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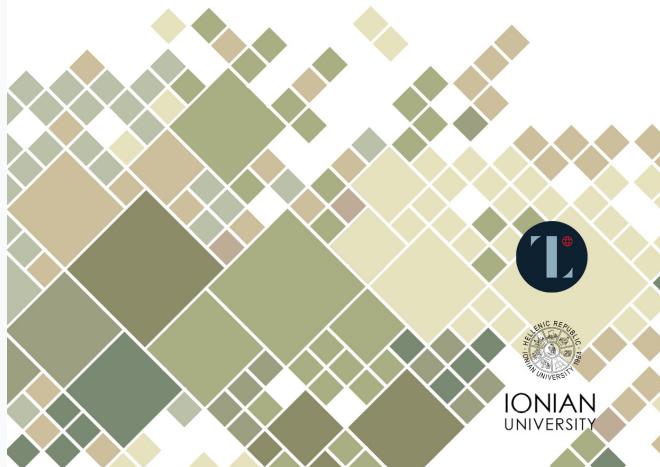


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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING: Paving the Way to Social Justice Through Professionalization

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### Interpreters' Perspectives on Court Interpreting in Abu Dhabi

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# Interpreters' Perspectives on Court Interpreting in Abu Dhabi: Challenges and Future Prospects

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## Abstract

*Court interpreting is a crucial aspect of the legal system as it is a guarantee for those who do not speak the language of the court to understand and effectively participate in the court proceedings. A court interpreters' job is to facilitate the communication between speakers of different languages to ensure a fair and just legal process. Given the fact that the UAE is multilingual and multicultural, it is assumed that court interpreting is an important area for study. This research sheds light on the current state of court interpreting in Abu Dhabi by examining the challenges faced by court interpreters and proposing practical measures to improve the quality of this industry. For data collection, a structured questionnaire using Likert Scale and some open-ended questions were given to a random sample of court interpreters in Abu Dhabi. The findings show that court interpreters in Abu Dhabi lack academic background and sufficient training.*

**Keywords:** Abu Dhabi Courts, court interpreting, interpreter's perspectives, modes of interpreting

## 1 Introduction

Interpreting is a mediated oral translation of oral discourse (Jones, 1998) and is now being taught at universities and educational and training institutions where interpreters receive enhanced training around the globe (see Zagood, 2020 and Bogucki, 2010). Interpreting includes different modes and types such as consecutive, simultaneous, liaison, and whispered. Liaison or community interpreting “takes the interpreter into the most private spheres of human life... it takes place in settings where the most intimate and significant issues of everyday individuals are discussed: a doctor's surgery, a social worker's or lawyer's office, a goal, a police station, or courtroom” (Hale, 2007:25-26). Legal interpreting is, therefore, a term that refers to any kind of interpreting that might take place in courtroom settings or other legal contexts such as law offices, law enforcement agencies, jails, prisons, police departments, immigration authorities, and barrister chambers (Mikkelsen, 2000 and Inghilleri, 2003). “Court interpreters work not only in courts of law but also in law offices, law enforcement agencies, jails and prisons, and other public agencies associated with judiciary” (Mikkelsen, 2017:1). Like interpreters in various fields, they are likely to encounter difficulties during their interpreting journey. In fact, these difficulties may lead to adverse impacts, especially in the legal field. Court interpreting is crucial to the legal system, as it guarantees that those who do not speak the court's language can understand and participate in proceedings. Court interpreters' job is to facilitate the communication between people who speak different languages and are involved in the trial to ensure a fair and just legal process. According to The Official Portal of the UAE Government<sup>1</sup>, there are more than 200 nationalities in the UAE. Needless to say that almost every nationality speaks a different language and has a different culture which makes interpreting a necessity in UAE courts. This necessity comes from the fact that the UAE is a multilingual and multicultural embracing society and most cases in the court are from different nationalities. As court interpreters are widely needed, some might be inexperienced. Therefore, it is essential for them to gain an in-depth understanding of this industry. While there has been much research on the challenges and problems encountered by interpreters from countries other than the United Arab Emirates, none has focused specifically

<sup>1</sup> <https://u.ae/en>

on the court interpreter's challenges in UAE courts except for Al-Tenaijy's (2015) PhD dissertation, which addresses the recruitment and training of court interpreters. To fully understand the reality of court interpreting, it is important to gain a complete picture of interpreters' knowledge, experience, and perceptions of the problems they face in courtrooms. This study examines the various types of problems encountered by legal interpreters in Abu Dhabi courts and explores potential solutions. It identifies key problem types, including cultural, psychological and linguistic challenges, demonstrating that these are the common issues faced by interpreters in Abu Dhabi courts.

