Challenges and Coping Strategies in English-Kiswahili Sermon Interpreting: Insights from Selected Pentecostal Churches in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Liyenja Mwinuka ⓘD
Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics
University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
mwinuka.liyenja@udsm.ac.tz

Abstract

This study investigated the challenges church interpreters encounter during English-Kiswahili sermon interpreting in Pentecostal churches in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Guided by Gile's (1995) Effort Models of Interpreting, the research employs a qualitative design to provide an in-depth analysis of the interpreters' experiences. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and video recordings in two purposively selected Pentecostal churches in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The findings reveal that interpreters often face significant challenges, including the rapid pace of preachers' speech, technical malfunctions in public address systems, the complexity of figurative language, and the physical and mental fatigue associated with prolonged interpreting sessions. These challenges frequently resulted in communication breakdowns between preachers and their audiences. To address these challenges, sermon interpreters adopted various strategies, including skipping certain parts of the message, summarising content, maintaining intense focus, and engaging in rigorous Bible study to enhance their understanding and preparation. Although these coping mechanisms were sometimes effective, persistent challenges often led to information loss and hindered effective communication. The study also highlights a significant lack of professional training among the interpreters, which significantly limited their ability to manage the challenges during sermon interpreting. Comparatively, the literature indicates that professionally trained interpreters are better equipped to address challenges during interpreting, benefiting from their advanced skills and specialised methodological training. Based on these insights, the study advocates for the development of specialised professional training programmes for interpreters in Tanzania. These programmes would equip interpreters with essential knowledge, advanced skills, and a strong ethical foundation, enabling them to deliver high-quality interpretations and ensure accurate and effective communication in religious and other social settings in Tanzania.
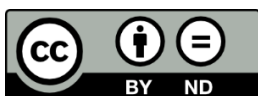
Introduction

In Tanzania, community interpreting predominantly takes place in church settings, where English and Kiswahili are the primary languages used for interpretation (Ngoda 2018; Mulundi 2021; Mwinuka 2022, 2023). This is particularly evident in Pentecostal churches, which often invite guest preachers who typically deliver sermons in English (Mwinuka, 2022). Thus, interpreting becomes necessary in these contexts since Kiswahili is spoken and understood by more than 90 percent of Tanzanians, while English is spoken and understood by less than 10 percent of Tanzanians (Petzell 2012; Tibategeza 2018). Consequently, as Mulundi (2021) asserts, sermon interpreters play a vital role in ensuring effective communication, enabling the audience to comprehend the preacher's messages and teachings delivered in English.

Effective sermon interpreting requires delivering a full and accurate message to the audience that depends entirely on the interpreter for comprehension. However, providing a complete message in interpreting is a very complex task, as Gile (1995) asserts that interpreting entails a large number of almost concurrent cognitive, psychomotor, and affective processes, all of which pose major challenges for the interpreter who has to deal with them simultaneously. These challenges may affect the quality of interpreting and, consequently, hinder effective communication between the preachers and the audiences.

Pentecostal church setting, the focus of this study, adds another layer of complexity to interpreting. Pentecostal worship is characterised by a dynamic and energetic style involving clapping, waving, raising hands, dancing, marching, falling in the Spirit, shouting, and a call-and-response form of preaching, often accompanied by spontaneous interruptions (Macchia 2006). These interruptions, such as audience members shouting, clapping, repeating the preacher's statements, or answering rhetorical questions, frequently disrupt the flow of sermons. As a result, sermon

interpreters face the daunting task of navigating rapid shifts in the mode of communication while maintaining the integrity of the message.

This study, therefore, was motivated by the fact that church interpreters are expected to meet the communicative goals, that is, relaying the message as it is in the source language into the target language despite all the complications originating from such dynamic sermon settings. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on Pentecostal churches to investigate the challenges church interpreters face during sermon interpreting and the coping strategies they employ to overcome such challenges. The investigation is guided by the Effort Models of Interpreting, developed by Daniel Gile in 1995, which describe the interpreting process as involving distinct but interconnected cognitive efforts: Listening and Analysis, Production, Memory, and Coordination. These efforts represent the mental tasks required to comprehend the source language, retain information, and reformulate it accurately in the target language while managing the overall process. The model emphasises that interpreting is a resource-intensive activity, and interpreters operate within limited cognitive capacity. When the demands of these efforts exceed this capacity due to factors like time pressure or complexity, errors or omissions can occur, consequently hindering effective communication. Gile's (1995) model provides a valuable framework for understanding and analysing the challenges interpreters face, particularly in high-stakes or demanding scenarios such as the Pentecostal church settings.

Methodology

A homogenous purposive sampling technique (Creswell 2018) was employed in selecting two Pentecostal churches in Dar es Salaam. The two churches were selected because they regularly invite guest preachers who preach in English with Kiswahili sermon interpreters as bridges. The researcher attended two Sunday services, one at each of the selected churches, where the guest preachers preached in English with the aid of Kiswahili sermon interpreters. While observing the two services, the researcher took detailed notes of all the observable challenges the two sermon interpreters faced.

Recording videos is a routine practice in the churches under review, typically done to maintain records of Sunday services. As such, the preachers and sermon interpreters were aware that the services were being

recorded, but they were not initially informed that the recordings would be used for research purposes. This approach was employed to avoid any potential changes in their preaching and interpreting behaviour, which could have impacted the data. After the conclusion of the two services, the preachers and sermon interpreters were asked by the researcher and the church leaders for their consent to use the recorded videos for research purposes. Both parties willingly granted their consent. Additionally, at the end of the services, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the two sermon interpreters to gather their profiles and obtain other information relevant to the study.

