliver his/her full speech just because he has no confidence in the interpreting system.*

This assertion by respondent X – that MPs have no confidence in the interpreting system – clearly implies that there is a serious problem with interpreting in Parliament, particularly interpreting from indigenous languages into English, and that
that problem is the reason African language speaking MPs prefer to use English to deliver their speeches.

On the second question regarding the quality of simultaneous interpreting in Parliament, respondent X says:

*It varies from language to language, from person to person and it also varies from day to day.*

This implies that the quality should not be generalised but should be judged according to its different perspectives. As respondent X further says that:

*On a given day the interpreter may deliver excellent product, two days later in another debate the same interpreter may deliver horrible product.*

This implies that days and topics of debates are not always the same. On the other hand respondent Y says “Only quality that is measured is quite good”. Respondent Y refers to the interpreting quality that is being evaluated on the spot while interpreters are busy interpreting, because after the interpreting session the evaluator gives feedback to the interpreter for future performance improvement. However, that does not happen often. Respondent Y further says:

*But there could be some challenges here and there, for instance, one gets interpreters who get their first training of interpreting when they start working at Parliament, since simultaneous interpreting is not common and there are not enough qualified interpreters.*

Most interpreters get exposed to simultaneous interpreting for the first time when they arrive at Parliament, the respondent further states that they train these interpreters during the sittings of Houses, because there is no any other place or time during which to train interpreters except at Parliament during the proceedings of the Houses of Parliament. Respondent X is of the view that quality interpretation depends on the temperament for interpreting, as he says:

*It does not matter how much training one gets and how much practice one gets, one will not improve, because one needs to have the attitude and temperament of saying interpreting is not difficult then one will make a good interpreter.*
Respondent X implies that one must have a passion that will drive him/her to deliver better quality of interpreting. In other words respondent X means training is not vital to better quality of interpreting services. This point will be argued later.

Respondent Y is of the opinion that interpreters who are said to be delivering poor quality are those who are still new in the field and such interpreters are not familiar with the subject specific terminology. Respondent X is of the opinion that interpreting improves with practice and that he knows of some good interpreters and yet there are average interpreters. Respondent X clearly does not view training as a vital instrument of better quality in interpreting services. (See addendum D Controller’s interview copy).

On whether interpreters receive reasonable training that enables them to deliver better quality of interpreting services, respondent X says that, “training should assist in the delivery of better quality of interpreting services”. However, he also feels that theoretical knowledge without practical training does not guarantee good quality of interpreting services. On the other hand respondent Y refers to mentoring offered by Senior Language Practitioners (SLPs) and peer to peer mentoring as the best training that can be given to interpreters. Respondent Y says:

No formal training is offered in Parliament, and interpreters have to understand why certain things are done.

On the other hand respondent X concurs that formal training enables interpreters to deliver better quality, but it must be coupled with practice. Respondent Y says:

The only interpreters who benefit from formal training are those registered with institutions of higher learning.

It is clear from these respondents’ responses that Parliament’s Language Services Section does not offer training to interpreters in either theory or practice. And the fact – that they never receive any training in interpreting – is confirmed by 65% of interpreter respondents. Now the question is, how can they be expected to deliver good quality of interpreting services if they are not given training? What happened to the annual budget allocated for training of interpreters, particularly in interpreting?
However, the last question does not fall within the scope of my study I will leave it at that point.

On the issue of what can be done if found that the quality of interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa is indeed not up to standard, the respondents had to say the following: respondent X mentions the provision of speeches as a fundamental requirement for preparation in order to improve interpreting quality. On the other hand respondent Y mentions the provision of formal training as fundamental in the improvement of interpreting quality. Respondent X further mentions that some Members should be requested to read their speeches before they are delivered as the interpreter cannot be expected to make sense if the speech itself does not make sense. Respondent Y further says Members should be given workshop about interpreting services and brings the problem of code switching to their attention and to encourage Members of Parliament to use their languages so that interpreters can have enough practice in interpreting from their languages into English.

On the issue of Members of Parliament giving speeches to interpreters before hand, both respondents concur that provision of speeches will make a huge difference in the quality of interpreting as interpreters will be able to prepare themselves beforehand. However, both respondents are aware of the fact that Members of Parliament do not always stick to their speeches, but they say if an interpreter has an insight into the speech he will do better. On the issue of the speeches being embargoed until delivered respondent Y says the speech is not embargoed to interpreters, because interpreters form part of the profession, it means they form part of the confidentiality. For instance during the State of the Nation Address (SONA) and the Budget Speech, media people are locked in two hours prior to the start of the sitting. Interpreters should also be included in that lock in as they are people who will be interpreting that speech.