Thus, the significance of court interpreters is undeniably vast. They are an important part of court sessions with people speaking multiple languages whether they are judges, lawyers, defendants, or even witnesses. Interpreters engage with a variety of people in the court system and can connect directly with the people they are working with, providing a vital link between that person and other court representatives. Each legal system has its own trial processes, legal principles, and terminology, which may not have cultural or linguistic equivalents, creating challenges for interpreters. (Estefani, 2020).

Unaccredited and unskilled interpreters can compromise interpretation quality, leading to serious consequences. For example, a judicial investigation into interpreting in one of Ontario's most multicultural courthouses disclosed that it had been using interpreters who were so completely unqualified that they consistently failed the provincial accreditation test and, in some cases, could not even read the language they were being paid to interpret (Morris, 2010).

This creates serious challenges and responsibilities for the interpreter, as they might face expected and unexpected challenges that they must deal with using their knowledge and experience as a professional legal interpreter. For example, facing new legal terms, dealing with formal and informal language at the same time, strict deadlines, etc. Providing an inaccurate interpretation may be linked with obstruction of justice charges, whether it be by the interpreter or by the witness. Hiring an interpreter without any indication of that individual's ability cannot be considered to meet the requirements for a fair trial.

Although such issues and challenges may vary depending on time and place, some of them are easy to predict while others require to be solved spontaneously. Abu Dhabi courtrooms are similar to those worldwide but also have unique challenges. Al Ain courts deal with people of several nationalities, making the interpreter take into consideration the challenge they are facing and requiring them to have an extensive background of different cultures and dialects. Moreover, the challenges that interpreters face in Abu Dhabi courts do not come to an end. Despite any difficulties, an interpreter is required to be dedicated to their job and to abide by their roles. Due to the limited information regarding the issues and challenges that interpreters face in Abu Dhabi courts, this research aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by court interpreters and the future prospects of the industry in Abu Dhabi. Thus, this study aims to

1. introduce the reality of court interpreting in Abu Dhabi.
2. identify the challenges encountered by legal interpreters in Abu Dhabi courts.
3. suggest some solutions for the challenges that court interpreters face in Abu Dhabi.

This study is, therefore, attempting to answer the following questions from Abu Dhabi court interpreters' perspectives:

1. What is the current state of court interpreting practices in Abu Dhabi?
2. What are the primary difficulties faced by legal interpreters working in Abu Dhabi courts?
3. What potential strategies can be implemented to overcome the challenges experienced by court interpreters in Abu Dhabi?

