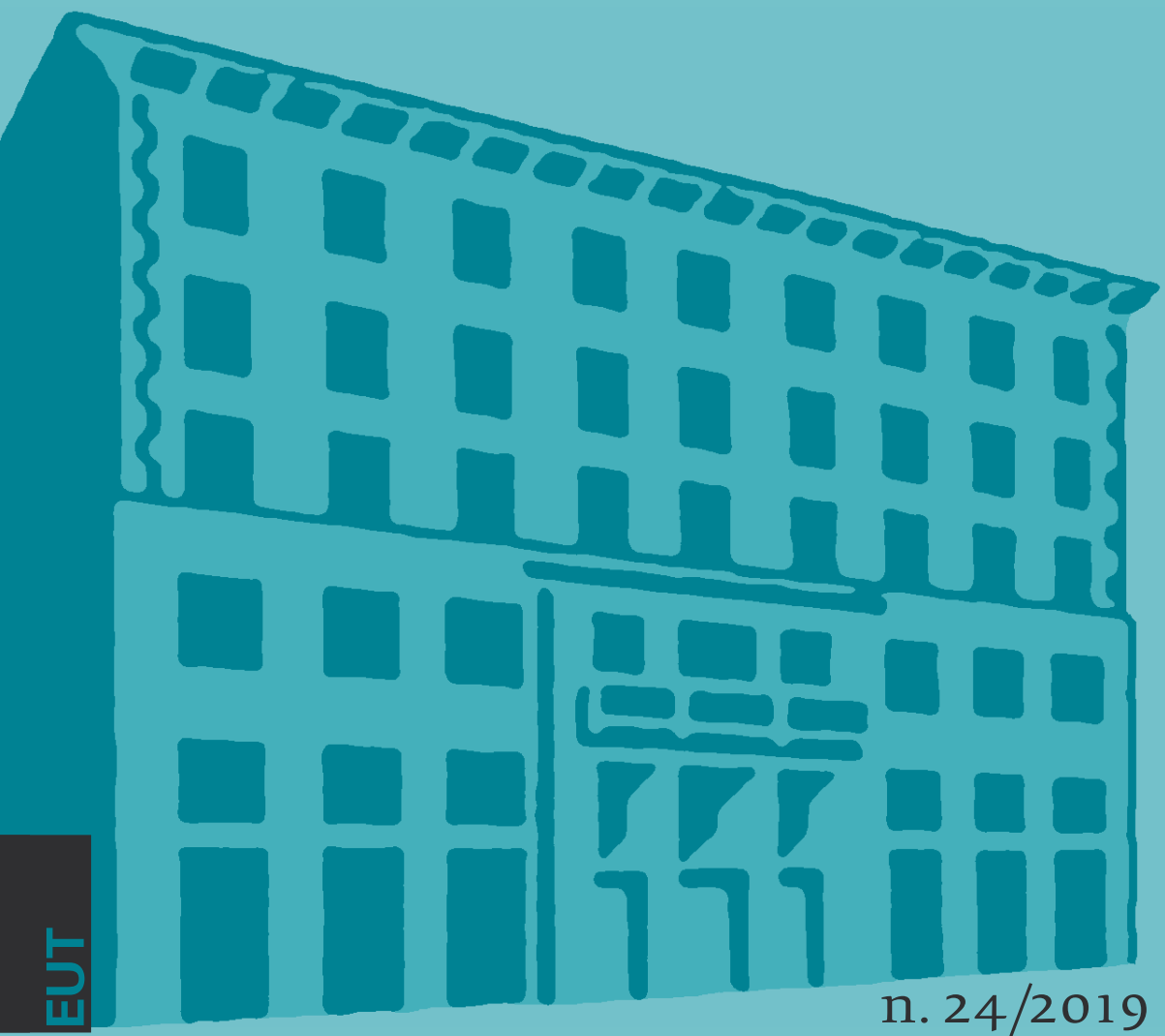
Università degli Studi di Trieste
Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche, del Linguaggio,
dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione

The Interpreters' Newsletter



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The Interpreters' Newsletter
Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche, del Linguaggio, dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione
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Editorial

The Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Teaching Conference Interpretation: 30 Years Later (1989-2019)

From the very beginning, research on conference interpreting has been oriented towards didactics and training. Herbert's *Handbook*, Rozan's consecutive note-taking manual or Paneth's Master Thesis, *An Investigation into Conference Interpreting*, all addressed interpreter training as a result of personal experience in the profession and as trainers. Didactic reflections are at the core of the interpretative theory of the Paris School, Giles's Efforts models, and the different cognitive models or neurolinguistics approaches that followed. *The Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Teaching Conference Interpreting* was the title of the Symposium held in Trieste in 1986 that led to new lines of empirical studies for simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. Sound scientific foundations were required at the time to develop the new discipline of Interpreting Studies in search of an autonomous status. Thirty years have elapsed since the publication in 1989 of the selected papers of the Trieste Symposium by John Dodds and Laura Gran, and in the meantime the interpreting landscape has changed dramatically. In particular, Public Service Interpreting (PSI) has entered the scene and a considerable amount of research work is devoted to the various interpreting forms and settings. Technology has also come into play with software and devices that are having an impact on the profession and seem to require specialised training or at least some adjustments to existing courses.

This issue features four articles covering different aspects of interpreter training and may give an indication of the way in which things have been changing. The first contribution, by José Conde and Fanny Chouc, is a detailed account of the benefits of multilingual mock conferences in training. A study was carried

out with conference interpreting students taking part in weekly simulations of multilingual conferences with all the language combinations taught across the programme. Students were interviewed to gather information about their experience and its benefits for learning, with particular reference to situations where they did not have a working knowledge of all the languages used. In this case, they would have the opportunity to act as interpreting end users evaluating the interpretation from a real communicative point of view.

Almudena Nevado Llopis and Alina Pelea describe and evaluate a training module in PSI and medical interpreting for conference interpreting students in their first and second years. The research questions concern the additional skills to be taught to prepare conference interpreting students for PSI settings, the duration of the module and what type of information is most needed. A comparison between the interpreting performances delivered by trained master students and those delivered by untrained undergraduate students give important indications in this respect.

How to teach interpreting students to deal with numbers and what kind of training could be developed to address this common problem-trigger for interpreters is the topic of Francesca Frittella's contribution. On the basis of research findings, she presents a constructivist, skill-based training programme aiming at developing competence in the simultaneous interpretation of numbers. The article describes the theoretical foundations of the training programme and the way in which the instructional design supports the learning process. It also highlights the potential of research in the field of instructional design to advance interpreting pedagogy. Two groups of interpreting trainees participated in the training programme and provided unstructured written feedback. The responses were analysed by qualitative thematic analysis.

Finally, the article by Arianna Fichera gives an overview of how the work at the EU has changed since 1989 when *The Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Teaching Conference Interpretation* was published. The article is based on the experience of the Italian booth at DG SCIC. It describes the evolution of interpreting over the past three decades and identifies, from an EU perspective, the main challenges to be met by interpreting departments and their students, from language combinations including several C languages to interpretation from non-standard English. These are tough challenges for young interpreters wishing to embark upon a career at the EU, but, as Fichera states, "Acquiring all the technical skills required to be an interpreter and learning to work under pressure may seem daunting for first year interpreting students, but generations of interpreters that have gone on to work for international institutions have proven that it is a reachable goal."

We hope you will enjoy this issue. *Buona lettura!*

Caterina Falbo
Alessandra Riccardi
Maurizio Viezzi

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Multilingual mock conferences: a valuable tool in the training of conference interpreters

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Abstract

This article considers multilingual mock conferences as a pedagogical tool in the training of conference interpreters, and examines the case of Heriot-Watt University's mock conferences. This activity draws on theories of situated and experiential learning by Kolb (1984), Brown et al. (1989), Lave/Wenger (1991) and Kolb/Kolb (2005) and builds up on existing research by Ardito (1999), Kurz (2003), De Laet (2010), Alexeeva/Shutova (2011), Xiangdong (2015).

A study was carried out with M.A. and MSc[1] Conference Interpreting students over two academic years. These students take part in weekly simulations of multilingual conferences which bring together all language combinations taught across the programme. Students were invited to reflect upon this experience and its learning benefits as part of their training. The study was also aimed at fostering a reflection on good practice in training on their part (Sawyer 1994 and Gile 2009, 2013), by drawing their attention to the use of peer-learning strategies (Boud et al. 2001). The mixed-method approach used for this study focuses on students' perception of the activity, and on the challenges and benefits of taking part in an interpreting task where trainee interpreters do not have a working knowledge of all the languages involved.

1 Heriot-Watt University offers a 4-year undergraduate M.A. programme in translation and conference interpreting, during which students start consecutive interpreting in year 2 and simultaneous in year 4, and a 1-year intensive postgraduate MSc programme in conference interpreting.

Keywords

Simultaneous interpreting, training, situated and experiential learning, peer-learning, mock conferences.

Introduction

Academics designing conference interpreting programmes often face a key challenge, flagged by Xiangdong (2015: 326), namely that: "internship opportunities are limited". To address this issue, the training conference interpreters receive needs to feature experiences designed to raise students' awareness of their future working conditions and environment, either by taking students out of the classroom (Chouc/Conde 2016) or by creating as authentic an experience as possible in an adjusted learning environment. A number of learning and teaching strategies can be used, and this study proposes to describe and explore one of them: multilingual mini-conferences or mock conferences (MCs). They will be considered as one element of the training of conference interpreters, drawing on the data collected from the experience of two cohorts of M.A. and MSc students from Heriot-Watt University (22 participants in 2014-2015 and 21 participants in 2015-2016). This study complements existing research on the learning benefits of relay interpreting which was based on the same cohorts' experience of MCs. During these MCs, students encounter for the first time a genuine audience, although not in a genuine conference setting; they also experience an authentic interpreting community of practice, meaning that for instance, when a speech is delivered in Chinese as part of the MC, the students working from Chinese into English have a genuine audience around the table. Additionally, this set-up also enables students to get a first-hand experience of relay interpreting (Chouc/Conde 2018). They know that their fellow interpreting students in the booths are depending on their interpreting to provide relay into other languages such as French, German, Spanish, Arabic or British Sign Language.

The use of simulated, multilingual mock conferences is embedded in the curriculum of M.A. and MSc students during the final stage of their conference interpreting programme of studies at Heriot-Watt University. This is part of a comprehensive situated learning strategy devised to enable students to develop a solid awareness of professional practice, challenges and expectations, as well as acquiring conference interpreting techniques. Although this practice is often used in one shape or another by institutions training conference interpreters, there is a limited amount of research on its benefits to date. De Laet (2010: 254) describes MCs, highlighting the situated learning dimension of staging a simulation replicating the different stages of a conference rather than using speeches out of context, and Xiangdong (2015) presents a similar process designed to make students experience and reflect upon the various forms of communication one faces when interpreting at an event, rather than working on just one given speech. These models, however, describe settings in which all the students taking part in mock conferences have similar language combinations, while

the model studied in this article places students in a multilingual setting, as explained above. In the mock conferences considered, students not only provide interpreting but also experience interpreting as pure users, thus engaging in a more comprehensive learning experience. This additional aspect complements the more standard format of conference interpreting classes, in which "all participants understand the two languages being used, without the real need for overcoming language barriers for communication" (Lee in Xiangdong, 2015: 326). It also mirrors a number of professional settings, particularly common in international institutions, in which a large number of languages are used, or "in multilingual conferences in countries where most interpreters have only two working languages", as highlighted by Shlesinger (2010: 276).

Besides, the MCs studied in this experiment were designed with situated learning in mind, following Kolb's statement that: "Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner" (Kolb 1984: 27). The purpose of these mock conferences is, therefore, to create the experience of this community of practice described by Lave and Wenger (1991: 53), crucial to the learning process: this "serves a bridge between classroom realism and professional realism, paving the way for the trainees to enter the industry" (Xiangdong 2015: 328). MCs create a valuable situation for an interpreting trainee, in which

> s/he acquires the skill to perform by actually engaging in the process, under the attenuated conditions of *legitimate peripheral participation*. This central concept denotes the particular mode of engagement of a learner who participates in the actual practice of an expert, but only to a limited degree and with limited responsibility for the ultimate product as a whole (Lave/Wenger 1991: 14).

This pressure or responsibility is alleviated by the lack of summative assessment on this specific task and this situation creates a context favourable to another dimension of situated learning: the autonomous and collaborative phase (Brown *et al.* 1989). This kind of task leads students to a stage when "students no longer behave as students, but as practitioners, and develop their conceptual understanding through social interaction and collaboration in the culture of the domain, not of the school" (Brown *et al.*1989: 40). It is also consistent with the need for an apprenticeship model, highlighted by Sachtleben in her research on the multilingual classroom (Sachtleben 2015: 51-59), and it echoes Gillies' recommendations: conference interpreting students should "practice in groups", "listen to each other" and "work with listeners who need interpretation" (Gillies 2013: 13-14). In such a context, students are exposed to prepared speeches as well as spontaneous interventions, a crucial part of the training highlighted by Ardito (1999). They take on the role of speakers regularly, revisiting the experience from different perspectives through the cycle of MCs. Spontaneous interventions are more difficult to include in a standard interpreting classroom model, but during MCs, students are faced with unscripted challenges, thus creating settings that match Lave's concept on experience as a learning tool (1988). This type of experience makes learners realise the benefit of "[engaging] in authentic activity using the context in which an issue emerged to help find a solution" (Brown *et al.* 1989: 35). The use of authentic experience is also described as beneficial and

constructive (Alexeeva/Shutova 2010 and Kurz 2002), because students are exposed to genuine conference communication dynamics. They have to come up with strategies to cope with what Ardito (1999: 188) calls "pragmatic aspects of orality and interlinguistic communication".

This "exposure interpreting method" (Alexeeva/Shutova 2010) enables students to learn from "immersion in authentic professional situations followed by self-reflection/analysis, but also from a process of collective reflection – with multiple and reciprocal feedback – involving all those taking part in the taught sessions", described by Perez and Wilson (2011: 251) in the context of public service interpreter training. Adopting situated learning strategies to train conference interpreters is also consistent with what Gonzalez-Davies/Enriquez-Raido (2016: 9) recommend when they describe the use of experience in which: "the main aim is to reproduce the professional context in a community of practice that includes academic scaffolding and/or any of the teaching methods indicated above".

In addition, MCs create a community of practice, similar to the ones studied by Lave/Wenger (1991), but this particular model differs slightly from what they describe in that there is no direct master-learner relationship here: all the interpreting is provided by interpreting trainees, for interpreting trainees; trainers merely observe or contribute as speakers, they do not model the skill trainees are developing. All interpreters are therefore on a par: they are all trainees, at a similar stage of the training process, and they need to collaborate.

As such, the relay interpreting dimension of mock conferences creates an interesting peer-learning situation as well as an experiential learning context, albeit didactic, following concepts highlighted by Hara (2009) and Boud *et al.* (2014). To achieve the research objective, this study explores more specifically the perceived learning benefits of a situation in which students "share the status as fellow learners and they are accepted as such" (Boud *et al.* 2014: 4). Through this experiment, we are proposing to explore the view that "Reciprocal peer learning emphasizes students' simultaneous learning and contributes to other students' learning" (*ibid.*) applied to conference interpreting training, looking at this particular setup, in which students depend on each other to complete the task at hand.

To explore the benefits of placing trainee conference interpreters in a situation mirroring a professional multilingual conference setting, in which they have a genuine audience and rely on each other's performance to be able to participate, the study focused more specifically on the following aspects:

- the impact of MCs on student motivation;
- the lessons students have drawn in terms of pace management and interpreting technique in such a situation;
- their understanding of the importance of delivery following MCs;
- the impact such an experience has had on their preparation practice and their awareness of booth management;
- how taking part in MCs has affected students' views on cooperation and good practice in a conference interpreting setting.