5.4 Recruitment of language practitioners in the Parliament of South Africa

When the first phase of Parliamentary Language Policy was implemented in 2004, the conception of a language practitioner in the context of the Parliament of South Africa implied that the candidate, if appointed, would have to render Translation, Interpreting and Reporting services as these are core functions of each Unit of the Language Services Section. For an example, if the candidate is appointed in the
Interpreting Unit, the candidate shall have interpreting as his core function, translation and/or reporting as his second and third Key Results Areas (KRAs). However, if a candidate is appointed in the Translation or Reporting unit such candidate has the liberty to choose one second KRA. Moreover, these current advertisements couple interpreting with indexing and indexing ideally does not belong with the Interpreting Unit, but suitably belongs to Reporting Unit. Indexing is said to be compulsory to each language practitioner, but interpreting is not compulsory to each language practitioner. This action creates some biasness against interpreters. The lesson learned during the Language Policy Implementation Project EU Study Visit (2007:13), as it was aimed at addressing the challenges experienced in the Parliament Language Services, is the best approach to follow, as it classifies Interpreting and Translation as separate Directorates in order to effectively manage the particular quality challenges facing them.

It is important to state that I was invited for short listing of two isiZulu LP positions, one in the Translation Unit and one in the Interpreting Unit. The procedure followed is that the co-ordinator announces potential candidates from the list of applicants that he has shortlisted to check whether other panel members had shortlisted the same candidates. Each panel member announces possible candidates he/she has shortlisted. The human resources practitioner records the common choices from all panel members. The non-submission of qualifications is not a disqualifying factor in this panel. In other words, if the applicants meet the requirements of the position according to his/her Curriculum Vitae, they are shortlisted irrespective of whether or not certified copies of the qualifications are attached.

Ten candidates were shortlisted for the two positions. It is a standard procedure that five candidates are shortlisted for one vacant position. I was again invited by the same panel to observe in the shortlisting of a Sesotho language practitioner (translator) position. The next shortlisting I was invited for to observe was for Sesotho language practitioner (translator). The panel coordinator requested each panel members to give five possible candidates by mentioning the names and numbers of such possible candidates, for example candidate X is number 1 etc.
After this shortlisting, I anticipated to be invited for the actual interview; unfortunately I was excluded when flight and accommodation bookings were made, as the interviews were to take place in Durban and Johannesburg. When I made enquiries about my exclusion from bookings, I was told by the HR representative that permission was only granted for me to observe in interviews held at Parliament and not outside of Parliament. This was not our initial agreement nor the same understanding because I had prior knowledge that most language practitioner interviews are not conducted in the Parliamentary precinct, but are conducted in various provinces as that is the normal practice of the Parliament’s Language Services Section.

I then wrote an e-mail to the Division manager in an attempt to clarify this confusion. I requested the intervention of the Division manager in this matter. The Division manager responded by saying “If I recall well, your observation of the interviews was granted on the basis that there would be no cost to Parliament”. She further says “If I understand your request now [it] is that you want Parliament to make you part of the panel that goes out to KZN and Limpopo for these interviews”? The Division manager articulated that if that is what the researcher wants, the Division manager cannot approve that simply because that would constitute unauthorised expenditure as my accompanying the panel does not relate to any functional area of Parliament or of the parliamentary administration. As a result, the Division manager referred me to Chapters 2 and 5 read with section 68 (1) of the Financial Management of Parliament Act, 2009 (Act No 10 of 2009).

The terms of reference of the interview panel, in which I observed, were to identify three suitable candidates. One post was for an interpreter in the interpreting unit and the other two for translators for the translation unit.

During my observation in the beginner interpreters’ interviews, the following were observed:

Before the start of the interviews, the panel coordinator distributed questions papers for the interviews, an English version for the interpreting test and English version for the translation test. This means the candidate is tested orally in English, which counts 50% of the total interview. The interpreting test from the candidates first language
into English counts 25% and the translation test from candidate’s first language into
English also counts 25%. The oral interview is categorised as follows:

1. The **profile** of the candidate is allocated 20%. In this category the candidate has to
present himself before the interview panel regarding skills, experience and
relevant qualifications in language, translation and interpreting field in an attempt
to convince the panel that he is superior to other candidates and that he is the most
suitable candidate for the position.

2. **Interpersonal skills** are allocated 10%. This category seeks to determine the
depth of the candidate’s interpersonal skills by asking the candidate to explain
what they would do if he and three colleagues were given a translation task of a
lengthy document, and they have a tight deadline. The scenario has it that the team
had divided the document into four equal parts but that the candidate notices that
one of his colleagues is not pulling his weight. He is always on the phone for
personal reasons and he is always absent from his work station for lengthy
periods. And it is clear to the candidate that his colleague is not likely to produce
quality work or meet the deadline.