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Definition of Interpreting

As mentioned earlier, interpreting is the act of transferring messages verbally from one language to another. It is a mediated oral translation of oral discourse (Jones, 1998). Interpreting occurs in situations when groups of people do not share a common language. Interpreting takes place in a wide range of settings such as international conferences, business meetings, legal courts, and social events. The profession of interpreting is usually compared to the profession of translation. Unlike interpreting, translation is “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text” (Newmark, 1988:5). Both interpreters and translators require a set of skills to do their work such as knowledge of the two languages and cultures, effective communication, and comprehension skills. It is worth mentioning, however, that speaking two languages fluently is not enough to master such professions. Interpreting is of two main modes: conference and liaison. Conference interpreting is either consecutive or simultaneous. Consecutive interpreting is when the interpreter transfers the speaker’s messages orally after the speaker has paused. Taking notes in this mode of interpreting is highly essential as it helps the interpreter remember the speaker’s ideas and produces a meaningful message. Usually, this type of interpreting takes place in legal settings, medical appointments, and business discussions. Simultaneous interpreting, on the other hand, is delivering the speaker’s messages at the same time from one language to another. Interpreters usually carry out this type of interpreting in international forums and conferences. As the interpreter sits in a private room, s/he translates the speech into a microphone and the message gets transferred to the audience through headphones or loudspeakers. The second mode of interpreting, liaison interpreting, has appeared in different terms and “in ways that sometimes overlap or contradict: *ad hoc interpreting, community interpreting, public service interpreting, dialogue interpreting, biliteral interpreting, triad interpreting, discourse interpreting, cultural interpreting, intercultural interpreting, and intersocietal interpreting.*” (Tipton & Furmanek, 2016:3). While in conference interpreting the interpreter transfers messages in one direction only of language transfer, liaison (community, the term widely used) interpreting is bidirectional and the interpreter transfers messages in two directions, i.e., facilitates communication process between two monolingual parties. The context of liaison (community) interpreting is the provision of public services such as healthcare or community services to facilitate the communication process between monolingual communicators and in settings such as government agencies, community centers, legal settings, educational institutions, immigration departments, and social services (Wadensjo, 2001). It is worth noting, therefore, that “community interpreting or public service interpreting usually encompasses legal interpreting [including court interpreting] as one of its various settings.” (Mikkelsen, 2017:1). The term ‘Legal interpreting’ refers to all kinds of interpreting that take place in all legal settings such as interpreting in police departments, customs offices, and immigration authorities, etc. (Gamal, 2009). In court interpreting, the interpreter can transfer messages either consecutively or simultaneously based on the request.

## 2.2 Brief Historical Background of Court Interpreting

Interpreting is believed to be as old as language and “no one knows when interpreting began, but it surely dates back further than recorded history” (Mikkelsen, 2017: 5). Sarmiento Perez (2011) mentions that interpreters facilitated communication between Europeans and Africans groups in some areas including legal contexts in the fourteenth century. Colin and Morris (1996) cite some trials that took place between 1682 and 1820. In those trials, several languages were involved, and interpreting was a key element in the proceedings. In addition, Mikkelsen (2017: 5) states that “the most famous interpreted trials in history were those of accused Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg in 1945-46.” Recently, there has been an increasing demand for court interpreters since the world is becoming a small village and people have been travelling a lot for business, education, tourism, etc. Most countries around the globe started to appoint (freelance) interpreters in their courts to ensure fair trials and to meet the standards of human rights. However, no quality

standards have been imposed by governments/courts to ensure the quality of interpreters, instead, “the selection of interpreters has been left to the courts’ discretion” (Mikkelsen, 2017:7) albeit of the “increasing awareness of the need to ensure the quality of interpreting services in the judiciary” (Mikkelsen, 2017:7). As a result, many educational and training institutions have established programmes for training and qualifying interpreters, yet court interpreting is offered only as one or few courses. It is being said that Sweden is the first country where a training programme for community interpreters (including court interpreting) was established in folk high schools in 1968. Later, more (graduate) programmes for interpreter training were established in European and American Universities, for example, “the Monterey Institute of International Studies (now the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey) offered its first certificate course in court interpreting in 1983 as an adjunct to the Master of Arts (graduate degree) in Conference Interpreting” (Mikkelsen, 2017:9). Thus, the emergence of court interpreting training programmes at university level led to the recognition of court interpreting as an important profession for many bilinguals. However, there is still much to be done to organize such profession regarding the standards and qualities of court interpreters as well as their contractual conditions all over the world.

## 2. 3 Qualities, Skills, and Ethics for Court Interpreter

The profession of court interpreting requires that interpreters first acquire a great command of a given pair of languages and extensive knowledge of the legal system, local legislation, and cultural codes and customs of the country concerned. Court interpreters must also know the entire terminology specific to the field of law in question (criminal law, civil law, commercial law, etc.). Prieto Ramos (2021:128) states that “the consistency and accuracy of terminology are central aspects of translation [and interpreting] quality”. In addition, court interpreters must have great professionalism, ethical principles, oral fluency, as well as the ability to concentrate, and very good memory. They must indeed be able to translate complex dialogues with completeness and accuracy to avoid misunderstandings or ambiguities between the parties involved in the trial. These qualities are essential because the slightest error in interpretation can compromise the quality of the exchanges between the interlocutors and the good understanding of the words of each party. Beitsch (2016:1) argues that “bad translation by court interpreters can turn misunderstanding into injustice”. Morris (1999) also states that interpreting is the face of justice. Therefore, interpreters are to master some qualities and skills which Gaiba (1998:47) summarizes as follows:

Given the stressful conditions of the job, interpreters had to have self-composure under pressure and the ability to concentrate in difficult situations. The job required the mental agility to hear and speak at the same time, and to adapt instantaneously to the stimulus of the source language. This means that interpreters had to be able to quickly find an alternative if the best translation did not come to mind, as they were not supposed to stutter or stop. They had to be able to make decisions quickly and accurately. The job also required great mental and physical efforts because of the need to interpret both speedily and accurately, and to adapt to the speed of the speaker. Finally, interpreters were required to have a good voice and clear enunciation, so that it would be easy to listen to them for hours at a time.

Additionally, court interpreters, among all professionals, need to adhere to ethics to preserve their professionalism, impartiality, and role boundaries. Beaton (2010:10) states that “because knowledge is power, true professionals adhere to ethics when dealing with clients in order to harness that power for good”. In addition, Hale (2007) mentions that the most frequent topics covered in industry-specific codes globally are confidentiality, accuracy, and impartiality/conflict. These three areas have also been thoroughly discussed by Mulayim & Lai (2019:59-63).

## 2. 4 Previous Research on Court Interpreting

Having consulted the available literature on court interpreting, a comprehensive review of research on legal interpreting conducted by Montoliva-Garcia (2018) was found. In this review, she described the evolution of research on legal interpreting from 2008 to 2017, and “analyses the trends emerging and the focal points of research activity in the field” (Montoliva-Garcia, 2018:38). She compiled publications on legal interpreting including court, police, prison, asylum, immigration and military interpreting; and then created a database in which 464 publications were collected and coded per setting and theme. The findings of this review showed that “the field features stark differences between settings, and the courtroom remains the most-widely researched field” (Montoliva-Garcia, 2018:56).

The above study shows that court interpreting is an important area of research around the globe. However, only two studies on court interpreting in the region were found and reviewed below which necessitates the need for the current study to identify the reality of this industry in Abu Dhabi.

### 2. 4. 1 Court Interpreting in the UAE

In a focused PhD dissertation investigating court interpreting in the UAE in terms of recruitment policies, training opportunities and quality standards, Al-Tenaijy (2015) discussed comprehensively the current situation of court interpretation in the UAE highlighting the civil legal system of the country. She mentioned that the country's civil courts deal with cases related to diverse types of issues and cases such as debt recovery, private suits, maritime, bankruptcy, and intellectual property. Most cases are submitted in memorandum form and are usually referred to multiple times before a verdict is issued (Al-Tenaijy, 2015). The UAE is a federal country made up of seven Emirates and the UAE Constitution provides that each Emirate has its judicial system. Hence, the capital of Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah, and Dubai have their independent judicial systems. The other four emirates, Ajman, Fujairah, Umm Al Quwain and Sharjah, have a single federal system (Al-Tenaijy, 2015).

Arabic is the official language of the UAE's court proceedings. Amharic, Baluchi, Bengali, Chinese, Dari, English, Ethiopian, Farsi, Filipino, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Madras, Malayalam, Nepali, Pashto, Punjabi, Russian, Sindhi, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu are among the 25 foreign languages used in court translating and interpreting in the country. In this study, Al-Tenaijy (2015) interviewed 14 court interpreters who were fluent in Arabic, the official language of the UAE and the working language of court interpreters. The interviewees were from both sexes: males (93%) and females (7%). The females were from Sudan, Iran, and Somalia and registered as full-time court interpreters nationwide.

The findings of the interviews showed that the court interpreters were from Pakistan (36%), India (21%), Afghanistan (14%), Egypt (14%), Iran (7%), and Bangladesh (7%). Al-Tenaijy (2015) also highlighted that apart from one, all the interpreters had more than three years of experience in court interpretation, nine had 4-10 years' experience in court translating, while four others had worked in courts for 14-20 years. When asked about their salaries, Al-Tenaijy (2015) mentioned that twelve participants provided information about their monthly salaries, while two remained silent. She added that federal court interpreters typically made less money than full-time court interpreters who served in local courts. Federal court interpreters earned between \$1,049 and \$1,232 per month, while municipal court interpreters earned between \$1,082 and \$3,787 per month. Al-Tenaijy (2015) also found that interpreters in the local and federal courts held a variety of job titles. Eight of the participants were judicial interpreters, one chief

interpreter, two daily clerks, two only interpreters, and one interpreter/court secretary (Al-Tenaijy, 2015).