The outcome of such a study can be used to better inform curriculum design and students' training through situated learning experiences for interpreting train-

ing, and the conclusions on the impact of this type of situated learning strategy can lead to the development of similar experiences in other fields, for instance in translation training: one could create a fictive scenario, in which students would tackle a mock professional projet, playing the parts of a client, project manager, translation team, editing team and proof-readers. This model could also be easily applied to business studies, or any field in which students are developing specific professional skills and will be called to interact with a range of stakeholders.

1. The study

As part of their training, students enrolled on the M.A. and MSc in Conference Interpreting at Heriot-Watt University are trained through language-specific classes, focused on one language combination. During these, students will either deliver a live performance or work in individual booths, getting feedback from their lecturers/trainers and/or peers. It is possible to stage a pure user experience for consecutive interpreting by ensuring the designated pure user leaves the room during the delivery of the source speech, but not so for simultaneous since in this type of class setup, users understand both the source speech and interpreting provided by their peers and can generally hear both. Although this aspect of the teaching model is rarely formulated explicitly in studies on conference interpreting pedagogy, it often underpins the conference interpreting teaching classroom model described for instance by Gile (1999).

So to address the limits of language combination-specific classes, all M.A. and MSc conference interpreting students enrolled at Heriot-Watt take part in a series of weekly mock conferences. These sessions bring together all the students registered on the same programme, and a multilingual mock debate is staged over a period of 2 to 3 hours, around a current issue relevant for all languages represented. The MC topics are selected to ensure that various points of view can be featured and lead to a proper debate. These MCs are not open to the public, though visiting lecturers often attend and participate in various capacities; the audience usually only includes members of staff and the interpreting students themselves.

The interpreting required to enable communication in MCs is carried out by students, in consecutive and simultaneous modes. These MCs are organised in the later part of students' training, to ensure that they have built up the required skills and have the linguistic competency to tackle simultaneous interpreting. So for M.A. students, it means that these sessions take place during the second part of Semester 1 and at the start of Semester 2 of their final year of study; these students focused on liaison interpreting and consecutive interpreting in year 2, spent year 3 abroad and receive an intensive refresher on consecutive skills before starting simultaneous. In total, M.A. students take part in a minimum of 6 MCs. For their part, MSc students who follow an intensive 12 months programme start MCs in Semester 2. In some cases, MSc students' first introduction to conference interpreting techniques was when they started the programme, hence a later introduction of the activity for these cohorts. For M.A. MCs, members of staff play the roles of chair and formal speakers; all students who are sitting around the table have to participate as delegates. They are encouraged to play a character with

a profile relevant to the debate when taking part in the discussions. MSc students take on all of these different roles during the course of the MCs, acting in turn as chair, speaker, or even just as delegate, as the post-graduate course has been designed to feature a more in-depth reflexion on professional practice in conference contexts. This rotation of roles is designed to help students increase their understanding of the challenges interpreters face. Staff attend these sessions to provide feedback during the debriefing at the end, and students are provided with guidance on how to provide peer-assessment and how to self-assess as well.

Through these sessions, students experience a fully multilingual, almost real-life-like setting, difficult to stage in language-specific classes. These MCs give students an opportunity to collaborate with peers who have a different language combination and it creates a need to actively listen to fellow students to follow the full event, enabling students to approach interpreting from a new perspective. It is in fact this collaborative aspect which makes MCs particularly valuable as a component of conference interpreting training.

2. Research methodology

The study was carried out over a period of two years in order to collect data from a significant pool of participants, thus building on Xiangdong's (2015) experiment. A total of 43 students completed the questionnaires (22 for the first cohort, 21 for the second) and 32 students volunteered to take part in the interviews. All language combinations taught at Heriot-Watt University were represented in the questionnaires and interviews, thus creating an illustrative sample. The experiment targeted two cohorts of M.A and MSc students who had all received a similar training in conference interpreting, which includes all the principles laid out by Gile (2009)[2]. At this stage of their training, both groups have studied the key concepts and theoretical framework of conference interpreting practice, and they have also had ample training and practice in consecutive interpreting, and a solid introduction to simultaneous interpreting in class.

A mixed-method approach was used to collect the data: the quantitative part of the study was carried out using short questionnaires which were made available, on paper and online, to reach out to as many students as possible. The qualitative part of the data collection encompassed more in-depth interviews in which students participated on a voluntary basis.

The questionnaires were based on a series of statements which participants were asked to rate, using Likert scales, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), following Sachtleben's model (2015), to make it fairly easy and quick for

2 Gile's Effort Model of Simultaneous Interpreting (2009:167-175) identifies the skills trainees need to master for simultaneous interpreting: Listening and Analysis, Short-term memory Effort and Speech production Effort, as well as Coordination Effort. Gile also considers problem triggers, failure sequences and anticipation, and suggests exercises to enable learners to test their skills and gradually build up their proficiency towards this Effort Model. MCs are designed to combine all these challenges and foster a reflexive approach to simultaneous interpreting practice.

students to engage with this study. Interviews were filmed, with the students' consent.

The MC[3] experience incorporates French, Spanish, German and BSL at M.A. level, and French, German, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese at MSc level. Thus, all students experience conference interpreting as pure users at some point, and practice either consecutive or simultaneous facing what Alexeeva and Shutova (2011: 14) call "the stress of working in front of a real audience". The significance of working in as authentic a setting as possible is also stressed by Kurz (1989, 2002); Thiéry (1990); Sawyer (2004); De Laet (2010); Setton (2010) and Gillies (2013) to name a few.

3. Data and Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaires and interviews lead to a number of findings in the shape of percentages and observations respectively. Three clear key aspects stood out and have been used to organise the data. They range from students' awareness of the task at hand (considered in 4.1) to their perception of core interpreting skills (in 4.2). It was also clear that participation in the experiment led to reflections on professional practice and even the development of a model of good practice, two aspects considered in points 4.3 and 4.4.

3.1 Awareness of conference interpreting

The overall experience

It appears that a vast majority of the interviewees considered mock conferences to be a fundamental element in their training as conference interpreters. When asked to rate from 1 to 5 – 1 being "I strongly agree" and 5 being "I strongly disagree" – the statement "The mini-conference experience has helped me understand how to get the best of my interpreting training" in the questionnaires, 88.7% of them stated that they strongly or partially agreed.

Then during the interviews, all students, without exceptions, reiterated that MCs are a very useful, valuable and beneficial learning experience. This is exemplified by the following statement made by participant 4, who noted that: "the miniconf is a real context and it forces you to practice and because you have other people relying on you, you can't choose to have a bad day, you have to play well". When looking more closely at answers in the open-ended questions in the questionnaires and at the observations made by students during interviews, it was clear that participating in MCs led students to pay more attention to their performance, while also contributing to their motivation.

3 Note that these MCs are known by staff and students as "mini-conferences".

Performance awareness and understanding of aims

Students find mini-conferences challenging but spontaneously 50% of them mention in their first answer that MCs represent the closest possible experience to a real-life setting, showing a clear understanding of the purpose of such a challenge. Additionally, as respondent 5 reflected during the interview, "[they] realize [they] have to keep going because, otherwise, communication is broken" and they know how challenging it is when for instance they themselves rely on a colleague for relay interpreting or simply need the interpreters to follow the discussion. Moreover, another student sums up what MCs mean for them: "Before MCs we knew theoretically what it would be like to be in a conference. You know how it affects your interpreting and how you might get around something or how you have to improve your interpreting so the others can rely on you" (respondent 3). The benefits of MCs are identified by respondents in terms of student confidence and their perceived performance and progression, as is exemplified by the following answer: "Miniconfs really helped me to improve quite rapidly. I got 4/5 speeches one after the other and also the interventions afterwards so you get a feel of what it is really like as opposed to when you are in class in the booths where you don't feel as much pressure" (respondent 13). Building on the model described by Kurz (2002), respondent 23 notes: "When we do consecutive interpreting in class it's often a video which is useful too but, having the person there you can see the mannerisms, their pace is more adapted to the conference so I really enjoy seeing the person, having eye contact with them. That really helps me".

In pedagogical terms, MCs create a valuable opportunity for self-assessment as highlighted by the following idea expressed by interviewee 12: "MCs are very difficult but good to see your exact level". Students are provided with self-assessment sheets and encouraged to record their performance during MCs, to then critically assess their performance. Direct peer feedback is also a clear way for students to gauge their performance, as the room layout gives them a direct, visual contact with their listeners (colleagues taking relay and staff and student playing the part of delegates around the table). As interviewee 14 added: "You have to keep going and can't get stuck". This is further supported by respondent 26, who stated that "having the chance to be a speaker helps you get in the shoes of people you are working for". Participants' remarks validate the use of MCs as a situated learning experience: they show that the process has contributed to a better awareness of their performance and, through reflection, to a clear understanding of the standards they are aiming for.

Impact on student motivation and professional goals

Mini-conferences also have a positive impact on students in terms of motivation, an idea validated by Xiangdong (2015). Encouragement to perform to a higher level is essential for students: "When I listen to my colleagues, if they are well spoken or they enunciate well, it encourages me to continue with that same emphasis in my speech production, so I can learn from my peers. You have worse or better days, so it is nice to see that it is the same for everyone else. Listening to

my peers really pushes me, especially listening to my friends, which really helps me" (respondent 16).

An additional step in our questionnaire involved asking how the mini-conference experience had affected students' motivation to become professional interpreters, a recurring topic in the relevant literature (Lin and De Manuel Jerez in Xiangdong 2015: 325-326).

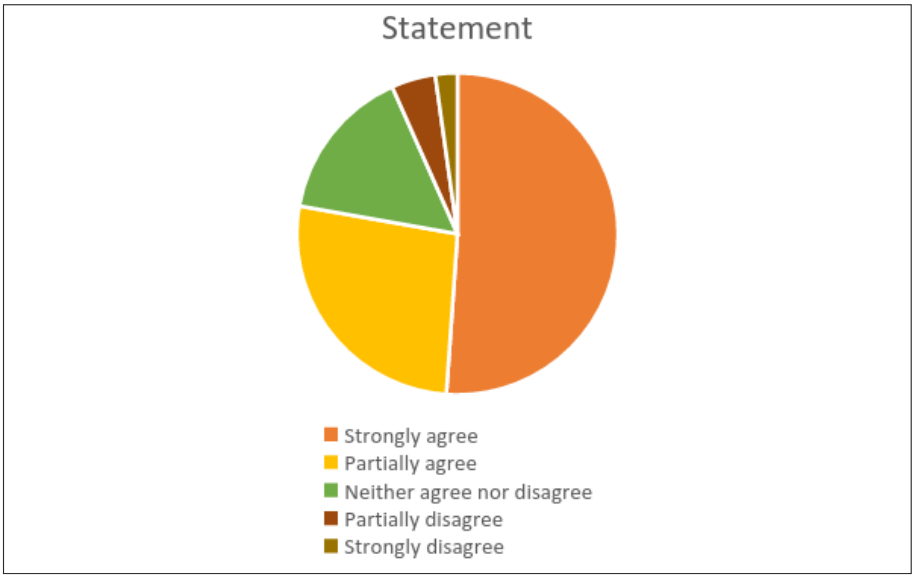

Figure 1: The mini-conference experience has motivated me in my willingness to become a professional conference interpreter.

As illustrated in Figure 1, it is clear that MCs definitely boost students' determination to become professional interpreters. A significant 77.3% of them strongly or partially agreed that taking part in this type of situated learning activity, designed as a largely student-led exercise, consolidated their determination to become professional interpreters. As Hawtrey (2007: 145) states: "Experiential learning activities also offer a greater chance for students making the link between their studies and their personal goals, such as career or personal skill development". It is obvious that these students are at a point when they are considering their future professional plans and MCs act as an eye-opening experience, as indicated by respondent 20: "MCs could help you to start in the private market feeling more confident about your interpreting performance". Respondent 2 elaborates on this, making the connection between MCs and an authentic professional setting: "It's real, and it feels it is like it would be in the future, should you work as a conference interpreter". These comments confirm what Xiangdong (2015: 338) established: "though MCs seemed to be challenging tasks, trainees perceived them as good, beneficial and stimulating learning experiences". Moreover, this is consistent with Kurz's (1989: 67) statement that "students should undergo training that prepares them for real-life experiences", a point also made by Ardi-

to (1999: 187), who argued that interpreting training must be designed "as far as possible to reflect real-life conditions".

After analysing the comments made by respondents, it is clear that situated learning brings about benefits for students and one of them is understanding challenges, more specifically, those they may have to face once they start working in a professional conference interpreting booth.

3.2 Understanding core interpreting skills

Participants' responses in both types of data collected indicate that this experience of MCs has led them to better understand the range of skills they need to master, and to engage in constructive self-assessment in keeping with the principles of a situated learning experiment. More specifically, they referred clearly to core skills like pace-management, preparation and command of the professional booth, and collaboration.

Pace and décalage

To begin with, we will look into students' observations about pace and technique. Talking about relay interpreting, respondent 3 said: "It makes you realize your own needs as a language user, so you need the interpreter to keep up the pace, you need them to give you information about things, about a particular culture. So it makes you aware of what you need to provide in your own interpreting". Similarly, respondent 30 noted: "Pace makes you think about when you are providing [the interpreting]. You learn from things they [your peers] do well if they keep going". Respondent 22 reflects further on pace-keeping and décalage, comparing practice from the source speech and relay from a pivot interpreter: "[Miniconferences have taught me] how to control my time lag because normally I tend to be too close [to the source speech] and that has helped me to understand I need to wait, to lag behind the interpreter a bit more. If the other interpreter corrects himself, then you have the time to avoid the original mistake".

Taking part in MCs has led students to analyse the difficulties they encounter and connect experience with theories on interpreting studies. In fact, respondent 12, having noted the issue with coherence, diagnosed her performance and identified what she needed to improve: "longer décalage. Having an idea of the topic allows you to better decipher the message". Respondent 8 added: "if someone is speaking very slowly, I know that needs to be changed so I try to rephrase to make it sound more dynamic." These statements demonstrate that through this type of experience, students are able to respond to various real-life-like challenges presented in a conference setting.

Building on the question of pace, participants have reflected on another concern: the need to finish sentences. It seems to be one of the most significant lessons identified by participants: "Trying to give the right pace is important. And trying to finish your sentences because if you don't have entire sentences, it's problematic for the others" (respondent 3). Respondent 18 further elaborates: "Don't start a sentence if you don't know where it is going". This point is often

highlighted in class, but MCs lead participants to experience the issues that stem from this type of problem, and they subsequently engage better with the professional practice they are taught.

Preparation, booth strategies and technological competency

A further learning benefit from participating in MCs is that students realise the benefits of adequate preparation, an aspect which is crucial both for conference interpreting trainees and professional practitioners. Furthermore, students started to reflect on practical aspects of professional practice, such as which tools to bring in the booth and how to use them, as highlighted by respondent 9: "I think I need to prepare the glossary well in advance. I need to tune the channels and I need to give the message in simple language".

These elements may be subsidiary skills for trainee interpreters but, if students are starting to engage with such considerations at this learning stage, these practical aspects are less likely to become an issue or cause of stress in a professional setting. To take the reflection further, it would be interesting to develop a collaborative research activity to work on a more comprehensive list of good and bad booth practices.

Students have learnt further valuable lessons: "[The mini-conference] gives you a better conception of things to avoid in your own interpreting. It has taught me a good level of self-awareness in terms of booth management and of making sure when the mike is on/off" (respondent 17). This links with Flerov's (2014) set of recommendations on booth management.

Cooperation and peer support

A further key element identified by students is cooperation and its benefits, in particular to gain awareness of good, professional practice and delivery. Respondent 2 stated: "You can work in teams, you can listen and you have the chance to perform and get feedback from peers", articulating clearly the collaborative learning benefits of the experience.