3. **Ability to learn:** This question is allocated 10%. In this question the panel wanted
to know from the candidates about a situation in which the candidates had to learn
something difficult. This question is divided into four parts, as follows: (a) why
was it difficult to learn? (b) Why did the candidate have to learn it? (c) How long
did it take? And (d) what was the end result?

4. **Teamwork:** This is the last oral question asked by the panel to candidates. This
question is allocated 10%. This sought to discover the participation of the
candidate in a recent team effort. This question is divided into two parts, as
follows: (a) the role played by the candidate, (b) the outcome of the effort, and (c)
why that outcome?

5. **Interpreting test:** The interpreting test is allocated 25%. It takes place
immediately after the oral interview. It is explained to the candidate that a small
recording device will be used on which the candidate’s first language has been
recorded. While listening through headphones the candidate is required to
interpret simultaneously into English. Before the candidate start interpreting the
panel coordinator explains this to the candidate in words approximating the
following: “You should put headphone on your ears, you will hear a recorded
speech in your mother tongue and you must interpret it into English.” The panel
co-ordinator also explains the interpreting survival techniques to the candidate, as follows: “if you miss a word you must not dwell on that word because this is not a translation” and he does this in a very casual way. When the candidate starts interpreting the panel members consult the English version distributed by the panel co-ordinator to each of panel members. The panel also listens in order to check whether the candidate is accurately conveying the words written in the English text (which is the target language in this case.) If the candidate interpreted better the panel co-ordinator would immediately make remarks such as “you are trainable, you can do this”. What I found unfair to the development or promotion of multilingualism, especially African languages, was the emphasis placed by the panel on the English language. The panel emphasises English as the main language to the detriment of other languages, as if interpreters are only going to interpret into English and not into their mother tongues.

The reality of interpreting in the Parliament of South Africa is that, in most cases, the language of the floor in both the National Assembly (NA) and National Council of Provinces (NCOP) is English and interpreters will then interpret into their respective mother tongues, which is any of the other nine South African indigenous languages. Only when the speaker from the floor uses Afrikaans or one of the African languages will an interpreter become a pivot, which means he will interpret into English. It is therefore commonly understood that most languages used for interpreting during sittings of both Houses of Parliament are the first languages of individual interpreters. However, during the interpreting test the panel does not test whether the candidate is competent in their first language; the panel only focuses on English.

My main objective was to observe on a panel which interviewed language practitioners for African languages. Unfortunately I was not given that opportunity by the panel co-ordinator and the Division manager. The reason I wanted to observe on an African languages panel is because complaints of poor quality interpreting services from Members of Parliament are based on the interpretation from African languages into English; Members do not have a problem with Afrikaans interpretation.
5.5 Recording of the source and target language
I also recorded the speakers’ and interpreters voices simultaneously as a requirement for me to complete this study. (See addendum E again for speakers and interpreters’ transcriptions copies). This was a big challenge for me since there is no dual recording machine in Parliament of South Africa. However, as I am a practising interpreter researcher, I attempted a plan which made it possible for me to record both voices of the speaker and the interpreter simultaneously. Though the instrument I have used does not guarantee 100% quality of recording, it was a good attempt, which I hope, in the absence of the dual recording machine, can assist in interpreters’ performance self evaluation. I have used my own recording device to execute this assignment. Full details are given in page 63 to 64 of this Chapter.

5.6 Analysis of recording:
As an experienced interpreter in both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting I am of the view that it should be considered that simultaneous interpreting is very challenging in comparison with consecutive interpreting. However, if one can master consecutive interpreting it becomes easier to interpret better in simultaneous interpreting. The interpretation of interpreter A shows that even if one can be a seasoned interpreter there is no guarantee that one will always flow and interpret accurately in simultaneous interpreting. As Gile (1995: 165) correctly states:

“The fact that most interpreters sometimes have great difficulty in comprehending and the fact that virtually all people make many false starts, adds ums and ahs, and speak ungrammatically, suggest that production may be making quite a number of very substantial demands on our linguistic systems.”

For example, when an interpreter A is interpreting from English into isiNdebele and he/she is a seasoned interpreter in simultaneous interpreting and prior to interpreting, interpreter A used to be a teacher, obviously teaching language. Having been a teacher of language does not always guarantee better language interpreting, because interpreting has its own dynamics that one has to know in order to deliver a better quality interpreting service, and such dynamics are acquired through training. Interpreting needs a total concentration. For instance interpreter A, starts on a wrong note: When the speaker says “Deputy Speaker” the interpreter says “Deputy
Minister”. This clearly shows a lack of concentration in the interpretation from the part of the interpreter.