The interpreted records of the sermons were transcribed and analysed qualitatively. Through back translation, the researcher was able to compare the preachers' English utterances with their Kiswahili-interpreted counterparts. In the data presentation and analysis, abbreviations and acronyms were used: Inter. for the Sermon interpreter; Serm. for Sermon; P1, P2, and P3 for the first, second, and third preachers, respectively; INT1 and INT2 for the first and the second interpreter; and B.T. for back translation.

Profiles of Interpreters

The interviews revealed that the two sermon interpreters involved in the study were not professionally trained interpreters. None of them had received formal training in interpreting. Instead, they identified themselves as self-taught interpreters who developed their skills through personal efforts, including reading various books, listening to other interpreters, and studying the Bible, spiritual literature, and church manuals. Both interpreters emphasized that they rely heavily on their proficiency in English and Kiswahili to deliver quality sermon interpretations.

In terms of language proficiency, INT1 studied English as a subject from primary school through to university, whereas INT2 studied English from primary school up to high school. Both Sermon interpreters asserted that they were proficient in Kiswahili, as it was not only a language they studied at various levels of their education, but it was also the language of their

everyday communication. The interview also revealed that INT1 had seven (7) years of experience in church interpretation, whereas INT2 had five (5) years' of experience in the same. Consequently, the two sermon interpreters relied more on their language proficiency and experience rather than on skills that could be acquired through formal training in interpreting to provide quality Sermon interpretation.

Findings and Discussion

Preachers' Speed of Speech Delivery

The speed of message delivery, also referred to as the input rate, can be a challenge to interpreters. According to Pöchhacker (2015), both slow and fast speed message delivery can disrupt the processing and production of interpreting output and consequently can affect its quality. In this study, it was observed that the preacher of sermon 1 was preaching at a normal speed, which could not have disrupted the flow of interpreting if the sermon interpreter had been in sync with the preachers' speed. Despite the normal speed of the preacher of the first sermon, the sermon interpreter, in some instances, was too slow to cope with the speed of the preacher and hence ended up misinterpreting and skipping some of the preachers' messages. As a result, he affected the quality of sermon interpreting and consequently hindered effective communication between the preacher and the audience. Extract 1 illustrates:

Extract1: Serm. 1

> P2: But when I am looking at my result
> *Inter: Lakini nikitazama matokeo yangu*
> P2: **They do not correlate with my effort**
> *Inter: **Hayafananii na kazi yangu niliyokuwa nata…** (skipping)*
> B.T: **They do not correlate with my work that…** (skipping)
> P2: **How many people are ready for that change?**
> *Inter: **Watu wako tayari katika kuta…** (skipping)*
> B.T: **How many people are ready for**… (skipping)
> P2: This question must be answered in this conference
> *Inter: Hili swali lazima lijibiwe katika mkutano huu*

It was observed during the sermon interpreting that the sermon interpreter was slower than the preacher. As a result, the sermon interpreter failed to provide a complete rendition and ended up with an unfinished interpreting

output: "*Hayafananii na kazi yangu niliyokuwa nata…*" As can be seen in extract 1, such inappropriate and unfinished interpreting hindered effective communication between the preacher and the audience. To facilitate effective communication between the preacher and the audience, the sermon interpreter could have interpreted "*They do not correlate with my efforts*" as "*Hayaendani na jitihada zangu.*"

In the same extract, the sermon interpreter also skipped interpreting "*how many*" and "*change,*" which are the keywords in that preacher's particular utterance. Therefore, the sermon interpreter interpreted "*How many people are ready for that change?*" as "*Watu wako tayari katika kuta...*" which can be translated into English as "*People are ready for…*" which is an incomplete rendition of the original message. As per observation, the incomplete rendition was the result of the sermon interpreter's failure to match the rhythm of the preacher during the sermon interpreting. This affected the quality of sermon interpreting and hindered effective communication between the preacher and the audience. To facilitate effective communication, the sermon interpreter could have interpreted "*How many people are ready for that change?*" as "*Watu wangapi wapo tayari kwa mabadiliko hayo?*"

It emerged that the preacher of Sermon 2 delivered the message at a rapid pace, which significantly disrupted the flow of interpretation. Despite the sermon interpreter's efforts to keep up with the preacher's firing speed, there were numerous instances where the interpreter struggled to maintain pace. This resulted in misinterpretations and omissions of parts of the preacher's message, ultimately compromising the quality of the interpretation and hindering effective communication between the preacher and the audience. Extract 2 illustrates:

Extract 2: Serm.2

    P3: **It is not over**
    Inter: **Sio kila mmoja wetu**
    B.T: **Not every one of us**
    P3: **Until God says it is over**
    Inter: **Mpaka …. Imekwisha** (skipping)

B.T: **Until… it is over** (skipping)
P3: **It is not over!**
Inter: Sio kila mmoja wetu
B.T: **Not every one of us**
P3: Until God says it is over
Inter: Mpaka Mungu aseme kwamba imekwisha
P3: **The devil is a liar**
Inter: Jehovah ni muongo
B.T: **Jehovah is a liar**

Observations revealed that the preacher delivered the sermon at an extremely high speed, making it difficult for the sermon interpreter to capture all the words spoken. Despite repeated efforts to keep up with the preacher's pace, the interpreter was unable to do so consistently. This led to the production of interpreting outputs that were frequently inaccurate and inconsistent with the preacher's message. As can be seen in extract 2, in which the preacher said, "*It is not over,*" this was interpreted as "*Kila mmoja wetu,*" which can be back-translated into English as "*Every one of us,*" which is a completely different message from that of the preacher. As a result, there was a breakdown of communication between the preacher and the audience. To facilitate effective communication between the preacher and the audience, the sermon interpreter could have interpreted "*It is not over*" as "*Haijakwisha.*"