In this regard, the importance of observation is relevant both for students who work with the same language combination, or students who work from a language not understood by the listener, as stressed by Gillies (2013). Thus, MCs place students in a situation where they must cooperate, something which they do not necessarily do in class or in self-study sessions despite being encouraged to do so, as noted by respondent 21: "until we started doing mini-conferences, we hadn't listened to each other interpreting so that was a good lesson for me or if you noticed that someone was quite nervous when talking, it made you aware of how that comes across so trying to calm yourself down and deliver in a calm fashion that makes sense does help".

Since participants are still trainees, their delivery as speakers, consecutive interpreters or simultaneous interpreters are not always optimum, but this has actually contributed to their peers' learning experience. It could also be argued that it also reflects fairly the realities of conference settings, when interpreters are faced with a range of speakers who are not necessarily all used to public speaking

or to being interpreted. Respondent 8 reflected that this diversity of speech delivery types was constructive: "It has taught me to adapt (…). If you are relying on someone sounding anxious, you need to change that and sound calmer".

Users' expectations are also significant for respondents: "[the mini-conference] has made me more aware of what is expected. So that has really encouraged me to think about it more seriously and it made us all try our best, it really pushed us. It is helpful to give each other feedback" (respondent 3).

This last comment reinforces another valuable learning outcome identified by participants: peer feedback. Respondent 23 noted: "I find it helpful to get feedback from people listening to me so I learnt a lot about the way I speak". Likewise, solidarity and empathy are characteristics mentioned by most participants: "You have to be very clear anyway but when you think about your colleagues, you think, I need to do well for them" (respondent 14).

3.3 Anticipating the professional context

Engaging in an authentic interpreting experience has also led students to reflect on the "community of practice" described by Lave and Wenger (1991), identifying in particular two aspects of a professional context that may not be so apparent in dual language-combination classes, namely pressure and directionality.

Pressure

Pressure is one of the aspects that students identified as related to real-life practice, given that it is an experience as close to a real-life setting as possible, and thus conducive to stress, as indicated by Alexeeva and Shutova (2011: 14). Respondent 13 noted: "We get to be put in a real-life situation without the stress of a real job" and respondent 28 further reflected on the learning benefits of this controlled increased pressure: "Sometimes I realize I do better at miniconfs than in class because I have more pressure on my shoulders and because I really need to do well at that time so that gives you a taste of real life". Students feel stressed because "[their] colleagues and lecturers are listening to [them] but [they] end up getting used to it" (respondent 11), thus showing the benefits of this type of situated learning experience to enable trainees to build coping mechanisms suited to the challenges other than the linguistic aspect of interpreting. Because MCs combine an array of features that resemble the professional world in a very faithful way, students learn to identify aspects of professional practice and articulate a constructive reflection on the pedagogical aspect of such an experience.

Directionality

Another matter that emerged from the questionnaire completed by students was language directionality. Even though it would be ideal for professional interpreters to work into their native tongue (Lim 2005: 1), the reality is that working into one's B language is increasingly required of conference interpreters. This developing demand experienced by professionals is reflected in MCs when students need

to work into their B language in order to facilitate communication. Therefore, it is another aspect of the experience which further enhances students' awareness of the challenges and realities of professional practice: the exercise mirrors what they will likely encounter on the market while 22.7% disagree (Figure 2).

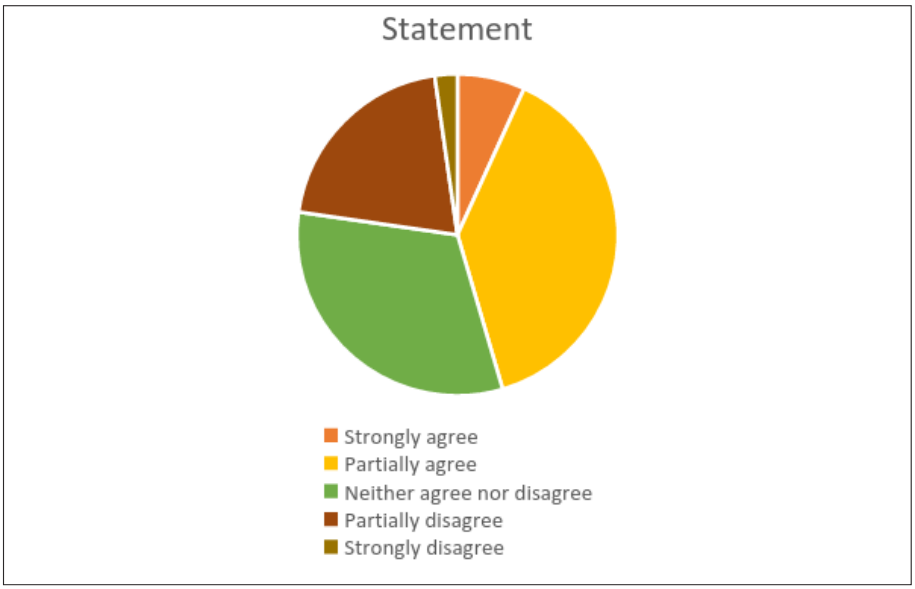

Figure 2: Interpreting into the foreign language means a decrease in quality.

One would expect students to believe that an interpreter performs better into their native language and that was the case in some instances but, surprisingly, several students considered that working into their B language was better because the message is better understood and delivered in simple terms into the B language, as expressed by respondent 31: "Sometimes non-natives make sentences more simple but if you get all the information, that is perfectly right. If the non-native speaker is very clear and sentences are simpler, then it could be easier, but if you don't understand the accent, the situation gets worse. It depends on the level of the language of the person". The following answer elaborates on the same idea: "It depends on the person. Sometimes it is very good even when it is not done by a native speaker because they go straight to the point and use less complicated vocabulary" (respondent 17).

However, other students believe that working into their native tongue is "generally better" (respondent 12) because they can focus on "making the message make sense" (respondent 8), and, since they are more proficient in their A language, they generally manage to convey the meaning in a way that is easy to understand. Respondent 19 identifies the simultaneous interpreting level of the interpreter as something more relevant than their level of proficiency in a particular language: "Generally it is easier to have the relay from someone working into their mother tongue because obviously working into your B language is harder. However, the most important is how good the interpreter is more than

the language". Similarly, respondent 27 insists on the interpreting level of the simultaneous interpreting provider: "There are more calques and literal interpretations. Delivery is more stressed into the foreign tongue, they are having to think about what they are reformulating". Respondent 13 goes a step further: "I don't think the message is as clear and concise if they aren't native speakers, if they are not too comfy in that language, they stick too close to their A language".

3.4 Towards the articulation of a model of good practice by trainee interpreters

Participants have gained a clear understanding of the consequences of interpreting errors through first-hand experience, and started to formulate in their own words the core aspects of good professional practice during the interview process, showing a shift from practice and observation towards the articulation of a model of good practice to aim for.

While good professional practice is discussed and illustrated at length in class, it is through the experience of MCs that students make these principles their own. For instance respondent 19 stated: "You always have to be switched on because if you muck it up there is going to be a mistake in the next interpretation". This quote illustrates how the trainee starts taking responsibility for their part as an interpreter, through an increased awareness of the consequences of inaccuracy or lack of completeness in a performance, an aspect perhaps less easy to fully grasp during a standard bilingual session during which no relay takes place.

This immersive and authentic experience has also enabled respondent 22 to clearly relate their experience of a multilingual event facilitated by interpreters with the dos and don'ts of professional practice, while reflecting on the learning process such an experience has led to. They stated that: "You have to be as efficient as you can. It makes you more precise and it puts the pressure on you to do well because, if there is no one needing your interpreting services, you just mumble along but with this, you have to keep that professional level, so that has definitely helped". It is apparent that having genuine listeners has led this respondent to assimilate the need for clarity and consistency in their delivery, as well as the importance of stamina, an aspect which is better apprehended in a coherent and uninterrupted simulation like a mock-conference.

Respondent 27 gives a further and interesting insight into the learning outcomes of a realistic multilingual conference, highlighting the benefits of being exposed to the pressure this type of peer-dependent experience creates. This respondent explained: "It [the experience of MCs] has taught me how to cope under pressure. Because you see you are doing something real which is valuable for other people". The respondent clearly relates their learning process to the MC experience and concludes by identifying the same performance criteria an interpreter ought to aim for as respondent 27, stating: "You need to go straight to the point and make it clear. You are producing meaning".

Through participation in this type of situated learning experience, conference interpreting students have started to reflect on a model of good practice towards which they must strive. They are taking ownership of their performance and become fully aware of the consequences of poor or partial interpreting of

the source speeches; they have experienced and overcome the pressure inherent to such a setting through the realisation that their part is crucial in the communication, and they are articulating the key aspects of a good performance based on their experience of their peers' work: efficient, clear, focused on meaning and delivered in an articulate and timely fashion.

Through this situated learning experience, respondents have followed the learning model described by Kolb/Kolb (2005:198), drawing from a concrete experience (the MCs) they have observed in a reflexive way (as illustrated by their comments on their peers' or their own experience of MCs), before formulating abstract concepts (the model of good professional practice and key skills highlighted in the above paragraph). Being able to take part in further MCs then enables them to apply this concept of "good practice in interpreting" in further sessions.

4. Conclusion

The mock (or mini) conferences model adopted at Heriot-Watt as part of the final stage of the conference interpreting training of M.A. and MSc students is designed around a fully multilingual format. Students are therefore placed in a context where they experience interpreting not only as providers, but also as pure users, either actively as they take relay, or as users of interpreting attending a debate.

The data collected in this study has highlighted the beneficial nature of MCs as a pedagogical tool, showing that, through this experience, students have further engaged with core skills embedded in conference interpreting. This situated learning activity allows participants to realize how valuable it is for them to practice in a setting as authentic as possible. It also helps them understand the benefits of peer feedback and the importance of good booth management, and it led them to reflect on the quality of their delivery, to name a few of the learning benefits.

The performance of students in MCs would be worth studying, then comparing results with performances in class to establish.

Directionality is an issue raised by participants; therefore it would also be interesting to further consider the impact that working from a relay into a B language has on the learning experience of other trainees, considering that the relay is provided by a trainee conference interpreter. To do so, a comparative experiment could be designed to study comments made by trainee interpreters taking relay from peers who interpret into their A language.

Ultimately, taking part in this experience has contributed to trainee interpreters collaboratively developing a model of good professional practice to aim for, and it has led them to realise through this authentic and immersive situated learning experience that engaging in group practice and peer-feedback has an impact on their own performance.

It is also apparent that having the opportunity to engage in this type of experiment, mirroring a professional setup is highly motivating for students and helps them focus their efforts with a better understanding of the challenges pertaining to an authentic practice of the skills required for the task. In this sense, the ethos of this situated learning experiment can be adopted in other fields in which students need to develop skills and work towards joining a community of

practice (Lave/Wenger 1991) such as translation but also marketing, engineering, law, etc. This training pattern can be mirrored by creating learning environments that immerse trainees in a genuine, controlled situation.

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Public Service Interpreting for Conference Interpreting students: evaluation of a training module

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Abstract

This paper sets to present the conclusion of a training experience involving first- and second-year conference interpreting (CI) students who attended a 12-hour module on public service interpreting (PSI) and medical interpreting. The questions we endeavour to answer are: what extra skills should be taught to this category of students to prepare them for the particular context of PSI? What information should be provided? What would be the ideal duration and content of an extracurricular module for students who already have the basis in CI? A comparison between the interpreting performance by trained master's students and untrained undergraduate students gave us important clues as to the best answers.

Keywords

Public service interpreting, medical interpreting, conference interpreting, training evaluation.

Introduction

During the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year, a trainer from San Jorge University in Zaragoza (Spain), co-author of the present paper, delivered a four-step module in public service interpreting (PSI) for conference interpreting (CI)

students at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (Romania). Students attended these extra-curricular classes (here referred to as workshops and/or the training module) as part of their training for a local market that still does not always make a clear distinction between the various professions and activities involving the passage from one language-culture to another. Although MA programmes in translation and conference interpreting have existed for many years, it is not unusual for BA students of philology or applied modern language departments to work as both translators and interpreters. Romanian legislation allows it, as it does not distinguish thoroughly between the various translation-related professions.

The group was made up of six first-year students (who attended classes of consecutive interpreting without notes in the same semester as the first step in their CI training) and six second-year students (who had just started their simultaneous interpreting training). All attendees were native speakers of Romanian, 11 had English as a C language, seven had French, and six had Spanish. The only student who did not have English in her combination had a sufficient understanding to attend and was also helped by colleagues who translated for her in *chuchotage* mode when necessary. Classes were delivered in English while training exercises mainly involved the English-Spanish combination, and, less frequently, the Spanish-Romanian. Whenever needed, explanations were provided to those who did not have Spanish in their language combination. Linguistic diversity within the group proved an asset for the training, as students with Spanish had to play the role of interpreters for their classmates, who, in turn, had an authentic *pure customer* experience.

The trainer had multiple years of experience as a teacher and researcher of English-Spanish public service interpreting in general, with a strong focus on medical interpreting.

The module comprised four sessions combining theory and practice and ensured a progression from general to particular:

Public Service Interpreting (two hours): an introduction to the peculiarities of the context of public services (healthcare, courts, and other related settings) and of PSI as a profession in comparison to other interpreting contexts (especially conference interpreting), as well as the need for specialised training, current training opportunities, the status of interpreters in different countries (Australia, Canada, Spain, United States and United Kingdom), and the needed elements for PSI professionalization (e.g. clear and universal definition, certification and accreditation processes, codes of ethics, etc.);

Interpreting Techniques and Exercises (two hours): breathing, relaxing, and voice-training techniques; short-term memory and two-way interpreting exercises; court interpreting assignment consisting of a questioning of a Spanish-speaking defendant by an English-speaking prosecutor during a trial followed by a collective brainstorming based on a series of questions (e.g. What was the most difficult aspect during interpreting? How did you solve interpreting problems? What knowledge and skills do you think you need to be a court interpreter?)

Ethics in PSI (four hours): the importance of codes of ethics, as well as their limitations and main principles (accuracy, confidentiality, impartiality), and their practical implementation; video analyses, case studies, and role-plays involving situations with potential ethical dilemmas;

PSI in Specific Settings: Medical Interpreting (four hours): the definition of medical interpreting, the role of medical interpreters and their required competences, preparation and documentation exercises for medical interpreting assignments, and medical interpreting practices consisting in case studies and role-plays.

To test the efficiency and relevance of the training module, two Romanian trainers drafted pedagogical reports (see 2.1), participating students answered a questionnaire (see 2.2), and eight simulated interpreted medical consultations were recorded and analysed (see 2.3). In what follows, we will present the results of this experience and draw conclusions which are relevant for organizing training in similar contexts.

1. Description and assessment of the experience

1.1 Trainers' observations about the module

Two local CI trainers with professional experience as conference interpreters and public service interpreters, one of whom co-authored the present paper, attended all the training sessions as observers and discussed their observations with the module trainer. They examined the actual training content as well as the group dynamics. In particular, they looked at the degree to which the objectives were met, the effectiveness of the different activities and whether CI students were an appropriate audience for such a module (see Srivastava *et al.* 2018). A peer review model was used (see Gosling 2002), as we considered this the most constructive way of sharing opinions, know-how and knowledge.