Interpreter A keeps on using the word “UmThethomgomo” for the word “Bill” throughout the interpretation session, instead of using the word “umThethomlingwa”. This is misleading to the listener, and affects the quality of the interpreting services. This tendency also renders interpreting inefficient. For an example, interpreter A has a tendency of saying “Begodu” which means “and” even where it is irrelevant, like in this case, the speaker says “firstly, secondly, thirdly……” interpreter A says “begodu, begodu, begodu……” which means “again, again, again…..”. There is also some omitted information from the interpretation of the interpreter, for example, in paragraph 4 of the addendum “ihlangano, abajameli bayo” “the representatives of the organisation” this phrase is one of the examples of the omissions in the interpretation of interpreter A. Other omissions are in “italic” for the ST and TL in addendum G. Some words are wrongly used by interpreter A, such as “abakhethwa” referring to “candidates”. An isiNdebele listener will be surprised to hear this word in the context of the election debate, because this word means “initiates” as in initiation school in isiNdebele. The correct word for “candidates” in isiNdebele is “abonkhethani”. See addendum F and G transcriptions copy.

During the recording of Interpreter B’s interpretation I discovered many errors, omissions, additions and lack of coping skills. For instance, this is an excerpt from the first paragraph of hon Maunye’s speech: “today’s debate is about deepening democracy and the pivotal role that the ANC has played in bringing into reality the ability of all South Africans to elect a representative local government of their choice” The interpreter interpreted this paragraph as follows: “ikulumo-pikiswano yanamhlanjesi ingokudephisa intandoyenengi eqakathekileko eyenziwe yi-ANC, ekuletheni ikghono kobana woke amaSewula Afrika akhethe abajameli bawo kuRhulumende wemakhaya.” When this interpretation is translated back to English it says the following: “today’s debate is about deepening important democracy which was brought about by ANC, in order to bring ability for all South African to elect their representatives in local government”. The speaker never said “important democracy”. This is the interpreter’s addition. The speaker speaks about the “pivotal role” played by ANC, and the interpreter has omitted that. In the same paragraph the
interpreter says “ekuletheni ikghono kobana woke amaSewula Afrika akhethe abajameli bawo kuRhulumende wemakhaya” which means “in bringing the ability of all South Africans to be able to elect their representatives in local government”.

However, the correct interpretation of this paragraph should have been as follow “ikulumo-pikiswano yanamhlanjesi imalungana nokudephisa intandoyenengi godu nendima eqakathekileko eyadlalwa yi-ANC ekukghonakaliseni kobana amaSewula Afrika akwazi ukukhetha urhulumende wekhaya ojamelekileko amthandako”. This would have been a good interpretation which precisely conveys what is said by the speaker. These are factors which render interpreting quality to be poor from the user’s perspective. However, it is difficult for the interpreter to improve from making such errors if he/she is not trained in the field of interpretation, especially simultaneous interpreting. (See addendum E again for copy of source text transcription).

The above are but a few examples of errors made by interpreters in their interpretation in a normally paced speech which had no technicalities and no information density. One cannot generalise from one excerpt but at least this gives an indication of the performance of interpreters in Parliament.

6. Key findings

6.1 Discussion of key findings

My primary aim in this study was to investigate whether the quality of the interpreting rendered in the Parliament of South Africa is up to standard. (See 1.4).

Lesch (2010: 42) in his article states that “Real world quality should thus begin with the client’s needs and end with the client’s perception – also in the case of Parliament”. It is against this backdrop that I have chosen this topic in order to address the primary client’s ongoing complaint about the poor quality of interpreting services in the national Parliament of South Africa. Primary clients in the context of Parliament refer to Members of Parliament (MPs) and secondary clients refer to the general public. However, my main focus on this study was on the primary clients, interpreters and their controllers. Lesch further states that “Both professional interpreters and clients should therefore take an interest in quality assurance policies
and guidelines” (Lesch 2010: 42). This statement implies that interpreters should capacitate themselves to always have the ability to deliver quality interpreting services to their clients. On the other hand, clients should be in a position to accept and appreciate the good quality of interpreting rendered by interpreters. However, the question of how interpreters could capacitate themselves when they are being denied training opportunities remains? As my findings reveal, that 65% of the sample of interpreters in Parliament had not received any training in interpreting, yet they are expected to delivery quality interpreting services to Members of Parliament and the general public. (See table 8).

6.2 Training of interpreters
According to Pöchhacker (2002: 189) AIIC has at a very early stage of the 1960s, stipulated that courses in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting should be designed and taught by practicing conference interpreters (cf Mackintosh 1995: 124). In my study I found that some interpreters’ supervisors/controller are against the idea of sending interpreters to formal training courses, as they are of the opinion that peer-to-peer training and Senior Language Practitioners’ on-the-job mentoring and coaching is effective in producing better quality interpreting as long as the interpreter has the temperament for interpreting. It is my contention that this attitude and approach lies at the heart quality in interpreting services in Parliament.