Additionally, in extract 2, because of the high preaching speed, the sermon interpreter failed to interpret appropriately the preacher's utterance, "*The devil is a liar.*" As a result, the sermon interpreter interpreted the preacher's utterance "*The devil is a liar*" as "*Yehova ni Muongo,*" which can be back-translated into English as "*Jehovah is a liar.*" The Kiswahili rendition of "*Yehova ni muongo*" not only contradicts the preacher's intended message but also confuses the audience, including those who did not understand the original English statement. For Christians, Jehovah represents holiness and truth, as He is the central figure of their faith. Therefore, the phrase "*Jehovah is a liar*" is deeply perplexing and unsettling, as it directly opposes their beliefs and understanding of Jehovah's character. However, as per observation, the sermon interpreter interpreted "*The devil is a liar*" as "*Yehova ni muongo*" unintentionally because the preacher was preaching at a very fast speed; thus, it was not easy for the sermon interpreter to catch up with the preacher's speed. As a result, the sermon interpreter ended up

misinterpreting the preacher's message and consequently affected the quality of sermon interpreting. To facilitate effective communication between the preacher and the audience, the sermon interpreter could have interpreted "*The devil is a liar*" as "*Shetani ni muongo*".

Furthermore, in extract 2, the sermon interpreter skipped some of the preacher's phrases because the preacher was preaching at a very high speed. In extract 2, the preacher said, "*Until God says it is over*." the sermon interpreter interpreted it as "*Mpaka … imekwisha*," which can be translated into English as "*Until… it is over*". The sermon interpreter did not interpret the phrase "*God says*," which is a key phrase in that preacher's utterance. Thus, the sermon interpreter was telling the audience that "*until it is over*" without telling them who says so. Until it is over and until God says it is over are two different messages, especially to the Christians. Thus, the sermon interpreter not involving God in his interpreting output hindered effective communication between the preacher and the audience.

The fast speed of the preacher in sermon 2 also led the sermon interpreter to produce some incomprehensible interpreting output. Extract 3 illustrates:

Extract 3: Serm.2
> P3: **The word rise**
> *Inter: Anguka*
> B.T: **Fall**
> *P3:* **It means to make a soul decision**
> *Inter: (mmmxxx)*

The preacher in extract 3 said, "*The word rise*", the sermon interpreter interpreted it as "*anguka*" which is not appropriate. This is because "anguka" means "*fall*" and "rise" means "*inuka*" (see TUKI 2000). Therefore, while the preacher was telling the audience to rise, the sermon interpreter communicated to the audience about falling, which is a contradicting message. However, as per observation, such inappropriate interpreting of vocabulary was a result of the very fast speed of the preacher which gave the interpreter very limited time to comprehend the preacher's vocabulary before interpreting them into Kiswahili. Because of the fast speed of the

preacher, the sermon interpreter was also heard interpreting "*It means to make a soul decision*" as *(mmmxxx)* which did not make any sense at all. Therefore, because of the fast speed of the preacher, the sermon interpreter failed to effectively render the preacher's message to the audience and consequently affected the quality of sermon interpreting. To facilitate effective communication between the preacher and the audience, the sermon interpreter could have interpreted "*It means to make a soul decision*" as "*Inamaanisha kufanya uamuzi ndani ya nafsi yako.*"

During the interviews, the two sermon interpreters highlighted the tendency of preachers to increase their speaking speed, particularly when they became carried away during preaching. They confirmed that when preachers delivered their messages at a fast pace, it often led to overlap between the preacher's speech and the interpreter's delivery. This overlap created confusion, resulting in noise and unclear messages, which affected the overall clarity and effectiveness of the interpretation.

When asked how they managed the challenge of preachers' fast speaking speeds during sermon interpretation, the two sermon interpreters explained that they typically coped by prioritizing the general message rather than attempting to interpret every word spoken by the preacher. They admitted that the rapid pace often compelled them to skip sections of the message, summarize, or simplify the content. INT1 stated, "*When the preacher is preaching at high speed, I normally skip some of the seemingly irrelevant aspects and interpret only the seemingly important aspects of the preacher's speech.*" This indicates that INT1 focused on interpreting only what he deemed contextually important within the sermon. Similarly, INT2 remarked, "*When the preacher is preaching at high speed, I often cope with his/her speed by not interpreting everything but conveying the general message.*" Skipping, generalizing, simplifying, or summarizing were the interpreters' primary strategies for handling fast-paced sermons. However, these methods proved ineffective as they often resulted in the omission of key messages, ultimately diminishing the quality of the interpretation. This, in turn, hindered effective communication between the preachers and the audience.

The findings of this study indicate that fast-speed delivery affected the quality of sermon interpreting. The findings of this study align with previous research by scholars such as Biamah (2013), who identified the

speed of speech delivery as a critical challenge in interpretation. Biamah (2013) emphasizes that interpreters often struggle to keep up with fast-paced speakers, leading to omissions, inaccuracies, or generalizations in their output, which compromises the overall quality of communication. The findings of this study also align with Gile's (1995) Effort Models of Interpreting, which emphasize the cognitive challenges interpreters face in managing listening, memory, production, and coordination efforts under time constraints. The high speed of preachers disrupted the interpreters' ability to process and deliver messages effectively, leading to omissions, misinterpretations, and incomplete outputs. These difficulties reflect cognitive overload, where the demands of interpreting exceed the interpreters' capacity, hindering the overall quality of communication. The findings highlight the importance of ensuring synchronization between the preachers' speech tempo and the interpreters' capabilities to facilitate effective communication.