According to the observers, the main assets of the module are the following:

- it provides a progression from general to particular and from theory to practice, which proved indispensable, as students had had no previous contact with PSI and were not necessarily aware of the difference between CI and PSI (see the module design above and the students' answers to the questionnaire below);
- it provides a balanced approach to both theory and practice, the two being evenly distributed throughout the module (all workshops included, to different extents, theoretical information and practical activities);
- it offers training content which is relevant to the reality of a PSI professional by presenting situations and scenarios similar to real life (mainly scripted dialogues and recordings designed for PSI training were used);
- it provides a great variety of materials and interactive exercises; more specifically, it combines various types of training resources and methods (PowerPoint presentations, printed documents, video analysis, Q&A, case studies, role-plays, etc.), which ensure students' attention and participation throughout each workshop;
- furthermore, students are provided with training material and bibliographic references for further use, and the trainer constantly promotes their active involvement thanks to a dynamic and empathic approach.

The observers also provided the following improvement suggestions:

- a more thorough analysis of the topic at hand could introduce actual training activities to raise awareness on the relevance of PSI skills in today's labour market;
- practical exercises could be intensified in order to give students the opportunity to practice interpreting techniques that are less used in their conference interpreting training (whispering and dialogue interpreting in particular);
- students' passive attitudes at the very beginning of the module could indicate the need for activities promoting their participation from the start;
- further developments could include more language combinations and focus on PSI-specific skills and difficulties, such as bidirectionality, endurance, and emotional resilience. This would require, of course, a linguistically homogeneous group and/or more time.

1.2 Trainees' questionnaire

In what follows, we will note the answers to the questionnaire administered to the students, focusing on what they learned during the training module that they would not have found in their regular training (inspiration was drawn from the Kirkpatrick Model as described by Srivastava *et al.* 2018, as well as from the more refined training assessment proposed by Kraiger *et al.* 1993).

The questionnaires were distributed in written form at the end of the last session and respondents gave them back anonymously to one of the observers within a week. Of the twelve students who took part in the training, one refused to answer the questionnaire.

It was written in English and consisted of six questions, two of them being yes-no questions with the possibility to add further comments, while others contained a list with items to evaluate or open wh-questions (see full questionnaire in Annex 1).

Q1 addresses the usefulness of the module directly: "Have these workshops helped you develop extra skills that will contribute to your development as a future interpreter? No/Yes (Please, name a few)".

Nine trainees answered "yes" to the question, one answered "no", and one did not provide any answer. The follow-up question offered respondents the opportunity to answer freely. Our subsequent analysis allowed us to group their answers in the following categories: *ethics* (five answers), *information on PSI*[1] (three), *voice-training techniques* (two), *relaxing and reaction control techniques* (two), *conflict mediation* (one), *development of further skills*[2] (one), *enhancement of background knowledge* (one), *awareness of the importance of interpreting* (one), *awareness of the importance of one's B language* (one).

1 Those who gave this answer stressed that it was all new to them.

2 Unfortunately, the student did not give details about the actual skills s/he considers to have acquired. We can assume, s/he refers to skills not stressed upon in CI training.

The student who answered negatively indicated that pragmatic information was acquired instead. The other respondents did not seem to distinguish between "skills" (e.g. relaxation and voice-training techniques, attention to the client's needs, conflict mediation techniques, stress management, ability to react to conflict situations) and "pragmatic information"[3] (e.g. codes of ethics, impartiality, specificities of PSI, ethical issues), as their answers mention both, with just five exceptions. This may suggest that the module was perceived as having mainly an introductory function and that students felt more time should be devoted to activities promoting acquisition of PSI-specific skills.

Q2 addresses the module's contents: "Which have been the most and the least useful activities and theoretical aspects addressed in the workshops?". Students were provided with a list of 18 items that they had to order according to their usefulness, from 1 (the most useful) to 18 (the least useful)[4], with the possibility of assigning the same grade to aspects they considered equally useful. The number assigned to each item was considered as a score, so that the total number of points would indicate each item's grade – with the best possible grade corresponding to 11 points and the worst to 198 points. The final point count resulted in the following ranking:

1. Medical Interpreting Role-Plays - 35 points
2. Case Studies about Ethical Dilemmas - 39 points
3. Video Analysis Exercises - 40 points
4. Role-Plays with Ethical Dilemmas - 41 points
5a. Briefing/Introduction in Public Service Interpreting - 46 points
5b. Two-Way Interpreting Exercises - 46 points
6. Medical Interpreting Case Studies - 51 points
7. The Main Principles: Accuracy, Impartiality and Confidentiality - 52 points
8a. Activities for the Development of Short-Term Memory - 53 points
8b. Useful Links and Resources for Medical Interpreters - 53 points
9. Court Interpreting Role-Plays - 58 points
10. Public Service Interpreter's Role and Codes of Ethics - 65 points
11. Preparation and Documentation for Medical Interpreting Assignments - 67 points
12. Public Service Interpreting Definition and Characterisation - 70 points
13. Definition of Medical Interpreting - 75 points
14. The Role of the Medical Interpreter - 80 points
15. Breathing, Relaxing and Voice-Training Techniques - 89 points
16. State-of-the-Art of Public Service Interpreting (research, training and profession) - 92 points

The list indicates a clear preference for practical exercises posing specific challenges (see positions 1-9, with the exception of 5a, 7 and 8b). Respondents also show a genuine curiosity about PSI (5a and 8b), while they seem less interested

3 Actually, the question was quite general and did not ask for such a distinction.
4 Rank definition: 1-3 = very useful; 4-7 = useful; 8-12 = possibly useful; 13-18 = the least useful.

in theoretical knowledge (10 to 16, with the exception of 15). The fact that "Medical Interpreting Case Studies" (6) ranks higher than "Court Interpreting Role-Plays" (9) is likely due to the particular emphasis put on medical interpreting during the module (with a session entirely dedicated to it), and not to a lack of interest by students.

The mere number of points assigned to an item, however, is not enough to acquire a full picture of the participants' views. For this reason, we also considered the number of times each item ranked in the first positions (from 1 to 3). Data (see Table 1 below) show that every single item was considered "the most useful" (1) at least once. Moreover, "Briefing/Introduction in Public Service Interpreting", "Main Principles: Accuracy, Impartiality and Confidentiality" and "Useful Links and Resources for Medical Interpreters" were considered "very useful" by the majority of respondents, ranking 5a, 7 and 8b respectively.

Item / grade	1	2	3
Medical Interpreting Role-Plays	2 times	3 times	1 time
Case Studies about Ethical Dilemmas	4 times	3 times	
Video Analysis Exercises	4 times	2 times	1 time
Role-Plays with Ethical Dilemmas	4 times	2 times	1 time
Briefing/Introduction in Public Service Interpreting	5 times		1 time
Two-Way Interpreting Exercises	3 times		1 time
Medical Interpreting Case Studies	4 times	1 time	1 time
The Main Principles: Accuracy, Impartiality and Confidentiality	5 times	1 time	1 time
Activities for the Development of Short-Term Memory	1 time	3 times	1 time
Useful Links and Resources for Medical Interpreters	5 times	1 time	1 time
Court Interpreting Role-Plays	1 time	3 times	2 times
Public Service Interpreter's Role and Codes of Ethics	4 times		1 time
Preparation and Documentation for Medical Interpreting Assignments	2 times		2 times
Public Service Interpreting Definition and Characterisation	2 times	3 times	
Definition of Medical Interpreting	2 times	1 time	1 time
The Role of the Medical Interpreter	2 times		
Breathing, Relaxing and Voice Techniques	2 times	1 time	
State-of-the-Art of Public Service Interpreting	1 time	1 time	1 time

Table 1: Distribution of top-ranked positions (1-3) allocated to the items of Q2

This indicates that no item was considered useless and that, even in such a small group, expectations and needs are quite diverse. The greatest challenge, in this context, is for the trainer to accommodate as many as possible. One way to achieve that would be to outline a profile of the group beforehand and plan activity distribution within the module accordingly. A profile outline, however, would require trainees' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as of each activity's aim and function – knowledge that beginners rarely possess.

When designing a module for trainees with no experience in PSI, therefore, flexibility is most likely the best approach, with trainers adjusting the module online, during the actual teaching activity.

These conclusions are largely supported by the answers to Q3: "What are the activities or theoretical aspects that should have been tackled in more detail in the workshops?". A heavier focus on practical exercises and less theory seems to be the key to successful training, according to most students. Only one respondent explicitly stated the opposite,[5] namely "analysis + understanding exercises, foundational exercises + theory regarding PSI, *fewer practical exercises*; foundational exercises + theory regarding PSI; *more theory*, analysis, understanding of context, people, skills, etc.; understanding + use of different registers, context; *more 'how to do it' + 'how it's already done' than 'let's do it ourselves'*". In our view, responding to both kinds of requests/expectations is a matter of class preparation (having a variety of materials at hand and at least two possible lesson scripts) and of trainers' ability of perception and reaction in class. If the trainer is sensitive to a given group's spontaneous reactions, s/he can adapt each task while still keeping to the overall learning outcomes. In general, however, we believe that effective practical exercises require a solid basis of theory and research.

Overall, the perceived effect of the training was positive. To Q4 ("Would you be interested in participating in an extracurricular module on Public Service Interpreting as a supplement to your conference interpreting training?"), ten respondents answered "yes", and only one (the person who expressed her/his preference for more theory) stated that s/he would not, unless "the aforementioned points were considered".

For a better grasp of the trainees' needs and expectations, the last two questions focused on possible changes and additions to the module. The suggestions made for Q5 ("What other activities / theoretical aspects should such a module comprise?") are quite helpful and realistic in most cases. Once more, we condense the differently formulated suggestions in a set of comprehensive categories: terminological activities (including anatomy lessons – basic level), vocabulary and collocation exercises, use of parallel texts, more role-plays resembling real-life situations, the opportunity to practice in real-life situations, psycho-physiological stress-reducing activities so as to be able to better interact with interpreting users/customers in stressful situations, pragmatic/professional details (contracts, administrative details in general), more training resources. These answers point to the importance trainees attach to familiarizing with and being prepared for real-life situations, thus confirming conclusions of previous research (Angelelli 2008; Creeze 2015; Krystallidou *et al.* 2018)

Finally, Q6, which asked respondents to make additional suggestions and comments, confirmed the usefulness of the experience and stressed participants' appreciation for the positive attitude of the trainer, the general atmosphere, and the interesting topics dealt with throughout the module. As regards trainees' suggestions, they mainly concerned practical details: the languages involved in the exercises should be known to all the participants (easy to achieve with small-

5 We highlighted the elements we consider the most relevant for our study in *italics*.

er and more homogeneous groups), and more stress should be put on Romanian PSI and the differences with respect to other countries. This latter aspect is indeed crucial for students, as PSI training ought to be also country-specific, without losing sight of the importance of a general overview of PSI – its development and professionalisation, national standards and differences in nomenclature. Unfortunately, to this day research on PSI in Romania is still lacking and there is no specialised training offered by Romanian universities, which further highlights the benefits of our PSI training module.

1.3 Comparing trained to untrained students

The third method we used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training consisted in the recording and analysis of two series of Romanian-Spanish simulated interpreted medical consultations, for a total of eight recorded interactions. The interpreted consultations took place out of class some days after the training sessions. Simulations were organised as follows:

Dialogues 1 and 2 were scripted and rehearsed beforehand by the interpreting trainers playing the roles of doctor and patient, who were instructed, however, to adapt their turns to what the interpreter did and said. Patient and doctor were native speakers of Spanish and Romanian, respectively.

Dialogues 3 and 4 (see Annex 2) were unscripted. The doctor was played by an actual doctor and the patient was played by a native Spanish interpreting trainer. General guidelines (e.g. avoid pausing too often for the interpreter; instead, allow the interpreter to manage the flow of the conversation) that could be useful for role-playing were given beforehand to the native doctor and patient (see Annex 2).

Each dialogue was performed twice and was interpreted first by a trained student (a CI master's student who attended the workshops) and then by an untrained student (a third-year undergraduate student who had not attended the workshops, but had been attending a two-month course on consecutive interpreting without notes). The four students were presented with the topics that would be covered in the dialogues some days before the recordings, so that they had time to prepare. All participants (students and native speakers) signed an informed consent agreeing to be video recorded. The same four students interpreted in both sessions, so that useful data that emerged from dialogues 1 or 2 could be used the next week for dialogues 3 or 4. Last but not least: in order to make both experiences as realistic as possible, no feedback from the assisting trainers (the Spanish trainer who taught the module and one of the Romanian trainers who observed the training) was provided after the first session, even if the students were eager to receive it.

Assessment of trainees' interpreting performances focused not so much on linguistic aspects as on pragmatic issues, such as their observance of the standards of practice, understanding of the medical interpreter's role, and solutions given to specific passages presenting ethical dilemmas. Comparing the performance of the trained students with that of the untrained students allowed us to stress the need of specialised training and to identify those aspects that actually need reinforcing in future training activities.

Similarities between the student-interpreters' performances, albeit few, were indicative of their professional potential: they all prepared for the assignment by reading about the topic in both languages and used to various extents the experience gained in the first session to deliver a better performance in their second sessions.

Differences, on the other hand, were numerous and highlighted the added value of the PSI training module. In discussing them, we should nevertheless keep in mind the difference of age (two years) and that the master's students (those who attended the PSI training module) had more than one year of experience in CI training (consecutive with and without notes, in particular).

Master's students prepared for the introductory part of the dialogue. They brought their class notes to make sure they took care of the aspects that were stressed as relevant during the module, as for example the importance of providing a short briefing in both languages before interpreting (explaining the interpreter's role, the "rules" of an interpreter-mediated conversation, etc.). The effect of these formal details cannot be overstressed: indeed, not only do they raise awareness on the fact that there is an interpreter and that special communication rules apply, but the interpreter herself is in better control of her "in-between" position. This became even more evident when undergraduates interpreted: they were easily attracted into dyadic sequences with one of the parties, sometimes used the third person to refer to the doctor or patient, and kindly accepted to get more personally involved in the consultation, apparently without awareness of the existing risks. A relevant example is the students' reactions when, at the end of the interpreted consultation, the patient asks them to help her find a taxi:

(Dialogue 3. 1st recording)

Undergraduate student 1: Yo ahora tengo que preguntar si me puedo ir y, después, voy a darle una respuesta. [Now I have to ask if I can leave, and then I will give you an answer]

(Dialogue 3. 2nd recording)

Master's student 1: Lo siento, pero, como intérprete, yo no puedo acompañar a los clientes. Mi trabajo termina aquí. Lo siento mucho. [I am sorry but, as an interpreter, I am not allowed to accompany the clients. My work finishes here. I am really sorry]

Preparation for the assignment also differed. While specific terminology was a concern for both groups, the questions addressed to the Romanian trainer before the actual assignments indicated that master's students had a clearer idea of what they needed to better understand the context. More specifically, they asked about the medical situation because they had used the two or three lines provided by the trainer to investigate the topic and discover there were multiple possible options (see Annexes 1 and 2). Furthermore, they did not focus exclusively on terminological aspects, but tried to understand the processes and correlations behind technical terms. This is indeed visible when one master's student does not understand a term the doctor uses and asks twice for explanations:

(Dialogue 3. 2nd recording)

Doctor: Durerea este pulsatilă sau este continuă? [Is the pain pulsatile or continuous?]
Master's student 1: Interpretul își cere scuze: pulsatilă… adică în ce sens? [The interpreter apologises: what do you mean by *pulsatile*?]

Doctor: Pulsatilă, adică simte că e ca și cum i-ar bate inima în zona respectivă. Sau este o durere continuă și iradiază? [*Pulsatile* means she felt her heart beating in that area. Or is it an irradiating continuous pain?]
Master's student 1: Îmi cer scuze, nu înțeleg exact... [I apologise, I don't quite understand...]

After the second explanation, once she understood the concept, the interpreter could interpret properly. Asking for explanations rather than trying to use a Spanish word she was not sure of may be seen as an indication of good professional reflexes.