Gile (1995: 3) says formal training is important to assist individuals who want to become professional interpreters to enhance their performance to the full realisation of their potential. From the assertions of these theorists it is clear that training coupled with professionalism will have result in better quality delivery of interpreting services in the National Parliament of South Africa. The findings of my study showed that 65% of the sample of interpreters had joined Parliament without any interpreting skills, as most of them were recruited from the Department of Education where their primary duty was language teaching. The same 65% of interpreters never received formal training in interpreting after joining the Parliament of South Africa, and 90% of total population of interpreters consider training as ideal before assuming interpreting duties in Parliament, because they find themselves in a foreign environment and a foreign field of specialisation. 96% of the total sample of
interpreters in Parliament strongly believes that formal training will empower them to deliver quality of interpreting services to Members of Parliament.

Now the question is how language services management can expect interpreters to deliver quality interpreting services to Members of Parliament while they are aware that most interpreters had never received formal training in interpreting ever since they started interpreting in Parliament. Instead they have received training in aspects such as copy editing, indexing etc. which does not have much to do with the improvement of interpreting service quality.

Thirty-two per cent of the sample of Members of Parliament strongly believes that intensive training of interpreters in Parliament will enable interpreters to deliver good quality of interpreting services. Some Members even recommend that interpreters should actually be sent for training before commencing interpreting duties in Parliament. Lesch (2010: 57) says that one does not necessarily doubt the language abilities of an individual, but that individual functional abilities to interpret need to be nurtured and enhanced. In other words, this statement implies that language mastery alone does not necessarily make a good interpreter if one does not have the interpreting skills themselves. As a core functional area, interpreters need to be trained in order to acquire such skills for the better delivery of quality of interpreting.

Lesch states in his article that “It is essential that the users of the interpreting services should also become skilled in the utilisation of the service” (Lesch 2010:52). During the interviews with Controllers this researcher found that Members of the Parliament of South Africa have no knowledge of the interpretation services, as respondent X clearly stated that no one who wants to carry the responsibility of giving a presentation/workshop to Members about what interpretation is and how it should be utilised. Lesch, further says that the fact that Members of Parliament and the general public are not properly informed about the utilisation of the interpreting services places the interpreter in very difficult position and confirms the negative perception about simultaneous interpreters (Lesch 2010: 52).

I concur with Lesch in this regard because even if a technical problem occurs, such as listening devices malfunctioning, one would find some Members saying “There is no
translation, translators are sleeping”. Members use the term translation to express themselves because they do not know the distinction between translators and interpreters and they also do not know that interpreters have nothing to do with technical devices. This happens because no one is presenting workshops about interpreting services to MPs. This practice of not informing Members of Parliament about interpreting services still continues, despite the lesson learned during the Language Policy Implementation Project (LPIP): EU Study Visit’s Report (2007: 15) which clearly indicates that Member induction sessions are viewed as essential mechanisms to ensure that the role and method of how to effectively communicate in a multilingual environment – which includes interpreting – is understood and practiced. This can even be done by means of ensuring that a standard interpreting brochure with guidelines for Members using interpreting services is available on their intranet, and printed and distributed from time to time in Committee meetings.

Lesch (2010: 42) states that quality assurance has become an issue of the profession’s reputation as well as a basis for assuring good working conditions and adequate remuneration. My finding in this study reveals that working conditions in the National Parliament are not conducive to enable interpreters to deliver quality interpreting services, as 77% of the sample of interpreters said that working conditions in Parliament are not conducive to the delivery of good quality interpreting services. Eighty-four per cent of the total population of interpreters said that they are not treated as professionals by Parliament management, while 81% of the population of interpreters said that there is no good communication strategy in place to facilitate communication between them and their manager. In case of conflicts among the interpreters, the interpreting management is not able to resolve such conflicts. Management instead exaggerates the conflict. Eighty-four per cent of the total number of interpreters is totally dissatisfied with the salaries paid by the National Parliament to Language Practitioners. For example, a language practitioner is a specialist and his job is classified as a scarce skill, but his job is evaluated at C1. At the same time a Committee secretary, who is not a specialist and whose job is not classified as scarce skills, has his job evaluated at C3. This creates a big salary disparity between a language practitioner and the Committee secretary. This demoralises language practitioners and the quality of interpreting services suffers.
Seleskovitch (1986) and Gile (1991a) have concluded that interpretation users are liable to give misleading evaluations because they have different expectations. Respondent X, during the interviewing of the controllers said “I think some of the complaints are frivolous because Members do not fully understand the interpreting process which is available to them and how it works”. However, Members of Parliament assertions in this study are substantiated by the findings of this study which reveals that a majority of interpreters have joined Parliament without experience and some without relevant qualifications and skills and they were never sent for training up to now. How can it be possible to deliver quality interpreting without training, taking into consideration that simultaneous interpreting is a most complex and stressful task? Not everyone can master it; even some trained interpreters sometimes experience difficulty in producing quality interpretation. Therefore an untrained interpreter is worse.