Fault of the Public Address Systems
The use of public address (PA) systems in churches is typically determined by the size of the building and the congregation. Larger churches with sizable congregations generally use PA systems, while smaller churches with fewer followers may not (Biamah, 2013). Both churches included in this study utilized PA systems. However, during interviews, the two sermon interpreters reported that technical issues with the PA systems frequently occurred, often hindering effective communication between the preachers and the audience. Observations of the two English-Kiswahili sermon interpretations confirmed this, revealing multiple incidents where the PA systems failed. These failures resulted in the voices of both the preachers and the interpreters becoming inaudible at times, leading to a complete breakdown in communication between the preachers, interpreters, and audience. Extract 4 illustrates:

Extract 4. Serm. 1
> P2: I want **...** Dr. Ikemefuna (**fault of the microphone**)
> *Inter: Nataka nimtambue Dkt. Ikemefuna*
> B.T: **I want to recognise Dr. Ikemefuna (pseudo name)**

P2: Stand up, he came with his wife
Inter: **Pamoja na mke wake**
B.T: **With his wife**
P2: Mrs. Ikemefuna, can you stand up so that they can see you
Inter: naomba **... (fault of the microphone)**
B.T: **Please… (fault of the microphone)**

Extract 4 highlights a fault in the preacher's microphone during the sermon. While the preacher continued speaking, the microphone suddenly stopped working, resulting in the audience being unable to hear the message. Only the sermon interpreter, who was standing next to the preacher, could hear what was being said. The preacher said, **"***I want … Dr. Ikemefuna***"**. Because the sermon interpreter was close to the preacher, he therefore heard what the preacher said. The sermon interpreter interpreted the preacher's message to the audience as "*Nataka nimtambue Daktari Ikemefuna,*" which can be translated into English as "*I want to recognise Doctor Ikemefuna*". The same extract also highlights a fault in the sermon interpreter's microphone. Although the preacher's message was interpreted, the audience was unable to hear the interpretation due to the malfunctioning microphone, resulting in a breakdown of communication. The preacher said, "*Mrs. Ikemefuna, can you stand up so that they can see you.*" Because of the fault of the sermon interpreter's microphone, only "*Naomba…*" was heard by the sermon interpreter, which is an incomplete message. Such faults in the PA system posed significant challenges during the interpretation of the two sermons. These technical issues disrupted effective communication, not only between the preacher and the interpreter but also between them and the audience.

Observations revealed that PA system faults occurred repeatedly during both English-Kiswahili sermon interpretations. Extract 5 illustrates:
Extract 5: Serm.2
P2: And he is the preacher of God
Inter: Lakini pia ni mhubiri wa injili
P2: Hallelujah
Inter: Haleluya
P2: He is based in the Northwest province of South Africa
Inter: **Yeye yuko katika lile jimbo la … (fault of the microphone)**
B.T: **He is in the province of… (fault of the microphone)**

In extract 5, the preacher was introducing another preacher to the audience, stating, "*He is based in the Northwest province of South Africa.*" The sermon interpreter interpreted it as "*Yeye yuko katika jimbo la…*" which can be translated into English as "*He is from the province of …*" The observation revealed that although the sermon interpreter completed the communication to the audience, the message was not heard due to a fault in the PA system. This malfunction caused a breakdown in communication between the preacher and the audience. Without the microphone issue, the interpreter's rendition could have been heard as "*Anaishi katika jimbo la Kaskazini Magharibi mwa Afrika Kusini.*" This Kiswahili interpretation would have facilitated effective communication between the preacher and the audience.

The challenge of the PA system is also related to the way it is set in the church. INT1 explained, "*The speakers in the churches are set for the audience and not for interpreters, so sometimes the interpreter may not hear the preacher well because the speakers are directed towards the audience rather than the interpreter.*" This setup often prevents the interpreter from hearing the preacher clearly, leading to communication breakdowns between the preacher and the interpreter. Furthermore, INT1 noted that although the churches he serves are not designed with facilities to host conferences, they frequently do so. The lack of an appropriate PA system for conference settings often causes echoes during such events. These echoes not only make it difficult for the interpreter to hear the preacher clearly but also hinder the audience's ability to understand the interpreter. This recurring issue poses a significant challenge, frequently resulting in communication breakdowns.

To address challenges with the PA system, the two sermon interpreters explained during the interview that they often consulted the public address system personnel to resolve any technical faults. INT1 added that he would sometimes ask the preacher to pause the sermon to allow the personnel to fix the problem. INT2 shared that when echoes occurred, making it difficult to hear some of the preacher's words, he would ask the preacher to repeat those words to ensure accurate interpretation. INT2 also noted that some

preachers, upon noticing the echoes affecting clarity, would naturally repeat certain sentences, allowing the interpreter to deliver those repeated messages accurately.

Observations revealed that sermon interpreters occasionally consulted PA system personnel or requested the preacher to pause when technical faults occurred with the public address system. These coping strategies, when employed, facilitated effective communication between the preachers and the audience. However, it was also observed during the two English-Kiswahili sermon interpretations that the interpreters did not consistently use these strategies when faced with PA system challenges. Consequently, communication breakdowns between the preachers and the audience occurred frequently. The observations indicate the sermon interpreters sometimes did not employ these coping strategies due to limited access to PA system personnel and reluctance to disrupt the preachers.

The study findings on faults of public address (PA) systems during sermon interpretation align with existing research on communication challenges in large gatherings, including religious settings. Biamah (2013) highlights that the effectiveness of PA systems is closely tied to the size and structure of the venue, with larger spaces requiring robust systems to facilitate communication. Similarly, Ishola (2017) notes that technical issues with communication tools, such as PA systems, can significantly hinder the flow of information in religious contexts, leading to disengagement among participants. This study corroborates these insights, demonstrating that repeated PA system faults during English-Kiswahili sermon interpretation caused communication breakdowns, leaving critical messages unheard by the audience.