The two groups also differed in terms of promptness: Master's students were in general faster to react, even in front of ethical dilemmas, although sometimes they also showed hesitation. When undergraduates found themselves "trapped", master's students strived to adopt the right attitude by taking a few seconds before saying anything. Their body language (surprise when hearing some questions or answers especially during the non-scripted dialogues, embarrassment when the doctor explicitly asked the interpreter to make sure she renders her exact words or when the patient made side comments asking her not to tell the doctor, hesitation and embarrassment when faced with terminological problems) suggests they were assessing each potentially dangerous situation with the implications of one reaction or another, so they took a couple of seconds, possibly trying to remember what advice the PSI trainer had given in similar cases. This is evident in the different students' reactions when the patient asks them their opinion regarding the number of tests suggested by the doctor:

(Dialogue 1. 1st recording)
Patient: (Talking to the interpreter) ¿A usted no le parece que son muchos análisis? ¿No estaré peor de lo que dice la doctora? [Don't you think that these are too many tests? Am I worse than the doctor says?]
Undergraduate student 2: Eeeeeeeeh... Yo creo que no, que es importante hacer esos análisis para saber de qué se trata y así estamos seguros. [Hmmmm... I think that having those tests done is important in order to know what is going on, so we can be sure]
(Dialogue 1. 2nd recording)
Patient: (Talking to the interpreter) ¿No cree que son muchos análisis? ¿No estaré peor de lo que dice la doctora? [Don't you think that these are too many tests? Am I worse than the doctor says?]
Master's student 2: (After some seconds of hesitation) Como intérprete, yo no puedo responder a esta pregunta, pero se la puedo transmitir a la doctora. [As the interpreter, I cannot answer this question, but I can ask the doctor]

In our opinion, their hesitation and even the doubts they sometimes seemed to have are good indicators of professionalism: Once trained, they are likely to turn such doubts into the ability to "take a reflective stance toward the principles of accuracy, completeness and impartiality and start developing the attitude of 'lifelong, reflective practitioners'" (Winston 2005, quoted in Krystallidou *et al.* 2018: 138). With appropriate practice and perhaps more consolidation-oriented training, the visible signs of the interpreter's opinions and feelings would eventually disappear.

As mentioned above, the students' performances showed improvement from one session to the other, even if the second, more realistic setting posed many

more difficulties. For example, while (quite surprisingly in the case of master's students) nobody considered taking notes during the first session, the second time, master's students came with a notebook which they used occasionally. In the second recording session, trainees showed more confidence, as this time they were aware that ethical dilemmas could emerge, and were not caught unprepared. Master's students were again faster to respond, but the undergraduates' reactions also seemed somehow prompter the second time round, even if, overall, the difficulties encountered were more evident in their case. For example, at the beginning of the second unscripted dialogue, the following ethical dilemma is presented to the interpreting students:

> (Dialogue 4. 1st recording)
>
> Patient: Mire, no entiendo por qué está usted aquí. Yo he venido a esta clínica otras veces y había una intérprete que lo hacía muy bien y no sé si la podríamos llamar. [Look, I do not understand why you are here. I have come to this clinic several times and there was another interpreter who did her job well, so I wonder if we could call her]
> Undergraduate student 1: Hoy voy a estar yo aquí y espero que no sea ningún problema. Voy a tratar de solucionar los problemas que tenga usted. Voy a hacerlo igual de bien (que la otra intérprete). [Today it's me who's going to be here and I hope this is not a problem. I will try to solve your problems. I will do my work as well (as the other interpreter)]
>
> (Dialogue 4. 2nd recording)
>
> Patient: Perdone, es que yo he venido otras veces a ver a la doctora y he tenido otra intérprete, que lo hacía muy bien, y no entiendo por qué esta vez tenemos que cambiar de intérprete. [Sorry, I have visited the doctor many times before and I had another interpreter, who did her job well, so I do not understand why we have to change the interpreter today]
> Master's student 1: Yo fui llamada aquí para interpretar. Y le aseguro que lo voy a hacer igual de bien que la otra intérprete. Se puede fiar de mí. [I have been called here to interpret. And I assure you that I will work just as well as the other interpreter. You can trust me]

Finally, we present here a number of observations on the difference between scripted and spontaneous dialogues. Firstly, the spontaneous dialogue was, beyond any doubt, more authentic and hence more relevant than the scripted one: conversation unfolded naturally, both patient's and doctor's reactions being directly determined by the actual situation (including the interpreter's performance), with no pre-established script. As a result, even ethical dilemmas seemed less artificial and were dealt with more naturally. Overall, interpreters were visibly under more pressure in the spontaneous dialogue and, of course, this was no surprise because the interventions of the real doctor were more challenging than those of the doctor in the scripted dialogues. Once again, master's students were better equipped to deal with difficulties: They kept to the general rules (briefing, first person singular, etc.), but also prepared more thoroughly because they expected the doctor's interventions to be more challenging this time around.

2. Conclusions: towards an extracurricular PSI module for CI students

Based on the training experience described above, the trainers' observations, the feedback from trainees, and the analysis of the simulated interpreted medical consultations, we are inclined to believe that even a short-term module on PSI for CI students is relevant as preparation for real-life challenges. This group (with the second-year students being, of course, more advanced than the first-year one) now has a clear idea about the purpose of interpreting, good (and tested) linguistic and communication skills, experience in consecutive interpreting without notes, motivation, and preparation and documentation skills. A PSI optional module, especially if time is limited, should therefore focus on the differences between CI and PSI, while also building on the similarities and the common set of skills required.

Several elements from our training module proved particularly useful. First and foremost, having analysed during the module the importance of ethical aspects through theory, case studies and role-plays yielded significant results. Undergraduate students were confronted from the very first moments with the difficulties caused by the fact that they had failed to clarify the situation beforehand – i.e. the limits of the interpreter's role or the main ethical principles s/he should apply, as well as the use of the first person singular and direct address. Not having taken these steps before the beginning of the consultation not only paved the way for unexpected turns during the interaction, but resulted also in an increased cognitive load, requiring greater efforts to manage communication, leaving less energy for output-related processes. Moreover, having been exposed to potential ethical dilemmas proved a very valuable experience for master's students. Even if they were slightly taken aback by unforeseen difficulties, their reactions were quite prompt and, more often than not, "correct" from an ethical point of view. It should be mentioned here that, while progress from one exercise to another was obvious in all cases, students with CI training seemed to find it easier to adapt to the particular demands of the medical interpreting exercises.

Secondly, having been made aware of the importance of preparation, while all four students read about the topics announced, anticipation was more efficient in master's students, who felt the need to have a more thorough understanding of the medical context and participants, and not just of the terminology the doctor might use.

Thirdly, it came as no surprise that having a background in CI helps, which makes us believe that a module in PSI is likely to be more effective if offered to students – whether undergraduates or master's students – who have at least one semester of consecutive interpreting training (with or without notes) behind them: listening and processing skills acquired, as well as speaking and rendition experience, all increase the efficiency of training for the particular context of PSI. As stated by de Pedro Ricoy (2010: 102), "training in translation and interpreting techniques and strategies […] provided in accordance with the learning objectives for other generic modules or course components can be leveraged […] for its application to specific public service settings".

Fourthly, PSI training programmes and courses should promote the collaboration between public service providers and institutions (Ertl/Pöllabauer 2010;

Tomassini 2012; Rudvin 2014; Kristallidou *et al*. 2018), and that is what we tried to do when involving a doctor in our experiment. Involving public service providers in training can bring interpreting practices closer to reality, prepare students for future working environments, and, finally, be a first step in raising awareness among public service institutions of the use of trained professional interpreters.

Our study also indicated some improvements that could be made in order to yield the best possible results with a limited number of training hours. Without playing down theoretical, research-based content, more time should be devoted to individual practical exercises, so that each student can try both simulations at least once, namely interpreting a scripted dialogue and also a spontaneous conversation, preferably in different training sessions. This way problems encountered the first time can inspire useful considerations on the right – or at least better – solutions to be applied. Along the same lines, working with smaller groups would allow greater, more active participation in every training session. Regarding language distribution during simulations, we suggest that trainers should bear in mind that the following "characters" are needed for each practical exercise: a native pure customer (possibly a trainee) for each of the two languages in the dialogue to play the role of interlocutors who do not understand each other; at least one experienced observer who understands both languages and can also assess the interpreting performance; and two or three trainees with the same language combination as the interpreter, who will be actively asked to peer-review and comment their peer's performance and learn first-hand from the experience. If face-to-face lessons are combined with distance learning sessions, independent learning, self-monitoring and, whenever possible, peer assessment, such scenarios can become regular practice without much effort (de Pedro Ricoy 2010; D'Hayer 2012).

To conclude, organizing an extracurricular PSI module for CI students is useful and highly recommended, especially in today's context of an ever-changing labour-market. It can be conceived as complementary training and, if well scheduled, can lead to the acquisition of new skills as well as to the development and consolidation of previously acquired skills.

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ANNEX 1
QUESTIONNAIRE[6]

Your opinion as a participant in the PSI workshops is very valuable for us. For that reason, we would really appreciate if you could answer the following questions. Your contribution will be voluntary and anonymous. Thank you in advance!

1. Have these workshops helped you develop extra skills that will contribute to your development as a future interpreter?
   Yes (Please, name a few):
   No
2. Which have been the most and the least useful activities and theoretical aspects addressed in the workshops? (Please order the following activities and theoretical aspects from the most useful to the least useful by assigning them numbers from 1 –most useful– to 18 –least useful. In case you consider that two or more activities or theoretical aspects have been equally useful, assign them the same number.)
   Public Service Interpreting Definition and Characterisation
   State-of-the-Art of Public Service Interpreting
   Breathing, Relaxing and Voice Techniques
   Activities for the Development of Short-Term Memory
   Two-Way Interpreting Exercises
   Court Interpreting Role-Plays
   Public Service Interpreter's Role and Codes of Ethics
   The Main Principles: Accuracy, Impartiality and Confidentiality
   Briefing/Introduction in Public Service Interpreting
   Video Analysis Exercises
   Case Studies about Ethical Dilemmas
   Role-Plays with Ethical Dilemmas
   Definition of Medical Interpreting
   The Role of the Medical Interpreter
   Useful Links and Resources for Medical Interpreters
   Preparation and Documentation for Medical Interpreting Assignments
   Medical Interpreting Case Studies
   Medical Interpreting Role-Plays
3. What are the activities or theoretical aspects that should have been tackled in more detail in the workshops? (Please select as many activities and theoretical aspects as you want from the list provided above)
4. Would you be interested in participating in an extra module on Public Service Interpreting as a supplement to your conference interpreting training?
   Yes
   No
5. What other activities / theoretical aspects should such a module comprise?
6. Please add here any suggestions and comments you might have with respect to these workshops.

6 This is the original version of the questionnaire distributed to students, not reviewed by a native speaker as no publication of the results was envisaged at that time.

ANNEX 2
GUIDELINES for the DOCTOR and the patient

First of all, we would like to thank you for participating in these simulated interpreted interactions and for your permission to record them.

In this document, we provide you with some general guidelines that may help you during the role-play.

1. The dialogues in which you will participate will deal with the following topics:

DIALOGUE 3. A Spanish woman staying in Cluj-Napoca for a week in a business trip has been suffering from sharp pain in her gums for several days. On the fourth day, she gets up with her right cheek very inflamed and it seems she has gotten a gumboil. So she goes immediately to the dentist.

DIALOGUE 4. A Spanish woman who arrived in Cluj-Napoca several months ago is having some symptoms that may be related with the beginning of menopause (known as perimenopause), such as irregular periods, night sweats, sleep problems, mood changes, etc. She visits her general practitioner to discuss possible natural remedies that may help her cope with these symptoms.

2. At the beginning of the conversation, the interpreter may or may not (depending on her training and/or experience) introduce herself and explain her role and what is expected from you.

3. While role-playing, participants who play the doctor and the patient should:

· act out the scenario as realistically as possible. Inject emotion! Keep it real!

· not help the interpreter. Never assist the person who plays the interpreter role by supplying a term when the interpreter gets "stuck". (Remember: In real life, most of the time no one is there to help the interpreter!)

· avoid speaking one sentence at a time. Don't "spoon-feed" the interpreter.

· avoid pausing too often for the interpreter: Instead, allow the interpreter to manage the flow of the conversation.

· keep talking. Do not interrupt the dialogue to critique the interpreter, discuss a term or for any other reason but an emergency. Wait until the end, in case you would like to share comments.

4. Specific guidelines for the doctor

While role-playing you may ask yourself the following questions:

Does the message of the interpreter make complete sense? Does it fit with the medical history and/or the patient's profile? If not, ask the interpreter to repeat and, in case you cannot properly understand the message, ask the interpreter for further explanations.

Are you unsure about your understanding of anything said during the conversation? Check with the interpreter before continuing.

Is the interpreted message much shorter than the patient's message? Check the completeness of the interpreted message with the interpreter and, if needed, also with the patient.

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Numbers: from stumbling block to training tool

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Abstract

Numbers are the most common and complex problem trigger for interpreters. Previous research on the topic highlighted a correlation between errors and specific skill deficiencies, suggesting that this difficulty may be overcome through targeted training. However, no systematic training method has yet been developed to address this vexing problem. This article presents a constructivist, skill-based training programme designed on the basis of research findings with the aim to develop interpreting trainees' competence in the simultaneous interpretation (SI) of numbers. The article outlines the theoretical underpinning of the training programme and its design. It then presents the results of a small-case study conducted through design-focused evaluation to explore the impact of the chosen instructional design strategies on participants' learning process. Two groups of interpreting trainees (5 in each group) participated in the training programme and, in the end, provided the author with unstructured written feedback. The responses were analysed by qualitative thematic analysis. The analysis reveals participants' perception of how the instructional design principles underpinning the training programme supported their learning process, leading to hypotheses for future studies on instructional design for conference interpreter training. The analysis also reports participants' perceived training outcomes and highlights the transfer of skills and techniques to different interpreting tasks, modes and language combinations. Overall, the article aims to contribute to the field's understanding of the difficulty in interpreting numbers and addresses the need for a pedagogical response to this challenge. It also aims to highlight the potential of instructional design research to advance the current stand of interpreting pedagogy.

Keywords

Simultaneous Interpreting, numbers, number comprehension, interpreter training, cognitive skill acquisition, metacognition, instructional design, design-focused evaluation.

Introduction

> Conference interpreters are made, not born […] This highlights the importance of training, particularly formal/institutional training, for conference interpreters […] Formal training can help individuals who wish to become professional interpreters enhance their performance to the full extent of their potential as well as helping them develop their interpreting skills more rapidly than they could through field experience and self-instruction. (Fan 2012: 1)

When talking about the *Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Teaching Conference Interpretation*, one of the main questions that arises is the relationship between interpreting theory/research and interpreter training. The landmark Trieste conference of 1986 (Dodds/Gran 1989) contributed to a shift in interpreting research from 'personal theorising' (Setton 2010) to scientific knowledge backed by empirical data. In the same way, over the years, interpreter education has seen a shift from an anecdotal teaching approach mainly driven by the trainer's subjective experience to a "systematic, structured training methodology based on solid theoretical research findings" (Kalina 2000: 9).