As far as the interpreters' education is concerned, Al-Tenaijy (2015) found that not all court interpreters had university degrees and none of the participants was part of a professional translation or interpreting association. All the participants graduated from their undergraduate or graduate programs either domestically or abroad. Four of them held high school diplomas, while two of the interpreters had left school after their 10<sup>th</sup>-grade year. Only two interpreters had been certified. Nine of the interpreters had bachelor's degrees in the following subjects: Arabic language and literature, English language and literature, Sharia, and law and accounting. Three interpreters held master's degrees in the arts, two of them had a focus on Islamic studies and one on mass communication. No one had ever received official training to be an interpreter or translator. Only one respondent claimed to have graduated from Cairo University in Egypt with a diploma in English/Arabic Translation. Al-Tenaijy's (2015:148) concluded by stating that "there is a lack of systematized and consistent recruitment procedures, there is a need for specialized interpreting training, no effective professional organizations, underestimation of interpreter's role, low remuneration and for standardization."

The current study is different from Al-Tenaijy's (2015) study as she focused on recruitment, training, and quality standards while this study sheds light on the challenges encountered by interpreters in the court and the future prospects from the interpreters' perspectives themselves. In addition, Al-Tenaijy's study investigated the above-mentioned areas in the seven Emirates in the UAE while the current one is only limited to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi only.

#### 2.4.2 Court Interpreting in Oman

A comprehensive study on court interpreting in Oman has been conducted by Al Issaei (2007) who introduces the structure of legal tribunals saying that they have undergone a full transformation because of the new Judicial Authority Act. Accordingly, the three different sorts of courts in Oman include the primary courts (courts of the first instance), courts of appeal (courts of the second instance), and the supreme court (courts of last resort). Providing a thorough description of the Omani legal system in his doctoral dissertation, Al Abri cited in Al Issaei (2007) traces the different stages the Omani legal system went through before realizing its current condition. He asserts that there are two phases that we may distinguish: the time frame before and following the passage of the Judicial Authority Act (90/1999) that was passed in 1999. Al Issaei (2007) adds that the recent growth in foreign investment projects and the local economy in Oman caused a dramatic increase in the number of expatriates working in most of the country's private sector and consequently led to an economic recovery. This economic recovery has made interpreting and translation services indispensable. Due to the rise in court proceedings involving English-speaking nationalities, there is a clear need for English-speaking interpreters in legal settings. Accordingly, the Omani Ministry of Justice hired a new generation of capable residents to serve as court interpreters in the country's numerous legal courts (Al Issaei, 2007). He concludes his study by arguing that these recently hired court interpreters have been introduced to a new area of practice that they are unfamiliar with. They are unable to find any codes of ethics that govern the actions of their profession. Even their rights and obligations as court interpreters were unclear. Court interpreters, therefore, face a significant issue because of the lack of regulations in the field of court interpreting. Court interpreters in Oman have had to contend with an unclear job description as well as some unforeseen obstacles resulting from their working environment.

### 3 Methodology

The major purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the current reality of Abu Dhabi court interpreting, the challenges encountered by legal interpreters, and the potential future solutions for those challenges. This research adopts a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Ahmad et al. (2019) define qualitative research as gathering information and understanding a particular situation or explaining a particular phenomenon. Quantitative research, in contrast, emphasizes objective measurements and statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Based on observation and interpretation, qualitative research is used to get an in-depth understanding of human behavior, experience, attitudes, intentions, and motives to discover how people think and feel.