Moreover, the study findings align with Gile's (1995) Effort Models of Interpreting, which emphasize the cognitive demands interpreters face in managing listening, memory, production, and coordination efforts. Faults in the PA system, such as microphone malfunctions and echoes, disrupt the interpreter's ability to process and deliver messages effectively, increasing cognitive strain. These disruptions force interpreters to allocate additional mental resources to comprehension and production, often exceeding their cognitive capacity and leading to errors, omissions, or incomplete renditions. Such challenges hinder effective communication between the preachers, the interpreters, and the audience. The findings highlight the

importance of reliable PA systems and proper coordination between interpreters and technical personnel to minimize cognitive overload and improve the quality of interpretation.

The rapport between the Preachers and the Audience

During an interview, the two sermon interpreters acknowledged that the rapport between the preacher and the audience sometimes affected the quality of sermon interpreting. This rapport encompasses the emotions and interactions shared during the preaching, involving the preacher, the interpreter, and the audience. Observations revealed that, in both churches studied, some audience members understood English and frequently responded directly to the preacher. This posed a challenge to the interpreters. For instance, INT1 noted that *"Noisy responses from the audience who understood English interfered with the interpreter's ability to convey the message."* This was evident in Sermon 1, where audience members who understood English loudly responded to the preacher with "amen" and other expressions of appreciation during the sermon. These interruptions created difficulties for the interpreter, as they often struggled to hear the preacher's message. Consequently, the audience relying on the interpreter faced challenges in receiving the message. The loud responses from the English-speaking audience disrupted effective communication, diminishing the interpreter's ability to relay the preacher's message accurately and fully to the entire congregation.

When asked about how they handled interruptions caused by audience responses and reactions during sermons, the two sermon interpreters explained that they often increased their attention and concentration on the preacher. They emphasized that heightened focus helped them hear the preacher despite the disruptions. However, they admitted that in cases where the noise was too loud to distinguish the preacher's voice, these strategies were insufficient. INT2 said that when audience interruptions occurred, he sometimes asked the preacher to pause momentarily to allow the noise to subside. He also mentioned that on occasions where he could not hear certain parts due to interruptions, he would skip the missed content and continue interpreting the next section that he could hear clearly.

While these strategies were somewhat helpful in managing interruptions, they were not entirely effective. Persistent interruptions throughout the service often led to the loss of important information, ultimately compromising the overall effectiveness of communication between the preacher and the audience.

The study findings on the challenges posed by the rapport between preachers and the audience align with existing research on interpreter-mediated communication in dynamic and interactive environments. Kopczynski (1994) discusses the importance of audience behaviours in interpreter-mediated settings, noting that active audience participation can complicate the interpreter's task, particularly when it leads to overlapping speech or excessive noise. The interpreters' need to heighten their attention and concentration to cope with such interruptions aligns with Gile's (1995) Effort Models of Interpreting, which emphasize the limited cognitive capacity available for listening, processing, and production efforts. Persistent audience noise, as observed in this study, exacerbates cognitive overload, resulting in skipped content and communication breakdowns.

Use of Figurative Language

Figurative language refers to the use of words or phrases to convey meanings beyond their literal sense, often to add emphasis or convey abstract concepts (Liberman, 2008). It is particularly useful in addressing abstract ideas such as anger, love, peace, evil, goodness, spirituality, and the concept of God. This type of language is highly prevalent in the Bible. As Goodness (2021, p. 204) observes, "In most of Jesus' speeches, figurative language occurs." However, a significant challenge lies in reliably identifying figurative language in biblical texts.

For interpreters, this challenge is magnified by the nature of interpreting, which requires immediate processing and does not allow time to consult external sources for clarification of difficult figurative expressions. Consequently, interpreters may interpret such language literally, potentially distorting the intended message. During interviews, the two sermon interpreters acknowledged frequently encountering challenging figurative language during sermon interpretation. These challenges, along with specific examples of figurative language encountered, are discussed in the subsequent sections.

Metaphors

During the interview, both sermon interpreters acknowledged frequently encountering unfamiliar metaphorical expressions that are difficult to interpret accurately. Metaphorical expressions draw a comparison by stating that one thing is another, allowing for deeper or more imaginative understanding (Liberman, 2008). INT1 explained that while some biblical metaphors are widely recognized and easier to interpret, such as "bridegroom" symbolizing Jesus and "bride" representing Jesus' followers (Revelation), or "wedding" referring to the second coming of Jesus, other metaphors are more complex and challenging. For instance, in the book of Daniel, the metaphorical expression "beast" represents kingdoms such as Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, which requires deeper theological understanding to interpret correctly.