Despite the substantial achievements made through the years, it is not possible to affirm that such shift has been completed. A first reason is that some misconceptions about interpreter training still risk preventing the successful reception of research findings in interpreter education. For instance, Pöchhacker (2010) points out that interpreter training in some educational institutions is still based on a "master-apprentice model". The underlying assumption is that learning occurs through the transmission of practical knowledge from the master of the craft – the practising trainer – to the want-to-be interpreter. The role of theory and research in such a model appears to be very limited. Only marginal importance is attributed to the trainer's theoretical knowledge of interpreting and pedagogy, such as fundamental principles and processes inherent in the interpreting task and factors stimulating or inhibiting learning. Furthermore, such a master-apprentice model does not assert the need to create a rigorous, theoretically sound teaching framework to enable students to achieve desired learning objectives. Considering the complex nature of interpreting skills and the requirements of the acquisition process, however, it appears reasonable that systematic training may be more effective than minimally guided approaches in supporting trainees' development of interpreting expertise. A second reason why the shift from an anecdotal approach to systematic interpreter training may still be regarded as incomplete lies in the lack of a comprehensive, research-based teaching methodology in some areas of interpreting pedagogy. One such exam-

ple is represented by the pedagogy of number interpreting. The difficulty commonly associated with interpreting these elements makes numbers eligible to receive priority in interpreter training. Despite this, a systematic framework for training and instruction on how to interpret numbers is still missing.

Numbers are generally acknowledged as a major stumbling block for interpreters, capable of disrupting interpretation and triggering gross sense contradictions (Frittella 2017). They were found to be even more problematic than other problem triggers, such as names (Lamberger-Felber 2001). Numbers are statistically correlated with a sensible reduction in the quality of the interpreter's delivery when this is assessed by parameters such as completeness, accuracy, plausibility, fluency, and effectiveness (Frittella 2017). The studies on interpreting trainees' SI of numbers reported an average error rate above 40% (Mazza 2001; Pinochi 2009). However, despite the "ready identification of numbers as a source of difficulty for the interpreter" (Mead 2015: 287), so far, research has failed to identify a concrete answer and even concluded that "there does not seem to be any real solution to this problem" (Pinochi 2009: 55). As a consequence, the inclusion of numbers in the interpreter training curriculum and the selection of training strategies still largely depends on the deliberate choices of the trainer rather than on research-based best practices (Frittella 2017). However, training shortages seem to be a major cause of students' inability to explain their difficulties in interpreting numbers and their lack of awareness of viable coping methods, which, in turn, seems to correlate with their errors (*ibid*.). For instance, the study just mentioned reports that the participants did not prepare on numbers although they had received key information one week before the experiment and they knew that they would interpret a number-dense speech. In the retrospective questionnaire, they did not show any awareness of the importance of acquiring relevant *encyclopaedic numerical knowledge* (Cappelletti *et al.* 2008) in preparation for interpreting numbers[1].

Numbers can be defined as highly cognitively demanding for several reasons. From a *cognitivist perspective*, the mental processes inherent in the transformation of a source-language (SL) number word into the corresponding target-language (TL) number word cause an increase in task requirements compared to the interpretation of other text elements[2]. From a *functionalist perspective*, numbers are elements that contribute to the information structure of the source text, that convey meaning and produce sense by interacting with the listener's background knowledge, and that have a specific communicative function in relation to the speaker's purpose: informing, persuading or evoking a desired effect on the audience. For this reason, numbers have a variable degree of semantic, cognitive and pragmatic redundancy (for the definition of the terms, see Černov 2004). From this point of view, the interpretation of numbers is not limited to a mere asemantic transcoding process ('literal translation', Braun/Clarici 1996), requiring

1 See Frittella (2017, 2019) on the implications of preparation on numbers and the acquisition of *encyclopaedic numerical knowledge* for the interpreter.

2 See Frittella (2017, 2019) for a comprehensive review of the causes of difficulty in number interpreting and a discussion of the implications of analysing number interpreting from a *cognitivist* and a *functionalist* perspective.

the interpreter to have mastered the ability to rapidly switch from 'intelligent' to 'literal hearing' (Pinochi 2009). It also involves processes such as anticipation, analysis and inferencing and, hence, implies multiple complex cognitive skills.

To the author's knowledge, the present article proposes the first systematic training programme for the SI of numbers, which aims to train the skills inherent in number interpreting. The starting point of the skill-based training programme was the author's previous research project (Frittella 2017, 2019), which served as a basis to develop a model of number interpreting and of the skills involved in this task. The course design process was also informed by a review of state-of-the-art scientific knowledge about complex cognitive skills, the requirements of the acquisition process, effective instructional design (ID) principles and influencing variables determined by the learner's cognitive and affective engagement in the learning process. The article also presents a small-case study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the ID principles underlying the training programme. This is an exploratory study involving two groups of participants: BA and MA interpreting trainees with Italian as their mother tongue and English as one of their working languages. Based on design-focused evaluation (DFE, Smith 2008), the author gathered participants' unstructured feedback at the end of the training programme and analysed the written responses by thematic analysis.

The article is structured as follows. First, it presents the theoretical pillars of the training programme, including a review of ID for cognitive skill training and the competence model of *number interpreting as skilled performance* developed by the author. Second, the article summarises the key characteristics of the course design and provides examples of the training activities. Third, it presents the study design. Fourth, it outlines the results of the thematic analysis of participants' feedback. Fifth, it discusses the author's interpretation of the results in light of relevant theory. Finally, it presents the conclusions of the present study and its future developments. In the context sketched above, this article pursues a double aim. On the one hand, it addresses the practical need of proposing a concrete answer to the vexing problem posed by interpreting numbers. On the other hand, it aims to draw the field's attention to the potential of instructional design research to advance the current stand of conference interpreting pedagogy.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1 Instructional design for skill acquisition

Simultaneous interpreting (SI) may be regarded as an example of expert performance, involving the concurrent use of multiple complex cognitive skills and requiring solving problems under time constraints and psychological pressure. The acquisition of interpreting expertise is influenced by several variables, such as the design of the training programme, the trainee's cognitive engagement, and affective aspects.

Instructional design is a discipline providing educators with a theoretical framework and research-based principles that allow them to target their courses to the intended objectives (Schott/Seel 2015). The design of a course comprises three fundamental components (Biggs/Tang 2007): the objectives, or *intended learning outcomes* (ILOs); the *teaching/learning activities*[3] (TLAs); and the *assessment tasks* (ATs). A model of the skill which is the object of training represents the starting point of instructional design for complex cognitive skills (for instance, as detailed in the *4C/ID model*, van Merriënboer 1997). The characteristics of the target skill and the requirements of the acquisition process from a psychological perspective determine the identification of both the objectives and the suitable TLAs.

Complex cognitive skills, such as the ones involved in interpreting, are defined as the result of sub-skills organised in a hierarchical structure (Speelman/Kirsner 2005). The learning and accurate performance of higher-order skills depend on the successful acquisition of fundamental sub-skills (Anderson 2004). Such skills can be divided into two categories according to their nature and their role in skilled performance (van Merriënboer 1997). *Recurrent skills* come into play in the execution of all repetitive aspects of a task (*ibid*.). Successful performance depends on their degree of *automaticity*, meaning that their execution is spontaneous, effortless, fast and errorless. An example of recurrent skill in the SI of numbers is the decoding (mental processing) of the source-language number word. *Non-recurrent skills* allow us to deal with variable aspects of tasks and new problem situations (*ibid*.). They imply the acquisition of *schemata*: highly generalised task knowledge built for those aspects of performance that are consistent across problem situations. An example of a non-recurrent skill in the SI of numbers is the summary explanation of a highly number-dense passage based on its semantic meaning – for instance, by providing the listeners with a description and explanatory inferences on the evolution of a trend over time, where the information density makes it very difficult to convey all numbers.

Different learning processes underly the acquisition of recurrent and non-recurrent skill components (*ibid*.). The acquisition of recurrent skills takes place by *rule automation*, which requires extensive task repetition to generate highly domain-specific procedures. Schemata are associated with expertise and their creation is deliberate, meaning that task repetition alone is not sufficient: the process requires the learner's conscious attention to abstract task-related patterns and identify effective behaviours. Successful learning processes build the learner's *reflective expertise* and increase the potential for *skill transfer* across tasks (van Merriënboer *et al.* 1992).

To support the desired learning processes, the TLAs must be targeted to achieve the intended objective. Each learning activity must present the learners with meaningful tasks that enable them to focus on the specific target skill (Ohlsson 1993: 171). It is indispensable to modulate task requirements to prevent the high cognitive load in the initial stage of skill acquisition from inhibiting the process and demotivating the learner (van Merriënboer/Sweller 2005). Task

3 The term 'training activities' is used in the present article to refer to interpreting exercises.

requirements can be modulated through sequencing strategies, which can be of two types (*ibid*.: 158): *part-task sequencing* involves practising individual task components in isolation before merging them into a complex whole. *Task-whole sequencing* involves practising the same task at increasing difficulty. Nevertheless, the design of the activities must take into account the nature of the skills trained, as the different learning processes involved in the acquisition of recurrent and non-recurrent skills require different ID strategies. The automaticity of recurrent skills is best supported through *restricted encoding*: practising the skill "out of context", in tasks that do not require further complex mental processes by the learner (van Merriënboer 1997). Schema construction for non-recurrent skills, on the contrary, requires practising the same skill in different contexts and reflecting on the shared features among tasks to abstract generalised patterns – a process of *mindful abstraction* (*ibid*).

Other than the design of the training programme, another factor influencing the acquisition of complex cognitive skills is learners' cognitive engagement in the learning task. The learner's *metacognitive skills* determine their patterns of self-assessment and self-regulation during learning. *Self-assessment* (Black/Wiliam 2009) implies comparing one's current performance against some standard. *Self-regulation* (Zimmerman 2002) means learning with a focus on attaining meaningful, self-set goals, monitoring one's progress during learning and adjusting one's learning strategies. Ensuring the effectiveness of these processes requires support by the trainer and dedicated ID strategies. Effective instruction provides learners with the necessary knowledge structures to comprehend the task and its inherent learning objectives, plan their learning, detect and correct the causes of error. Some key elements of effective instruction are, therefore, providing the learners with background domain knowledge and feedback (Ohlsson 1993). In the field of conference interpreter training, a number of studies identified trainees' metacognitive skills (Doğan *et al.* 2009), their engagement in goal-directed practice (Dingfelder Stone 2015), self-regulation and self-assessment (Fan 2012; Motta 2016) as crucial to the development of interpreting expertise. These studies also stressed the need for trainers to develop metacognitive skills in interpreting trainees through dedicated strategies and instruments, such as reflective protocols (Doğan *et al.* 2009), journals (Fan 2012) and digital tools (Motta 2016).

Finally, the outcome of training complex cognitive skills is influenced by affective aspects such as learners' motivation. John Biggs highlights that "motivation is a product of good teaching, not its prerequisite" (Biggs 1999: 61). He suggests using the principle of *constructive alignment* to ensure that a course is internally consistent and supports students' motivation. This ID principle implies a goal-centred design in which the objectives determine the selection of the TLAs and correspond to the assessment criteria. To motivate the student, the intended learning outcome of the course must be in line with the students' personal objectives and the TLAs must appear relevant to achieve such objectives. The concept of *self-efficacy beliefs* identifies the learners' confidence in their ability to achieve their self-set objectives through the efforts invested in training (Bandura 1986). This can be influenced through evaluation linking students' performance to *unstable* rather than to *stable* factors (Schunk/Zimmerman 2008) – i.e. to factors within

the learners' control, such as ineffective study practices or skill gaps rather than to the students' inborn ability. Studies in the field of conference interpreter training highlighted the crucial impact of trainees' motivation on learning performance and showed that the trainer's feedback, if it links performance to stable rather than unstable factors, can be demotivating for the interpreting trainee (Wu 2016). A demotivating effect was also linked to a lack of systematic trainer's guidance and to inconsistent guidance from different trainers (Takeda 2010: 42).

1.2 Competence model of number interpreting as skilled performance

The *competence model of number interpreting as skilled performance* presented hereafter is based on the author's previous adaptation of Gelij Černov's *probability prediction model* (2004) to number interpreting for analytic purposes (Frittella 2017), later called *redundancy ladder model* (Frittella 2019). The competence model fulfils a dual pedagogical purpose. On the one hand, it serves the purpose to analyse the interpreting product and process to identify the root cause of errors and the training needs of the individual trainee. On the other, it represents the foundation of the design of the skill-based training programme presented in this article. For the purpose of this article, the discussion will focus on the latter application of the model.

The competence model combines the *cognitivist* with the *functionalist* approach to the analysis of number interpreting, briefly discussed in the introduction. As represented in the figure below, the model describes number interpreting as a processing task unfolding on five levels – I) the number-word, II) the numerical information unit (NIU), III) the text, IV) the extralinguistic context, and V) the pragmatic function:

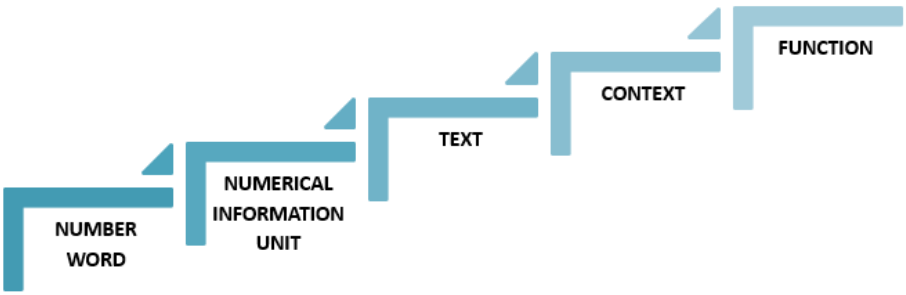

Figure 1: The levels of processing in the competence model of number interpreting as skilled performance

Different mental operations make it possible for the interpreter to process the input (the numerical information) on each level. Such cognitive processes can only be successful if the interpreter has mastered the underlying recurrent and non-recurrent skills. In the pedagogical application of the model, the recurrent

skills are called *skills* and the non-recurrent skills are called *techniques*[4], as can be seen in the representation of the competence model below. Errors systematically arise because of the failure in corresponding cognitive processes (Frittella 2017, 2019), pointing to a corresponding skill gap. This way, it is possible to identify trainees' needs through the analysis of their delivery.

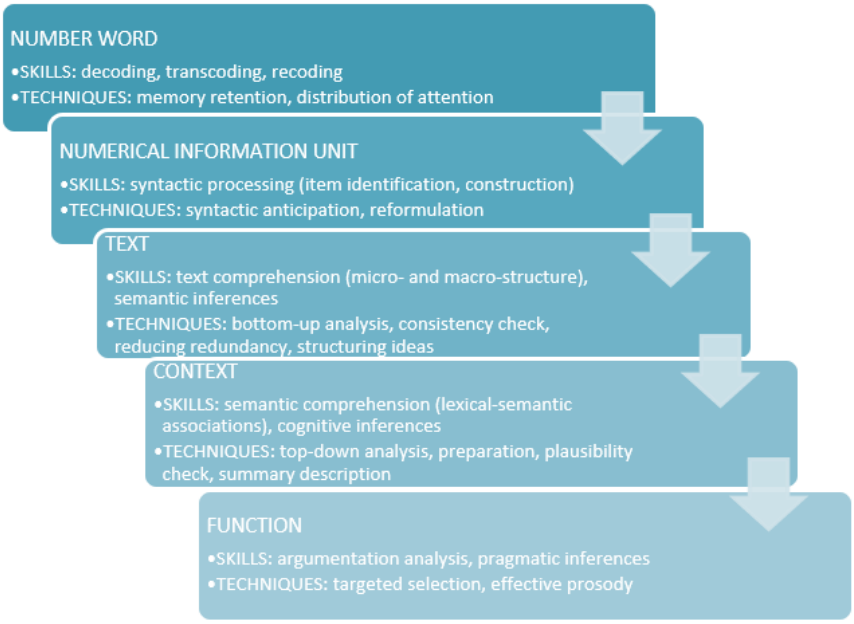

Figure 2: The competence model of number interpreting as skilled performance – recurrent and non-recurrent skills

Based on the distinction between recurrent and non-recurrent skills in cognitive psychology (van Merriënboer 1997), the difference between skills and techniques in the interpretation of numbers is the following. At each level of processing in the model, skills allow the interpreter to perform cognitive processes automatically that do not require cognitive control. The degree of automaticity of a given skill for the interpreter determines the speed of the processing task (*latency*), cognitive load and accuracy of the operations. Techniques, on the contrary, are consciously selected by the interpreter to (a) solve task-related problems promptly and efficiently, (b) overcome cognitive constraints, (c) achieve an intended outcome.