6.3 Provision of Speeches

The provision of Members’ speeches beforehand is very crucial for the purpose of pre-interpreting preparation in order to deliver quality interpreting services. Lesch (2010) says “Members should be aware of aspects such as making speeches available to the interpreters prior to the delivery of their speeches” (Lesch 2010: 52). 5% of the total population of Members of Parliament in this study mentioned the provision of speeches to interpreters beforehand as another aspect which will enable interpreters to improve the quality of the interpreting service. Respondent Y in the interview of Controllers in par. 5 mentioned that Members of Parliament previously used to provide speeches to interpreters beforehand. The Controller indicates the need to revive this practice in order to improve the quality of interpreting in the National Parliament.

Lesch (2010: 39) in his article presents a critical overview of the implementation of the Parliamentary Language Policy with specific reference to the delivery of interpreting services in the Parliament of South Africa. Perhaps the complete implementation of the aforesaid policy would have yielded better quality interpreting services in the Parliament of South Africa. Until 2008, only 25% of the project was implemented, which means that only the first phase of the project was implemented. To date, the Interpreting Unit of the National Parliament still has 44 interpreters and
that has remained unchanged since 2004. The only difference is that seniors in each language group have been allocated, except for sign language which, to date, does not have a senior language practitioner.

Lesch, further states that “People feel more at ease in their native language and can express themselves and comprehend message best in their mother tongue” (Lesch 2010: 50). This study reveals that 18% of the sample of Members of Parliament feels more comfortable expressing themselves in their native languages. They however do not have confidence in the interpreting system, as they feel that the message they want to convey may be distorted when it reaches the user/listener. They therefore prefer to use English when delivering their speeches. Only a few Members use their native languages to deliver their speeches and first liaise with interpreters who speak their languages and provide them with speeches to prepare themselves. It is against this backdrop that Members of Parliament strongly recommend that interpreters should be provided with speeches before hand.

6.4 Limited Use of Indigenous Languages

Lesch (2010: 55) states that the quality of the African language interpreters has room for improvement because they have to interpret into their second language and not only into their mother tongue. This statement is correct in the context of the Taking Parliament to the People’s programme, the People’s Parliament programme, public hearing meetings and Parliament oversight functions which take place outside the precinct of Parliament. However, during the sitting of the Houses of Parliament interpreters, most of the time, interpret into their mother tongue as Members use English when delivering their speeches because they have no confidence in the interpreting system. Some languages are spoken by Members once in a while, which makes interpreters to interpret from their native language into English. The qualities of African languages improve tremendously, and when some interpreters have to interpret into English it becomes a challenge. This is the reason why 59% of the total number of population of Members of Parliament in this study indicated that they experience inaccuracies when the speaker from the floor speaks one of the indigenous African languages the speech is not accurately interpreted into English.
Chapter 6 of the Report of the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament (RIPAP) (2009: 72) supports Wigand’s report says that, in 2004 Parliament initiated the Language Policy Implementation Project in order to ensure that Parliament ultimately has the capacity to deliver all services in all official languages as well as sign language. It further states that the project seeks to significantly increase the number of language practitioners employed by Parliament and to employ additional infrastructure and technological support for language services. The statement above implies that the completion of the abovementioned project would see a staff complements of an additional 453 interpreters in Parliament, but that has not been realised to date. Hence there is a shortage of interpreters in Parliament which causes the existing interpreters to work long hours in the booth which, in turn, has a negative effects on the delivery of a quality interpreting service.

To prove that Members of Parliament may be correct when they say interpreting quality is poor, there is “Memorandum” of Concerns and Complaints Raised by the Parliamentary Oversight Authority (POA) (addendum H) referred by the Division Manager to the Language Services Section Manager. Clause 2 reads “Again the POA raised at its meeting the following concerns which fall within your Section’s responsibility:’ Clause 2.1 reads ‘Poor interpreting which is sometimes unintelligible to the extent that some members decide not to follow the debate than listen to the interpreters”. Clause 3 of the same Memorandum reads “I want you to provide me with the following:”, clause 3.1 reads “Your own findings based on observation on which languages are experiencing poor interpreting, reasons thereof and what you are doing to improve/rectify the situation”. Reading the abovementioned statements contained in a memorandum referred to the Language Services Section Manager, one realises that there is a very serious problem with the quality of interpreting, that the problem has been ongoing but that no one takes initiatives to improve the situation. (See addendum H copy of memorandum) I say this because Chapter 6 page 72 of the Report of the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament (RIPAP) says “While efforts are being made to expand the capacity and effectiveness of the Language Services Section and address the backlog in transcripts, it is apparent that major difficulties still remain” (RIPAP 2009: 72).
7. Summary