Since this study investigates the challenges encountered by court interpreters in Abu Dhabi, a questionnaire, which was piloted, is thought to be an appropriate method for data collection. The questionnaire is divided into three main parts: part one includes some questions on personal information and experience. Part two, using the Likert scale, is designed to include questions on the current state of court interpreting in Abu Dhabi, the challenges court interpreters encounter, and their prospects for the industry and how to overcome the challenges faced. Part three includes some open-ended questions to allow participants express their views more freely. The questionnaire was distributed to working interpreters in Abu Dhabi courts as they are the appropriate ones to answer such a questionnaire. Moreover, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic and the selected participants were given the two versions (English and Arabic) for their convenience and to also allow interpreters working in other language combinations with Arabic to answer it. A purposeful sampling method has been chosen to gather accurate results that answer the questions. This requires locating and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are particularly educated or experienced about a topic of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A consent letter and/or any required documents were sent to Al Ain courts for allowing the researchers to question the legal interpreters.

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants (sample) of this study are 10 working interpreters in the courts of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (cities of Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and Al Dhafra). They are of both sexes: males and females. The ideal approach to providing an accurate description of the characteristics of a group would be to collect data on the whole population. However, in some contexts, this approach to sampling is often impossible to frame out because it is costly and time consuming. In this study, the total number of court interpreters in Abu Dhabi was unknown (no official data found) and the aim was to distribute the questionnaire to as many interpreters as possible. However, only 10 participants were reached. Therefore, it is assumed that this sample is a representative one as the current study is limited to the one emirate, Abu Dhabi. The reason for choosing all reachable court interpreters in Abu Dhabi was to achieve accurate and reliable data. It is also assumed that all interpreters were expected to have been involved in interpreting various court proceedings from and/or into Arabic. Therefore, they were expected to be able to provide reliable data.

#### 3.2 Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed online in late 2022, as many communications shifted online after the COVID-19 pandemic. The administration was carried out under the supervision of the researcher. All participants were emailed before sending them the questionnaire link to seek their permission and agreement for participation. They were given enough time (based on the pilot study) to answer the questionnaire. No problems concerning the administration of the

questionnaire were reported. The purpose of the questionnaire and a confirmation for the confidentiality of their answers was clearly stated to make them provide reliable and valid results.

## 4 Data Analysis

Since the questionnaire used for data collection for this study is divided into three parts, the data analysis is also subdivided into three sections based on the parts of the questionnaire. The following is the analysis of the three parts:

### 4.1 Analysis of Part One: Personal Information and Experience

As mentioned earlier, ten interpreters participated in this study by filling in the questionnaire. However, for unknown personal reasons, only five (50%) of them answered the questions of part one. Accordingly, the following is the information received from the five (50%) participants:

- Age: the participants' ages ranged between 35 and 55 years old. One (10%) was 35, one (10%) was 36, one (10%) was 38, one (10%) was 48, and one (10%) was 55; while five (50%) did not provide their ages.
- Gender: Three (30%) were female interpreters, two (20%) males, and five (50%) did not provide such information.
- Nationality: the participants who provided this information belonged to five different countries: one (10%) was from UAE, one (10%) was from Syria, one (10%) was from Pakistan, one (10%) was from Egypt, one (10%) was from India, and five (50) did not mention where they were from.
- Academic Qualifications: one (10%) master, four (40%) bachelors, and five (50%) did not provide such information.
- Major: Only two (20%) of the participants were majored in translation, two (20%) majored in English language and Literature, one (10%) majored in Language and History; and five (50%) did not provide information on their majors.
- Years of Work Experience: the interpreter's work experiences ranged between 5 and 13 years. Two (20%) had five years of experience, one (10%) had six years of experience, one (10%) had seven years of experience, one (10%) had thirteen years of experience, whereas 5 (50%) did not provide such information.
- Language of Work: three (30%) only interpreted between English and Arabic, two (20%) also interpreted between English and Arabic but also between other languages too including Hindi and Urdu, and five (50%) did not mention their working languages.
- Full/part time court interpreter: the five participants (50%) who answered this part were full time court interpreters, whereas five (50%) did not mention whether they were full or part timers.