For instance, on level I, the cognitive processes of decoding, transcoding and recoding come into play in transforming the Italian number word 'trecentoqua-

4 Other works in the field of Interpreting Studies call non-recurrent skills 'interpreting strategies' (Kalina 2000; Kadel/Seubert 2015). Riccardi (2005) distinguishes *skill-based strategies* from *knowledge-based strategies*, where the first can be understood as recurrent skills and the second as non-recurrent skills.

rantacinque' into the Arabic number 345 and the English number word 'three hundred and forty-five'. A sufficient degree of automaticity of the corresponding skills allows the interpreter to perform these processes accurately, fluently and quickly. Techniques come into play in the selection of an adequate procedure to follow that makes it possible to overcome inherent constraints and accomplish the interpreting task. An effective technique on level I allows the interpreter to select the best procedure according to the limitations of short-term acoustic memory (Cowan 2010) and the characteristic of the information to be processed—i.e. is it a number in isolation or a dense text passage? Is it a small or a large number?

2. Proposal of a training programme for the SI of numbers

The theory outlined above served as the foundation of the constructivist skill-based training programme for the simultaneous interpretation of numbers presented hereafter. The training programme is defined as *skill-based* because the design process, from the modelling of the complex cognitive skill to the development of the training activities, was guided by research on ID for complex cognitive skill training. The programme is *constructivist* in that the design process was strongly influenced by the assumption that the training outcomes depend on the adequate cognitive and affective engagement of the trainees in the learning experience. Hence, to achieve the objective of effectively developing number-specific skills, the design of the training programme includes elements in support of trainees' motivation and metacognitive skills. The principle of *constructive alignment* (Biggs 1999) was used to achieve maximum consistency among the training objectives, the training activities and the assessment methods.

The overall structure of the training programme reflects the competence model of number interpreting as skilled performance (1.2). The training programme comprises five sessions, each of which addresses one level of processing and trains the inherent skills and techniques. Each session includes a class session and a training session, with exercises for autonomous practice at home[5]. Each session opens and closes with a self-assessment activity, consisting of an interpreting test and a retrospective questionnaire that guides trainees' evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses.

The aim of the *class session* is to provide the trainees with the knowledge that allows them to engage in meaningful learning processes, self-direct and regulate their practice at home, which includes:

a. *knowledge of assessment*: the participants learn to classify errors that may arise in the processing activity and link them to corresponding gaps in skills or techniques;

5 For feasibility reasons, in the present study each session was completed in approximately one week (see section 3). However, the results of the study highlight that this time frame may be too short. For this reason, the author is transforming the training programme into an online course for self-paced learning, as explained in the conclusion of the article.

b. *task knowledge*: the participants learn to model the task, explain its inherent cognitive processes, the skills involved and viable techniques;
c. *knowledge of the objectives*: the participants are provided with a model of expert performance at each level and set their objectives;
d. *knowledge of training methods and self-regulation*: the trainer highlights the link between objectives and training methods as well as the importance of reflection and self-regulation during learning.

In the class session, the trainer also helps the trainees apply such knowledge to identify their individual training needs. The trainer uses systematic feedback on sample exercises (involving highlighting patterns across participants) to support trainees' self-analysis, guide them on how to perform the exercises and in reflecting on meaningful aspects of the task.

In the *training session*, the trainees practise the skills and techniques that are the objectives of the session. Each training session comprises several types of exercises, each type corresponding to one precise objective. To encourage goal-directed practice, the training session opens with a *training plan*, which reminds the trainees of the link between exercise types and skills/techniques like in the example below:

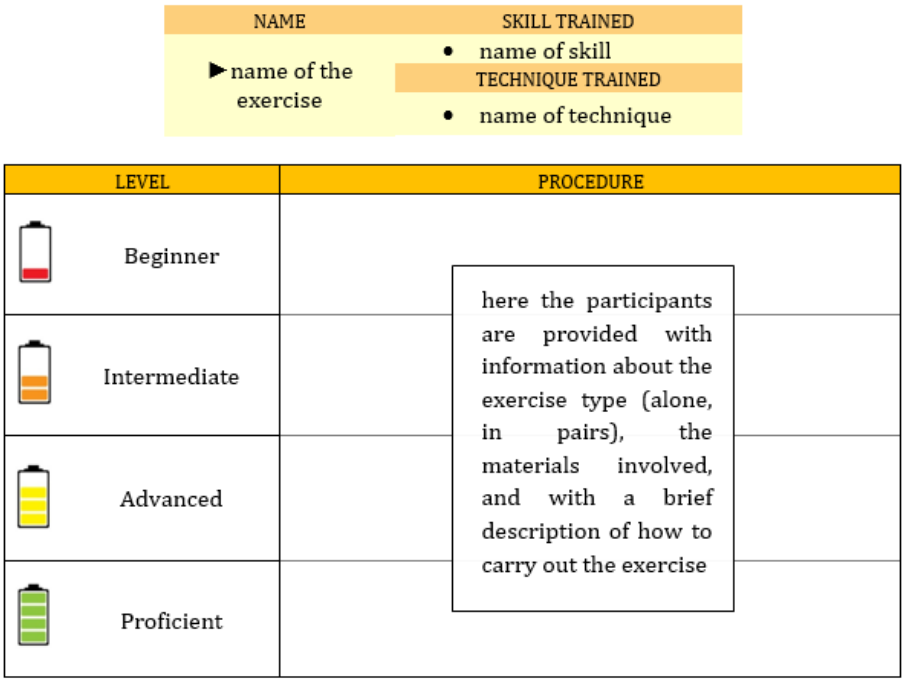

Figure 3: Example of the 'training plan' for one type of exercise in the first session

The design of the training activities is based on the description of the cognitive processes in the competence model of number interpreting. The exercise design includes both *part-whole* and *task-whole sequencing strategies* (see 1.1): the complex

skill is broken down into constituent skills initially trained in isolation, and each process is repeated at increasing difficulty (from beginners to proficient). For instance, when training decoding skills in session one, trainees are provided with recorded lists of number words and asked to visualise them as Arabic numbers, wait one second and only then "read out the number" from their mental representation. The difficulty is increased gradually by increasing the number of digits, the syntactic complexity of the SL number word, the speed of reading and reducing the time gap between one numeral and the next.

The exercise design also takes into account the different requirements of the acquisition of recurrent and non-recurrent skills. To facilitate the development of automaticity for recurrent skills, *restricted encoding* is used to enable the trainees to focus on individual processes in isolation, as in the above-mentioned example of training decoding skills. The training activities for techniques, instead, have a focus on promoting trainees' *mindful abstraction*. Several ID strategies are used to this aim, such as guided reflective activities accompanying the interpreting exercises. For instance, one of the objectives of session 4 is for the participants to develop a preparation technique for numbers. The training activities in this exercise type first provide the trainee with a structured procedure to follow (beginner's level). The degree of guidance is then gradually diminished and the amount of reflection and autonomous strategic thinking required to complete the task increases. In the next step, the trainees must complete a similar task based on 'key concepts' that give them hints on the relevant elements to focus on in their preparation. Then, they must prepare on an unrelated topic but are provided with a guided analysis of the context and the key concepts. Finally, they must apply their preparation technique without guidance. In this whole process, a reflective questionnaire helps trainees self-evaluate the effectiveness of their preparation technique. The questionnaire includes a checklist of relevant numerical information that the trainees should have searched for as well as questions aimed at helping them reflect on their approach to preparation and optimise their technique, such as:

- How did you plan your preparation and choose what to search for?
- What aspects of your analysis worked/what did not?
- How are you going to proceed next time?

In order to support meaningful learning processes during autonomous practice at home, the training programme includes a metacognitive tool called *trainee's manual*. The manual is a hybrid between a course syllabus, an exercise manual and a training journal inspired by research on the use of training journals and logbooks in interpreter training (Doğan *et al.* 2009; Lee 2015) and in other domains of expertise development (Tang 2002). It contains material to accompany the trainee in all stages of the learning process: self-assessment, goal-setting, self-regulation and reflection during the interpreting exercises. As a written record of trainees' progress over time, the manual also aims to encourage positive self-efficacy beliefs.

3. Participants and methods

To evaluate the consistency and effectiveness of the training programme, the study design drew on the *design-focused evaluation* (DFE) approach, developed by Calvin Smith (2008) to evaluate the effectiveness of the constructive alignment (Biggs 1999) of course design. DFE is a qualitative method primarily concerned with students' perception of the alignment of fundamental course components (the teaching-learning activities and assessment methods) with the learning objectives. Students' awareness of ID strategies facilitating the intended learning outcome is considered as evidence for the effectiveness and consistency of the course design (Smith 2008).

Given the difficulty of finding one large group of participants, two groups of students participated in the training programme. This choice also aimed to increase the *confirmability* (Bhattacherjee 2012) of the study, since it made it possible to determine whether the observation of the same phenomenon (the impact of the course design on the learning process) on two different groups of participants could lead to similar conclusions[6]. Given the difficulty of finding participants with homogeneous characteristics in the research time frame, the criteria for inclusion in the study were the following: a) language combination and directionality, b) previous interpreting experience, c) no previous systematic training in interpreting numbers, d) completion of at least 70% of the number seminar.

All study participants[7] were native speakers of Italian and the interpreting exercises were in English so that all were interpreting from their foreign language into their mother tongue. All participants in both groups declared that they had never undertaken systematic training on numbers before and that they regarded numbers as a major interpreting difficulty. The participants in the first group were five bachelor's students at the *Istituto Universitario di Mediazione Linguistica* in Perugia (Italy). They participated in the number seminar in the months of March and April 2017. At the time of the study, they were in their last bachelor's year in linguistic and cultural mediation, they had been studying consecutive interpreting for 3 semesters and simultaneous interpreting for 2. The second group consisted of five master's degree students of conference interpreting at the *Johannes-Gutenberg University* in Germersheim (Germany). They participated in the number seminar during the months of May and June 2017. At the time of participating in the seminar, they had been studying both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting for 4 semesters.

6 It is for this reason that the present study contrasts observations made on two groups of students despite their dissimilarities. The comparison should, hence, not be interpreted as an attempt to generalise the study conclusions.

7 Participation in the study was voluntary and the participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. They signed an informed consent form, in which they agreed to participate in data gathering throughout the seminar. They assigned themselves a pseudonym for the researcher to identify their data, as can be seen in the samples included in the present paper.

At the end of the seminar, the participants provided the author with their written feedback on whether they found the seminar useful, their perceived progress and what they found the most and the least helpful. The participants were told that their opinion was solely needed to improve the quality of the seminar not to compromise the authenticity of the responses (Ladkin 2017). They could keep their feedback anonymous but none of them chose this option.

Participants' feedback responses were analysed through qualitative *thematic analysis*. This method is commonly used to identify underlying concepts in unstructured qualitative data (Braun/Clarke 2006), such as the data gathered in this study. The analysis was conducted using the software QDA Miner. First, students' feedback was analysed to identify inductively the main themes. The themes were then categorised as follows: a) the perceived strengths of the course design, b) the perceived weaknesses, and c) participants' perceived progress, comprising the subcategories 'perceived improvement in the interpretation of numbers' and 'perceived improvement in participants' overall interpreting competence'. The figure below shows the hierarchy of the categories and sub-categories and the corresponding themes:

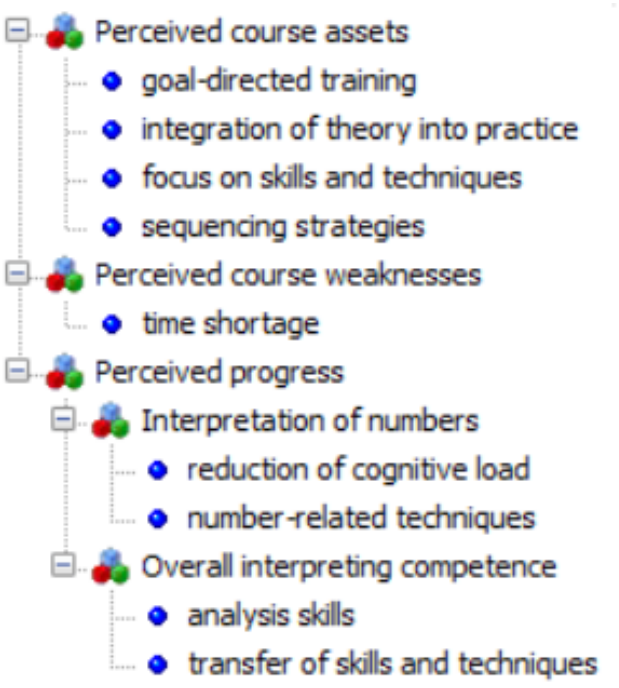

Figure 4: Themes grouped into categories for the thematic analysis of participants' feedback

Table 1 provides a detailed description of the themes:

Category	Code	Description
Perceived course assets	focus on skills and techniques	the structure focusing on precisely-defined skills/techniques with aligned exercises and assessment was a major strength of the training programme
Perceived course assets	goal-directed training	the goal-oriented training with targeted, gradual exercises was a major strength of the training programme
Perceived course assets	integration of theory into practice	the theoretical explaination accompanying practical training was a major strength of the training programme
Perceived course assets	sequencing strategies	the sequencing strategies were a major strength of the training programme
Perceived course weaknesses	time shortage	the short time frame for instruction and practice at home was the major weakness of the training programme
Perceived progress\Interpretation of numbers	number-related techniques	the participants felt that they acquired techniques to deal with number-related difficulties
Perceived progress\Interpretation of numbers	reduction of cognitive load	the participants felt that the cognitive load in the task of interpreting numbers reduced
Perceived progress\Overall interpreting competence	analysis skills	the participants found that their overall ability to analyse speeches during interpreting improved through the seminar
Perceived progress\Overall interpreting competence	transfer of skills and techniques	the participants reported that they could transfer the skills and techniques trained in the seminar to other interpreting tasks

Table 1: Description of the main themes identified in participants' feedback, divided by category

4. Results

Table 2 reports the number of occurrences of each theme in participants' feedback by the number of cases, i.e. showing how many participants mentioned each theme:

THEME	NO OF CASES
PERCEIVED COURSE ASSETS	
FOCUS ON SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES	5
GOAL-DIRECTED TRAINING	6
INTEGRATION OF THEORY INTO PRACTICE	3
SEQUENCING STRATEGIES	4
PERCEIVED COURSE WEAKNESSES	
TIME SHORTAGE	7
PERCEIVED PROGRESS	
INTERPRETATION OF NUMBERS	
REDUCTION OF COGNITIVE LOAD	5
NUMBER-RELATED TECHNIQUES	6
OVERALL INTERPRETING COMPETENCE	
ANALYSIS SKILLS	4
TRANSFER OF SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES	9

Table 2: Distribution of themes in participants' feedback by the number of cases

The chart below shows the distribution of the themes by the number of cases sorted in descending order:

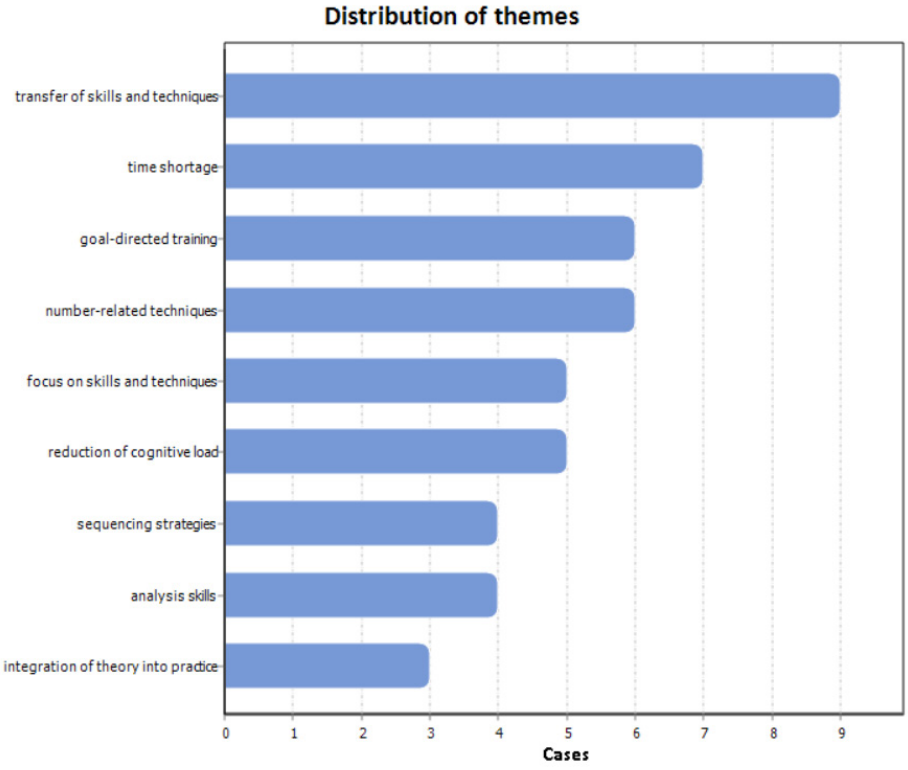

Figure 5: Column chart representing the distribution of themes by the number of cases

5. Discussion

The frequency of the themes in participants' feedback responses highlights the instructional design strategies that, in their opinion, most supported their learning process, the main weakness in the training programme and the perceived training outcomes. An in-depth analysis points to possible links between the ID strategies underpinning the training programme and their impact on participants' learning, and lead to hypotheses on the effectiveness of the design practices under investigation. While the value of these hypotheses must still be established empirically, they may stimulate further inquiry into instructional design principles for conference interpreter training.