INT1 also noted that some sermon interpreters tend to interpret metaphorical expressions literally, assigning them the surface-level meanings of the words rather than their intended symbolic significance. This challenge was observed during Sermon 2, where the sermon interpreter rendered the preacher's metaphorical expression literally, resulting in the distortion of the intended message. Such difficulties highlight the importance of familiarity with biblical metaphors and their contextual meanings to ensure accurate and effective interpretation. Extract 6 illustrates:

Extract 6: Serm. 2

> P3: There is a time in life
> *Inter: Kuna wakati katika maisha*
> P3: We call it a zero hour
> *Inter: Tunaiita kuwa **ni wakati ziro***
> B.T: **We call it zero time**
> P3: In a zero hour
> *Inter: Katika hiyo **hali ya mwisho***
> B.T: **In that final state**
> P3: In a zero hour
> *Inter: Katika **saa ya kufa***
> B.T: **In the hour of death**

P3: Even people you trusted
Inter: Hata watu uliotumaini
P3: They disappoint and leave you
Inter: Wanakukatisha tamaa na kukuacha
P3: You are just in a zero hour
*Inter: Kwa sababu upo **katika saa ya kufa***
B.T: **Because you are in the hour of death**
P3: Ladies and gentlemen
Inter: Mabibi na mabwana
P3: There is a zero-hour
*Inter: Kuna **saa ya mwisho***
B.T: **There is the last hour**
P3: In a zero hour
*Inter: Katika hiyo **saa sifuri***
B.T: **In a zero hour**
P3: Everything about your life
Inter: Kila kitu kuhusu maisha yako
P3: Is just down

In extract 6, the preacher used a metaphorical expression, "*zero hour,*" which is defined as "*The time when an important event is planned to begin*" (see Longman Dictionary, 5th Edition). As can be seen from the definition, "*zero hour*" is not a literal expression but rather a metaphorical expression because it is not defined using the obvious meaning of words. Despite "*zero hour*" being a metaphorical expression, the sermon interpreter in extract 6 unsuccessfully tried to define it literally. As illustrated in extract 6, "*zero hour*" at one point was interpreted as "*wakati ziro*" and at another point as "*hali ya mwisho.*" Not only that but also "*zero hour*" was interpreted as "*saa ya kufa*" and "*saa ya mwisho.*" This was a challenge, especially to the audience who entirely depended on the sermon interpreter to get the messages and the teachings intended by the preacher. To facilitate effective communication between the preacher and the audience, the sermon interpreter could have interpreted "*zero hour*" as "*Wakati mgumu usio na matumaini.*"

Parables

Another figurative language that the two sermon interpreters frequently encounter is the parable, which is a story told to illustrate a truth or moral

lesson (Liberman, 2008). Jesus' parables served as teaching aids and can be understood as extended analogies that compare two concepts or ideas. A commonly cited description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Parables were a central element of Jesus' teaching, and for a significant portion of His ministry, He relied heavily on storytelling to convey His messages. As noted in Mark 4:34, "He did not say anything to the people without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything." During the observation and analysis of the two English-Kiswahili sermon interpretations, some instances of parables were identified, as illustrated in Extract 7:

Extract 7: Serm. 1

>P2: Let me read it, he says in King James
>*Inter: Katika King James anasema*
>P2: Okay, we can read it, let me read it. He says, what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth good grapes, brought it forth wild grapes
>*Inter: Nasoma, katika Isaya sura ya tano mstari wanne biblia inasema, je kazi gani inaweza kutendeka ndani ya shamba langu la mizabibu nisioitenda? Basi na lipo tumaini ya kuwa litazaa zabibu mbona lilizaa zabibu mwitu? Haya basi sasa nitawambieni nitakalolitenda shamba langu la mizabibu. Nitaondoa kitalu chake, nitabomoa ukuta wake nalo litakanyagwa.*

The two sermon interpreters were asked if they knew the name of the parable and its spiritual meaning. INT1 identified it as *"The Parable of the Vineyard"* and explained that it symbolizes the house of Israel and the people of Judah as the vineyard. Instead of producing good grapes, representing righteousness and justice, they produced wild grapes, symbolizing wickedness and injustice. INT2 also recognized it as *"The Parable of the Vineyard"* but admitted not knowing its deeper spiritual meaning. Both interpreters stated that during their interpreting careers, they frequently encounter parables they do not fully understand, which negatively impacts the quality of their sermon interpretations.

When asked how they coped with the challenge of biblical figurative expressions, the two sermon interpreters explained that they frequently read the Bible to enhance their biblical knowledge, which helps them address such challenges. INT1 emphasized that understanding the context often aids in identifying the appropriate equivalent for unfamiliar metaphorical expressions. INT1 also mentioned that to manage unfamiliar figurative expressions, he evaluates their significance. If the figurative expression appears less important, he may choose to skip it. However, if it seems critical to the message, the interpreter seeks clarification from the preacher to understand its meaning and relay it effectively to the audience.

Similarly, Biamah (2013) found that interpreters faced significant challenges when encountering figurative language. According to Biamah (2013), some interpreters failed to recognize figurative expressions and interpret them in context, often defaulting to their literal meanings, which distorted the intended message. In Biamah's study, such challenges were sometimes mitigated by the preacher, who was not a guest speaker and was proficient in Kiswahili. In contrast, the current study revealed that sermon interpreters were not corrected when they faced challenges with figurative language since the preachers in the current study were guest speakers who lacked proficiency in Kiswahili. Consequently, they were unable to recognize the interpreters' difficulties, leaving errors unaddressed. This lack of correction contributed to communication breakdowns between the preachers, the interpreters, and the audience.

The challenges sermon interpreters face when dealing with biblical figurative language, such as metaphors and parables, align with Gile's (1995) Effort Models of Interpreting, which highlight the cognitive demands of listening, memory, production, and coordination. Figurative language increases the complexity of the listening and analysis effort, as interpreters must discern symbolic meanings beyond the literal sense. This also places additional strain on memory effort, as interpreters must retain and process abstract concepts while continuing to interpret in real-time. The findings highlight the importance of enhancing interpreters' biblical knowledge, contextual analysis skills, and cognitive capacity to handle the complexities of figurative language effectively.