Quality in simultaneous interpreting is considered to be a very important aspect in Parliament in order to enable Members of Parliament to be able to express themselves in their native languages. This will on the other hand enhance the development of multilingualism in South Africa. In order to render this job activity efficient and effective for the purpose of building an efficient and effective people’s Parliament that is responsive to the needs of the people and that is driven by the ideal of realising a better quality of life for all the people of South Africa, interpreting unit should be able to provide good quality of interpreting services to both Members of Parliament and the general public. Therefore, the study has reveal that the majority of interpreters are not trained ever since they have joined Parliament, how can they then be able to deliver better quality of interpreting services to Members of Parliament and to all the people of South Africa. Much will be said in the summary and conclusion chapter, chapter five.
Chapter 5

Conclusion and Findings

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the quality of simultaneous interpreting services in the National Parliament of South Africa. It is my view that I have managed to achieve most of the objectives I have set for myself, except off course for the interview with the Interpreting Unit Manager, as I realised that he will not assist my study and also due to the fact that he retired in January 2011 before I could conduct my interviews.

In order to fulfil the aim of this study, the empirical research was conducted, with the involvement of primary clients (Members of Parliament) from whom complaints of poor quality of interpreting services emanated. Interpreters who are services providers of Members of Parliament were also involved in this study.

In order to get clarity in case the findings proved that interpreting services are indeed poor, interpreters’ supervisors/controllers were also involved in this study as they are first level supervisors of interpreters and they are said to control interpreting quality.

In the execution of this study, questionnaires were distributed to both Members of Parliament and interpreters, while controllers/supervisors were subjected to semi-structured interviews. Interviews of the beginner interpreters were also attended in order to investigate the recruitment procedures followed during the appointment of interpreters. A typical advertisement for language practitioner posts was reviewed. Testing of candidates for interpreting was also reviewed and two seasoned interpreters were recorded after which the recordings were transcribed in order to verify the quality rendered by existing interpreters in the establishment of Parliamentary Language Services Section.

Chapter one set the basis for the study and commenced with a view that interpreting services are poor in the National Parliament of South Africa. Chapter one of this thesis, particularly the introduction, firstly dealt with the vital role played by
interpreting services in the legislative processes of the Parliament of South Africa. Furthermore it outlined all events that Parliament engages on in order to fulfil its Constitutional Mandate. Chapter one also sketched the background of the Implementation of the Parliamentary Language Policy in 2004, in compliance with Section 6 (1) of Act 108 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996. Lastly this Chapter dealt with the study’s research statement and the hypothesis of this thesis and the aims of the study were clearly outlined.

Chapter two provides a review of international and local literature regarding simultaneous interpretation. This thesis dealt with the literature review relevant in the field of interpreting, especially conference/simultaneous interpreting. Chapter two, deals with the role of the interpreter and interpreting in South Africa. For instance consecutive interpreting was mentioned in passing as it is not the focus of this study. It also refers to simultaneous interpreting during the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings (TRC) from 1996 to 1998. Chapter two also dealt with the recruitment and training of interpreters, quality in simultaneous interpreting, conditions affecting quality. Finally, quality from different perspectives was reviewed: quality from the interpreter’s perspective, quality from the user’s perspective, quality from the speaker’s perspective and quality from the employer’s perspective.

Chapter three addresses the relevant language legislative framework. The main focus was on Section 6 (1) of the Constitution, which recognises the official languages of the Republic and Section 31 (1) of the Constitution which recognises cultural, religious or linguistic communities who should not be denied the enjoyment of their culture, the practice of their religion or the use of their languages.

Chapter four firstly explains the methodology regarding empirical research and secondly analyses and interprets data collected during the empirical research. During empirical research, data was collected by means of questionnaires distributed to Members of Parliament, from questionnaires distributed to interpreters, from observing in the interview panel of the beginner language practitioners, from interviews with Control Language Practitioners and from the recording of SL and TL of the speakers and interpreters respectively. In my discussion I integrated theory and practice.
5.2 Findings of the study

The data in this study reveals the following:

1. Interpreting service is not up to standard: Empirical research in this study reveals that 59% of the sample of Members of Parliament has major problems with the inaccuracy of the interpreting services rendered in the National Parliament. (See table 4).