### 4.2 Analysis and Discussion of Part Two: The Likert Scale Questions

Table One below illustrates the findings of part two, Likert Scale Questions:

Table 1: Analysis of Likert Scale Questions

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%
1	I feel confident in my ability to interpret accurately in legal context.	5	50	5	50	0	0	0	0	0	0

2	I am familiar with the legal vocabulary and terminology used in courts.	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	I am aware of the ethical standards and guidelines for court interpreters.	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	I have received adequate training and support to work as a court interpreter.	2	20	7	70	0	0	1	10	0	0
5	I can remain neutral and impartial while interpreting in courts.	8	80	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	I can work under pressure and meet the demands of working as a court interpreter.	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	I am familiar with the cultural differences that may affect interpreting in courts.	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	I can maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of all parties involved in the trial.	8	80	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	I can handle unexpected or challenging situations during interpreting in courts.	4	40	6	60	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	I feel that my interpreting has had a positive impact on the court where I interpret.	5	50	5	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	I feel that the legal system in UAE values the role of court interpreters.	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	I usually attend local/ international training available to court interpreters.	2	20	5	50	2	20	1	10	0	0
13	I feel that I have a good working relationship with other court interpreters I work with.	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	I am satisfied with my work as a court interpreter.	5	50	5	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	I would recommend a career as a court interpreter to others.	5	50	4	40	1	10	0	0	0	0

#### 4.3 Analysis of Part Three: The Open-ended Questions

This part included four open-ended questions and the participants were given the freedom and space to express their views and perspectives on the current position of court interpreting and its future prospects in Abu Dhabi. In their answers, it seems that they agreed with their answers to the closed questions in part two. It is worth mentioning here that some participants answered this part in English and some others answered it in Arabic. Below is a summary of the participants' answers to the four open-ended questions:

1. What modes/types of interpreting do you offer in the court?

The participants offer different modes of interpreting in Abu Dhabi courts. They offer consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, and sight translation. In addition, they also offered phone interpreting during the lockdown caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

2. What challenges do you face in your work as a court interpreter?

Some participants identified dialectal differences as a major challenge in court interpreting. In addition, some mentioned that another difficulty faced was attending a trial as a covering interpreter, i.e., interpreting in a trial that started before and the interpreter has no idea about previous investigations of the case. Some also mentioned the ignorance of some defendants about civil and immigration laws.

3. What recommendations you may recommend/suggest for court interpreters?

Almost all interpreters agree that strengthening and enriching vocabulary is very important for court interpreters and highly recommended. Participants emphasized the fact that interpreters are to learn about civil and immigration laws as well as learning the dialects of the people involved in any trial. Moreover, they also suggested that interpreters needed to be aware of the cultures, learn interpreting strategies and techniques, strengthen their memories, and improving their note taking skills.

4. Any additional information you might think of?

In fact, most participants did not answer this question. However, the few ones who did mentioned that interpreters should not hesitate to consult peers or ask for clarification whenever needed during the trial. Additionally, they emphasized the difficulty of this job and consequently interpreters' mistakes are to be tolerated and considered as a part of the job.

## 5 Discussion of the Findings

Because the questionnaire used for data collection for this study consisted of three parts, the discussion below is divided into three parts too.

### 5.1 Discussion of Part One: Personal Information and Experience

The information provided about the participants is limited due to the small sample size and the fact that only half of the participants answered the questions might not provide enough information about court interpreters in Abu Dhabi. However, some tentative observations can be made:

1. The age range of the interpreters who responded to the questionnaire is between 35 and 55 years old.
2. Female interpreters represented 30% of the respondents while male interpreters represented 20%.
3. The respondents who provided information on their nationality came from five different countries: UAE, Syria, Pakistan, Egypt, and India.
4. Four out of the five respondents who provided information on their academic qualification have a bachelor's degree.
5. Only two respondents majored in translation, while the rest majored in English language and literature or language and history.
6. The work experience of the respondents ranged between 5 and 13 years, with the majority having less than ten years of experience.
7. Three respondents only interpret between English and Arabic, while two also interpret between English, Arabic, Hindi, and Urdu.
8. The five respondents who answered the question about full/part time court interpreting are full-time court interpreters.

It is, however, important to note that the findings are based on a small sample size and should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, the fact that only half of the participants answered the questions about part one may also limit the generalizability of the findings.