Interpreting for Long Hours

The two sermon interpreters highlighted that sermons in Pentecostal churches are often lengthy, requiring interpreters to work from the beginning to the end of the service. INT1 stated, *"Interpreting in our church normally takes a long time; when an interpreter is assigned to interpret a sermon, he/she is also required to interpret for the preacher and other speakers during the service."* This was evident in Sermon 1, where the interpreter worked continuously for one hour and eighteen minutes. During the interview, the interpreter of Sermon 1 admitted feeling exhausted due to the extended duration of interpreting. This fatigue sometimes affected his concentration, causing him to miss parts of the preacher's message. Such lapses were observed during the interpretation, as illustrated in Extract 8:

Extract 8: Serm.1
   P3: **My case will be**
   Inter:... (skipping)
   P3: Hallelujah
   Inter: Haleluya
   P3: Isaiah chapter sixty
   Inter: Isaya sura ya sitini

Extract 8 indicates how interpreting for long hours led the sermon interpreter to skip interpreting some of the preacher's messages. In extract 8, the preacher said to the audience, *"My case will be."* The sermon interpreter was required to relay this to the audience, but he skipped it and went on to say *"haleluya,"* which was the next preacher's phrase. As a result of this skipping, there was a breakdown of communication between the preacher and the audience. To facilitate effective communication between the preacher and the audience, the sermon interpreter could have interpreted *"My case will be"* as *"Neno langu litakuwa."*

Apart from a lack of concentration due to exhaustion, interpreting for long hours can lead to some more serious health problems, such as fainting of the sermon interpreters. INT2 was quoted saying, *"There was an incident in our church where an interpreter fainted because of interpreting for long hours."*

According to INT2, the sermon interpreter who fainted interpreted consecutively for more than five hours. As a result, he was too exhausted and fainted on the stage. INT2 further asserted that the sermon was stopped for some time while taking care of the fainted sermon interpreter and resumed later with a different sermon interpreter. Therefore, apart from affecting the quality of sermon interpreting and thus leading to the breakdown of communication, interpreting for long hours has some detrimental health-related effects on the sermon interpreters.

When asked how they manage the challenges of exhaustion from interpreting for long hours, the two sermon interpreters explained that they typically take a break by inviting another interpreter to take over, provided one is readily available. However, if no other interpreter is present, they must endure the extended interpreting sessions. INT1 added that to cope with long hours of interpreting, it is essential for interpreters to prepare by resting adequately beforehand, eating well, and staying hydrated. These practices help maintain their stamina and focus during the demanding task of sermon interpreting.

The findings of the current study are in line with Gile (1995), who asserts that interpreting requires that three efforts happen at the same time. These efforts are listening in one language, processing the message, and then reproducing it in another language. Gile adds that these efforts happen at the same time repeatedly, demanding an exhaustive level of concentration. Therefore, interpreters who work at the highest level of concentration cannot perform well for long hours because they will be exhausted. They may start interpreting well, but as time goes on, they will start missing some of the obvious words spoken by the speaker. As a result, there will be a breakdown of communication between the speaker and the audience.

Use of Different Versions of the Bible

During the interview, the two sermon interpreters affirmed having strong biblical knowledge. They stated that they are familiar with all the books of the Bible, including chapters, verses, and the names of key biblical characters. They also expressed familiarity with different versions of the Bible. Paradoxically, the sermon interpreters faced the challenge when the preachers did not share the version of the Bible that they were using in the sermon. This lack of information made it difficult for the interpreters to align

their interpretations with the specific wording or nuances of the preacher's chosen version. Consequently, this mismatch impacted the interpreters' ability to effectively convey the preacher's messages and teachings, ultimately affecting the quality of the sermon interpretation. Extract 9 illustrates:

Extract 9: Serm.2

> P3: Isaiah chapter sixty
> *Inter: Isaya sura ya sitini*
> P3: Verse number one to five
> *Inter: Kuanzia mstari wa kwanza hadi wa tano*
> P3: **I like the Amplified Version**
> *Inter: **Nataka tusome katika tafsiri ya neno***
> P3: **Amplified Version**
> *Inter: **Katika ile tafsiri ya neno***
> P3: We can read only verse number one is okay
> *Inter: Tutasoma ule mstari wa kwanza sio mbaya, vizuri pia*
> P3: **Amplified Version do you have it**
> *Inter: **Katika ile tafsiri ya neno kama unayo***

Extract 9 shows how interpreters' lack of knowledge of some of the Bible versions hindered their interpreting. In extract 9, the preacher wanted the audience to read "*Isaiah chapter sixty*" in the Amplified Bible (AMP). The Amplified Bible is an English language translation of the Bible produced by Zondervan and the Lockman Foundation. It is designed to amplify the text by using additional wording, a system of punctuation, and other typographical features to attempt to bring out a clearer meaning to the original texts.

In extract 9, the preacher said, "*I like the Amplified version,*" which is the AMP, but the sermon interpreter interpreted it as "*Nataka tusome katika tafsiri ya neno,*" which can be translated into English as "*I would like us to read in the translated scripture.*" This rendition is contrary to what the preacher intended to communicate to the audience. As a result, there was a communication breakdown between the preacher and the audience because of the interpreter's lack of knowledge of some of the Bible versions, such as the AMP.

When asked about how they manage the challenge of preachers using unfamiliar Bible versions, the two sermon interpreters explained that they rely on their knowledge of other English Bible versions to interpret the unfamiliar text. They also utilize the verbal context of the sermon to deduce the meaning of difficult words or phrases from the preacher's version. INT1 added that when faced with an unfamiliar Bible version, he tends to focus on the overall message rather than specific difficult words, interpreting what he believes the preacher intended to communicate rather than the exact wording.