2. Training for interpreters: This thesis reveals that 32% of the sample of Members of Parliament recommends that interpreters should receive intensive interpreting training before assuming their interpreting duties. On the other hand, 65% of the sample of interpreters had joined Parliament without interpreting skills and they have never since received interpreting training. (See table 8) Therefore, this implies that the National Parliament Language Services Section operates with 65% unskilled and inexperienced interpreters. This substantiates the claim of poor quality of interpreting services by Members of Parliament. (See again table 8)

According to Gile (1995: 3) formal training is important to assist individuals who want to become professional interpreters to enhance their performance to the full realisation of their potential. These findings imply that the interpreting service at Parliament will tremendously improve if interpreters could receive formal training in interpreting. It is my view that training is vital for success and an organisation that does not pay attention or invest in training of staff diminishes its competitiveness over time. This is what is happening currently with the Language Services Section of the National Parliament as a result of failure on the part of management to realise that training is fully link to performance and is a key component in the delivery of quality interpreting services.

3. The provision of speeches: Currently interpreters are not provided with Members speeches beforehand for pre-interpreting preparation, and this thesis reveals that 18% of the sample of Members of Parliament is of the view that the provision of speeches
to interpreters could be one of the attributes to quality improvement in the interpreting services in the National Parliament.

4. Working conditions not conducive: 77% of the sample of interpreters reveals that working conditions in the Parliament of South Africa are not conducive for the effective delivery of good quality of interpreting services to Members of Parliament and the general public. (See table 9). This is also evident by the number of language practitioners leaving the National Parliament for local municipalities, provincial legislatures and UNISA respectively. It is against this backdrop that Lesch (2005) in his article emphasises the same question asked by Angelelli (2004:1) whether it is the case that interpreters, powerful individuals who have occupied centre stage since the origin of the cross-cultural communication, are mere language conduits, invisible parties in the communicative events. Lesch further asks why interpreters’ abilities to perform complex linguistic and information linguistic task are often taken for granted, underplayed, underestimated or ignored.

5. Recruitment of interpreters: During the empirical research in this thesis, it has come to light that interpreting and language development are not being taken seriously by language services management. This was evident in the panel in which I observed, no question regarding interpreting was asked by the panel to candidates, whereas one of the successful candidates will have to perform interpreting as his core-function. During interpreting tests only the candidate’s English language ability is tested while the candidate’s first language ability is not tested.

5.3 Recommendations

For the purpose of rendering good quality of interpreting services and the retention of skilled and qualified interpreters in the Parliament of South Africa, the following is recommended:

1. Training for interpreters: Possibilities should be exhausted for the beginner interpreters to first receive training on theory and practice of interpreting from an accredited training institution before assuming their interpreting duties in any of the Parliament Houses. Training of interpreters should be ongoing to keep up with the development trend in interpreting. Senior Language Practitioners (SLPs) should be
given ongoing quality control training on the principles and procedures of quality control.

2. Provision of speeches: As the findings reveal that the provision of speeches beforehand proves to be one of the attributes of good quality in interpreting services, it is recommended that the Interpreting Unit Management acquire Member speeches beforehand for interpreters to prepare themselves during their pre-interpreting meetings.

3. Working conditions: It is recommended that working conditions in terms of treatment of interpreters, communication, conflict management, grievance or disputes management and salary packages be improved, to create the delivery of better quality interpreting services in the National Parliament of South Africa.

4. Recruitment of interpreters: Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the recruitment of interpreters in the National Parliament of South Africa be taken seriously by coordinators and panels. Questions regarding interpreting must be asked of candidates. The first languages abilities of the candidates should also be tested as opposed to the testing of English only and a language-specific SLP of the candidates being interviewed should form part of the panel as opposed to any SLPs who are not conversant with the mother tongue of the candidates being interviewed.

5. Workshop for Members of Parliament: Emanating from this statement: *Members of Parliament (MPs) do not understand the interpreting process because MPs are not being given a workshop about interpreting services, for them to know how interpreting works"*. See addendum D. I recommend that Members of Parliament should be given workshop about interpreting services in the National Parliament, so that they are able to understand the importance and challenges of interpreting.

5.4 Further research in interpreting

With this thesis I would like to encourage practicing interpreters to conduct research in interpreting, especially simultaneous interpreting, as it is still has a lot of grey areas
in South Africa. I have realised that research contributes to the academic status of the interpreting profession, thus setting the scene for interpreters to be treated accordingly, rather than as linguistic helpers. This undermining of the status and importance of language practice is currently happening in the Parliament of South Africa and can be seen in the committee assistant’s positions that have been graded on the same salary level as that of language practitioners. Language practitioners are specialists in their own right, their academic requirements is a degree; committee assistant post’s academic requirements is a diploma. This is a clear indication that the Parliament Management still undermines language practitioners.
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Appendices