### 5.2 Discussion of Part Two: The Likert Scale Questions

The Likert analysis aimed to measure the level of agreement or disagreement of court interpreters with statements about their profession. The Likert scale used ranges from 1 'Strongly Agree' to 5 'Strongly Disagree', with a neutral option.

Looking at the results, it seems that the court interpreters generally have a positive view of their profession, with a majority either agreeing or strongly agreeing with most of the statements. Specifically, the court interpreters expressed a high level of confidence in their ability to interpret accurately in legal contexts (100% agreement) and remain neutral and impartial while interpreting in courts (80% agreement). Many of the respondents also felt that they had received adequate training and support to work as court interpreters (70% agreement). They were aware of the ethical standards and guidelines for court interpreters (70% agreement). The participants were also familiar with the cultural differences that might affect interpreting in courts (60%

agreement). However, there were some areas where the court interpreters expressed lower levels of agreement. For example, only 50% of respondents agreed that their interpreting had had a positive impact on the court where they interpret, and only 50% usually attended local/international training available to court interpreters. Additionally, 40% of respondents felt that they could handle unexpected or challenging situations during interpreting in courts, indicating that there may be room for improvement in this area.

Overall, the Likert analysis provided valuable insights into the perceptions and attitudes of court interpreters in the UAE. It highlighted areas of strength and areas where improvement was needed, which could help to inform training and professional development programs for court interpreters.

### 5.3 Discussion of Part Three: The Open-ended Questions

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of court interpreters in Abu Dhabi. The fact that the participants agreed with their answers to the closed questions in part two suggests that their views are consistent and reliable. The different modes of interpreting offered by the participants reflect the diverse needs of the court system in Abu Dhabi. The use of phone interpreting during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of adaptability and flexibility in the face of unexpected circumstances. The challenges mentioned by the participants, such as dealing with dialects and attending a trial as a covering interpreter, highlight the complexity of the court interpreting job and the need for specialized skills and knowledge. The recommendation to strengthen vocabulary and learn about civil and immigration laws and dialects emphasizes the importance of ongoing education and professional development for court interpreters. The emphasis on cultural awareness, interpreting strategies and techniques, memory skills, and note-taking skills also reflects the multifaceted nature of court interpreting and the need for interpreters to have a broad range of competencies. The suggestion to consult peers or ask for clarification during a trial highlights the importance of collaboration and communication among interpreters, as well as the need for interpreters to recognize their limitations and seek help when needed. The emphasis on the tolerance of mistakes also reflects the challenging and high-pressure nature of court interpreting and the need for understanding and support from all parties involved.

Overall, these results provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of court interpreters in Abu Dhabi, and highlight the need for ongoing education, collaboration, and support for interpreters in this challenging and important profession.

## 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of court interpreters in Abu Dhabi, particularly in terms of their personal information and experience, attitudes towards their profession using a Likert scale, and their perspectives on the job through open-ended questions. The findings suggest that court interpreters in Abu Dhabi generally have a positive view of their profession and their ability to interpret accurately in legal contexts. However, there are areas where improvement is needed, such as handling unexpected or challenging situations during interpreting and attending local/international training available to court interpreters. The study highlights the importance of ongoing education, collaboration, and support for interpreters in this challenging and important profession. It is important to note, however, that the findings are based on a small sample size and should be interpreted with caution. Further research with a larger sample size could help to build upon these findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of court interpreters in Abu Dhabi.

Based on this conclusion, the author would recommend the following:

1. Ongoing education and training: The study highlights the importance of ongoing education and training for court interpreters in Abu Dhabi. Therefore, it would be beneficial for organizations to provide regular training opportunities for their interpreters to improve their skills and handle unexpected or challenging situations during interpreting.
2. Collaboration and support: It is crucial to create a supportive environment for court interpreters in Abu Dhabi. Encouraging collaboration between interpreters and providing them with support can help them manage the challenges they face while performing their job.
3. Further research: While the study provides valuable insights, it is based on a small sample size. Conducting further research with a larger sample size can help to build upon these findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of court interpreters in Abu Dhabi.
4. International training: The study suggests that court interpreters in Abu Dhabi would benefit from attending local and international training programs. Therefore, organizations should provide their interpreters with opportunities to attend training programs to enhance their skills and knowledge in interpreting in legal contexts.

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