Despite these strategies, observations during the English-Kiswahili sermon interpretations revealed that when preachers used complex biblical terminology, the interpreters often skipped those terms, leading to a distortion of the message. This indicates that the interpreters lack comprehensive knowledge of biblical terminology and are unfamiliar with some English Bible versions. To improve the quality of sermon interpreting, interpreters need to familiarize themselves with a wider range of English Bible versions and biblical terminology. This preparation would enhance their ability to produce accurate and effective sermon interpretations.

The findings on the challenges associated with preachers using different Bible versions align with existing studies on the impact of contextual and linguistic knowledge in interpretation. Biamah (2013) highlighted that interpreters often face difficulties when they lack familiarity with specialized terminology or contextual nuances, resulting in inaccurate or incomplete interpretations. Similarly, Karanja (2015) emphasized that interpreters' limited knowledge of specific terminologies or texts, such as biblical versions, can lead to misinterpretations and communication breakdowns, as observed in this study.

The challenges sermon interpreters face when dealing with different Bible versions also align with Gile's (1995) Effort Models of Interpreting. Unfamiliar Bible versions increase the complexity of the listening and analysis effort, requiring interpreters to process nuanced and unfamiliar terminology in real-time. This additional demand strains memory effort, as interpreters must retain and reconstruct meaning while continuing to interpret. These heightened demands often result in cognitive overload, leading to errors, omissions, and communication breakdowns. To address these challenges, interpreters should enhance their familiarity with various

Bible versions and biblical terminology, while pre-sermon briefings can help reduce cognitive strain and improve the quality of interpretations.

Conclusion

The sermon interpreters faced several challenges during the sermon interpreting. These challenges affected the quality of sermon interpreting and consequently hindered effective communication between the preachers and the audience. The sermon interpreters adopted some coping strategies to cope with the challenges they faced during sermon interpreting. Some of the strategies adopted (such as increasing concentration) facilitated effective communication between the preachers and the audience. However, most of the coping strategies adopted (such as skipping and summarising) were not effective as they hindered instead of facilitating effective communication between the preachers and the audience. The sermon interpreters in the current study had no professional training in interpreting. As a result, it was hard for them to navigate through the challenges they encountered, such as the speed of the preachers and the preachers' use of different versions of the Bible. This paper, therefore, recommends professional training of interpreters to equip them with the knowledge, methodology, skills, and ethics of interpreting with the anticipation that it will enable them to provide quality interpreting services by properly coping with the challenges they face during interpreting in churches as well as in other social settings in Tanzania.

References

Biamah, S. 2013, Dealing with communication challenges during interpretation of church sermons in UASIN GISHU county, Kenya. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* vol. 3, no. 14, pp. 148-157.

Creswell, J. W.2018, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Gile, D. 1995, Fidelity assessment in consecutive interpretation. *Target,* vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 151-164. DOI 10.1075/target.7.1.12gil

Goodness, D. 2021, Stylistic Analysis of Selected Sermons Delivered by Pentecostal Preachers. *Utafiti,* Vol. 16 no. 2, pp. 203 – 223.

Ishola, A. A. 2017, The role of technology in effective communication in religious settings. *International Journal of Communication and Media Studies,* Vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 153–160.

Karanja, P.N, 2015, Problems of interpreting as a means of communication: A study on the interpretation of Kamba to English Pentecostal Church Sermon in Machakos Town, *Kenya International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* Vol. 4, no. 5, pp. 196-207.

Kopczyński, A. 1994, Quality in Conference Interpreting: Some Pragmatic Problems. *Translation Studies: An Interdiscipline*, in M. Snell-Hornby, F. Pöchhacker and K. Kaindl, eds., pp.189-198, John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia.

Longman. 2009, *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (5th Edition), Longman, Harlow, England.

Mulundi, S. 2001, Towards professionalization of church interpretation in Tanzania: What do church stakeholders say about the quality criteria of church interpretation? *The Bible Translator,* vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 294-312, DOI: 10.1177/20516770211039491

Mwinuka, L., Malangwa, P. and Asheli, N. 2022, Quality assessment of English-Kiswahili sermon interpreting from selected churches in Dar es salaam: The case of sense consistency with the original message. *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education,* vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 132-150.

Mwinuka, L. 2023, Linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects affecting the quality of English-Kiswahili sermon interpreting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dar es Salaam.

Ngoda, N. 2018, The practice of community interpreting in Tanzania, Unpublished MA   Thesis, Pan African University.

Peremota, I. 2017, *Church interpreting in evangelical churches with Russian-language services,* Unpublished MA Thesis, The University College of Economics and Culture, Riga.

Petzell, M. 2012, The linguistic situation in Tanzania, *Moderna språk,* vol.106, *no.* 1, pp. 136-144.

Pöchhacker, F. 2001, Quality assessment in conference and community interpreting, *Meta*, vol. 46, no.2, pp. 410-425, DOI: 10.7202/003847ar

Pöchhacker, F. 2004, *Introducing interpreting studies,* Routledge, London and New York.

Pöchhacker, F. 2015, *Routledge encyclopedia of interpreting studies,* Routledge, London.

Seleskovitch, D. 1986, Comment: Who should assess an interpreter's performance? *Multilingua*, vol. 5, no. 4, p. 236.

Tibategeza. E. R. 2018, The prospects of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in the Tanzania education and training policy, *Journal of Language and Education,* vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 88-98.

TUKI. 2000, *Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu*, Oxford University Press, Dar es Salaam/Nairobi.

Yates, L. 2007, *Interpreting at church. A paradigm for sign language interpreters*, Booksurge, LLC, South Carolina.

Zondervan & The Lockman Foundation. 2008, *The Amplified Bible,* Zondervan, . Grand Rapids, MI.