Starting from the perceived assets of the course design, the following characteristics were identified as supportive of the learning process: the goal-centred, systematic training approach (6 participants), the explicit instruction on skills and techniques (5 participants), the sequencing strategies used to design the

training activities (4 participants), the background "theoretical" knowledge provided before the training session (3 participants):

> The fact that the exercises of each type are divided into various levels allowed us to focus on our needs: on the problems that caused us the most difficulties, and [on the activities] that could best help us achieve a specific goal and [improve at] each step before moving on to the next one. In my opinion, it is very important to divide such a complex process into many steps that, when worked on one by one, make it possible to achieve tangible results – Gina, MA

The participants also linked these ID elements to an improvement in their awareness of effective training practices and the importance of *self-regulation* in the learning process:

> The theoretical concepts were fundamental as well to understand the purpose of training and the best way to achieve the desired results... Even if before I did not understand the importance of this, the seminar made me realise how vital it is to practise methodically, which, now I know, leads to great results – Sally, MA

Seven participants stated that the above-mentioned elements enabled them to track their progress over time and identify the correlation between training quality and outcome. They declared that this, on the one hand, motivated them to persevere in their learning efforts and, on the other hand, reinforced their self-efficacy beliefs:

> I was always motivated to move forward because I was curious to see my limits on the various levels, and I found it smart to proceed step by step with a structured method – Margherita, BA
>
> You never feel overwhelmed because you start from the basics and slowly start reaching specific goals. ... The course showed me that, with the right means, the theory, the targeted exercise, the right objectives and the time each person needs, anyone can achieve good results – Gina, MA

Moving on to the perceived weaknesses of the training programme, 7 participants mentioned that the time frame of instruction was too short. They explained that this limited their engagement in the training activities and, hence, their effectiveness. As discussed at the end of this section, the time constraints may be, indeed, considered as one of the main limitations of this study. To overcome this limitation, the author is currently developing an online course for number interpreting, based on the research findings presented in this article.

Coming to the perceived outcomes of training, 9 participants explicitly reported a perceived improvement in their ability to interpret numbers. Such improvement was identified as a reduction of the cognitive load in number-related processing tasks by 5 participants:

> [the systematic training approach] allowed me to "train" and accustom my brain to actions that previously required a greater effort, such as the decoding and recoding of numbers. As the course proceeded, the complexity of the tasks increased but the previous difficulties seemed to have been overcome through training – Carolina, BA

6 participants identified the improvement in their ability to interpret numbers as the selection and application of techniques to overcome task-related constraints, difficulties and/or attain desired results:

> finding the logical thread of the speech, matching data to the right referents, avoiding internal contradictions or errors of implausibility, etc. – Margherita, BA

The improved awareness of techniques may be considered as an important result because it represents the first step in the acquisition process (van Merriënboer 1997). It also gains in importance in the light of previous research, which identified a link between participants' low awareness (metacognitive knowledge) of viable techniques for numbers and their errors (Frittella 2017, 2019). For instance, some participants felt that the seminar helped them develop a systematic preparation technique "not only for the interpretation of numbers but for the preparation of any interpreting assignment" (Sally MA). This may represent an important achievement considering that, without specific instruction, interpreting trainees may not be aware of the need to fill their gaps in relevant *encyclopaedic numerical knowledge* during preparation in order to ease comprehension and prevent plausibility errors in the interpretation of numbers (*ibid*.).

9 participants felt that their interpreting-general competence improved through the training programme. 4 participants defined this improvement as their improved ability to analyse the source speech, select and prioritise information. 9 participants also reported that they could transfer the skills trained in the seminar to other interpreting tasks, modes and language combinations, such as to consecutive interpreting from German into Italian.

According to the design-focused evaluation approach, participants' awareness of the way specific design elements supported their learning is an indicator of their effectiveness in supporting desired learning processes. Therefore, the analysis of participants' feedback may lead to hypotheses on the interrelation between instructional design principles and their impact on trainees' learning process. As explained in the second section of the present article, the training programme under investigation presents a *skill-based* structure, in which the nature and hierarchy of the skills inherent in the SI of numbers determined the selection of the teaching-learning activities and the sequencing strategies chosen to design the training materials. The principle of *constructive alignment* was used to ensure the consistency among all course elements, and the trainees were made aware of the link between each skill/technique and the corresponding exercise – between the objective and the means to obtain it. In their feedback, the participants reflected on the positive impact of such a systematic approach on their ability to analyse themselves, set their goals and train with a clear focus on achieving specific objectives. In other words, the design of the training programme, combined with the preliminary theoretical explanation, may have supported participants' self-assessment and self-regulation skills. This leads to the hypothesis that a combination of these ID principles and strategies may be effective in designing training programmes to support interpreting trainees' metacognitive skills.

Previous studies highlighted the importance of linking interpreting trainees' performance to unstable factors within their control (Wu 2016) and providing

them with clear guidance on how to fill their skill gaps (Takeda 2010). The participants in the present study reported a motivating effect deriving from the awareness of the objectives and the training activities that were most adequate to achieve them. Further research could explore the potential of criterion-referenced training programmes to support interpreting trainees' motivation and self-efficacy beliefs.

It is noticeable that 9 in 10 participants explicitly mentioned the transfer of skills/techniques from the context of training to other interpreting tasks. This high potential for transfer may be due to the dedicated instruction on skills and techniques during the study, which clarified to the participant general theoretical principles and guided them to apply them in the training sessions. Several studies have shown before that interpreting trainees tend to use a technique more often if this is explicitly addressed by their trainer (see for instance Li 2013). The hypothesis that could be further explored moving from the observation reported above, is that explicit, systematic instruction may also facilitate the transfer of skills from the context of training to unrelated interpreting tasks.

Coming to addressing the limitations of the present study, it must be stressed once again that it should be intended as an exploratory study aiming to open new paths for instructional design research in interpreting pedagogy. The analysis results cannot be regarded as generalisable and a number of limitations can be identified in the study design. The main limiting factors are the small number of participants (as is often the case in interpreting research as well as in in-depth qualitative studies in education) and the limited time frame of instruction, determined by the difficulty in finding an adequate context to test the training programme. Given the short time available to complete the training programme, the participants could not obtain the extensive practice needed to achieve the automaticity of the several skills and techniques presented in the seminar, which affected negatively the overall effectiveness of training. What is more interesting for the purpose of the present analysis is that the limited time available may have also affected participants' perception of the effectiveness of individual training strategies, such as the trainee's manual, which was mentioned in only two responses. The effectiveness of guided reflective practice supported by metacognitive tools remains to be explored systematically.

6. Conclusion

Interpreting is a practical activity that implies the mastery of a complex system of cognitive skills. Some believe that interpreter education should reflect the practical nature of this activity and be based on what has been called by Pöchhacker (2010) the "master-apprentice model". This is a minimally-guided teaching approach in which students are expected to master the skills involved in the interpreting task merely by trial and error (Takeda 2010). However, considering the complexity of skill acquisition and the several factors that influence the effectiveness of instruction, it is questionable whether minimally-guided approaches may actually deliver better training outcomes than systematic training.

The present article argued that instructional-design research may be a possible way to increase the quality of conference interpreting training courses. The empirical basis for the discussion was the systematic training programme developed by the author for the simultaneous interpretation of numbers – a common stumbling block for interpreters, for which no comprehensive training methodology had been yet developed. The article, then, explored the impact of the instructional design strategies underpinning the training programme on participants' learning process. The study was designed using the approach of design-focused evaluation (Smith 2008), hence, focusing on students' perception of the course design. The training programme was tested on two groups of interpreting trainees (10 in total, 5 BA and 5 MA). Their unstructured feedback was analysed qualitatively by the thematic analysis. The themes emerging from the analysis were grouped into three categories: perceived training outcomes, perceived strengths and weaknesses in the course design.

9 participants explicitly reported an improvement in their ability to interpret numbers through the training programme; in particular, they reported the reduction of the processing requirements of number-related interpreting tasks (5 participants) and the increased awareness of viable techniques to reduce the cognitive load in interpreting numbers, overcome task-related difficulties and achieve desired outcomes (6 participants). The improved awareness of techniques gains in importance in the light of previous research (Frittella 2019), which identified a correlation between participants' low awareness (metacognitive knowledge) of techniques and their errors in the interpretation of numbers. Furthermore, nearly all participants reported a positive impact of the training programme on their general interpreting competence. 4 participants believe that they could improve their analysis skills and 9 of them reported that they had been able to transfer the skills and techniques trained in the seminar to other interpreting tasks, modes and language combinations. Although further research is needed to confirm these conclusions, these observations may be promising, as they lead to the hypothesis that a systematic training methodology may support the acquisition not only of *one* skill but also of *interpreting-general*, *transferable* skills. It is possible, therefore, that skill-based training on numbers may turn this common *problem trigger* into a useful *training tool*, capable of supporting trainees' overall development of interpreting competence. The analysis also led to the hypothesis that systematic training, with dedicated instructional design strategies, may be effective in developing trainees' metacognitive skills and supporting their motivation as well as their self-efficacy beliefs. Overall, the analysis supports the view of previous studies that systematic training is more effective than minimally-guided approaches in fulfilling the primary purpose of formal interpreter education: "to help individuals who wish to become professional interpreters […] develop their interpreting skills more rapidly than they could through field experience and self-instruction" (Fan 2012: 1).

The main limitation identified was the short time available for instruction and training. To overcome this limitation, the author of the present article is currently developing an online course for number interpreting based on the research findings presented in this article. The fundamental structure of the course

remains unchanged. The course, based on five levels, addresses skills and techniques directly and provides guidance for their acquisition and successful implementation. It has a strong focus on self-analysis and self-regulation: it guides participants' ongoing self-feedback and helps them engage in meaningful practice. Differently from the previous course, the online training module allows participants to set the pace of their learning and to complete the course independently of their location. Furthermore, the course will be provided at different difficulty levels to suit different levels of expertise.

Given the limitations of the present study, addressed in detail in the discussion of the results, the observations made cannot be regarded as generalisable. However, the author believes that the present discussion highlighted the potential of instructional design research to advance the current state of interpreting pedagogy. The hypotheses advanced in the present article, as well as the theoretical framework presented, may be instrumental in stimulating further scientific inquiry into generalisable principles for the development of systematic conference interpreter training programmes. Instructional design research may open a new stage in the integration of interpreting theory/research into teaching practice. Entering this new stage, interpreter education may make a decisive step towards completing the shift from anecdotal to truly systematic, research-based teaching methodology.

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How work at the EU has changed since 1989: today's challenges for training departments. The experience of the Italian booth at DG SCIC

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Abstract

What was it like to work as an EU interpreter in 1989, when The Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Teaching Conference Interpretation *was first published in Trieste? And what is it like in the age of digitalisation and globalisation? The use of English as a Lingua Franca has been spreading relentlessly at the European Institutions, but multilingualism has not yet been lost and is still strongly promoted. This poses quite some challenges for interpreters, as a great deal of what they have to interpret is non-standard English, and at the same time they have to maintain a thorough knowledge of several passive languages. A group of European Commission staff interpreters share their views on how their work has changed over the past decades and on what this means for trainers and young interpreters wishing to embark upon a career at the EU.*

Keywords

Interpreting for the European Institutions, digitalisation, ELF, practical aspects of interpreter training, old and new challenges for interpreters.

* Disclaimer: The content of this article does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed lies entirely with the author.

Introduction

In 1989, Laura Gran and John Dodds, professors from the then Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators (SSLMIT) of the University of Trieste, published a compendium on the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching Conference Interpretation (Gran/Dodds 1989). The world around us and - with it - the work of interpreters have changed a lot since then.

This article presents the views of a group of eight experienced staff interpreters of the Italian booth at DG SCIC, the conference interpretation service of the European Commission, on how the evolution of language regimes at European Union meetings and Information Technology developments have shaped the work of interpreters over the past three decades and how these developments, as well as the wider societal changes around us, influence the didactics of interpreting. The article addresses some very practical aspects of interpreting and interpreter training and naturally focusses on work at the EU and in particular the Italian booth. Some observations, however, will also apply more generally to the profession as a whole.

The interpreters that were interviewed for this article have between 15 and 25 years of professional experience as staff interpreters at the European institutions and have all contributed to the training of young interpreters through the pedagogical assistance and dummy booth practice offered by DG SCIC to universities and visiting trainee interpreters.

The material used includes personal interviews with the above mentioned interpreters, as well as seven reports on virtual classes organised with the universities of Trieste and Forlì between March 2018 and January 2019, three reports on study visits from Trieste and Innsbruck, and a set of twelve evaluation questionnaires filled in by the Forlì students after their study visit to DG SCIC in November 2018.

1. Interpreting from past to present

30 years ago, the European Economic Community (EEC) only had 12 member states (Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Greece, as well as Spain and Portugal, the last two countries to join the EEC in 1986). The 12 member states spoke 8 official languages (English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Spanish and Portuguese).

The internet revolution had not taken place yet. Computers were entering people's homes, but were still mainly used for programming, text editing and gaming. Access to the world wide web spread gradually during the 1990s and only became widely available in most households in the early 2000s.

Over the past 30 years the EEC became the European Union (EU) which has grown to 28 member states with 24 official languages, and Brexit (United Kingdom withdrawal) will have no effect on this latter number. Both the gradual enlargement of the EU and the development of Information Technology (IT) have had a considerable impact on the work of interpreters.

The internet and social media now influence every aspect of our lives with smartphones allowing us to be permanently interconnected and giving us access to real-time information on any subject.

Language regimes have become increasingly complex and the limited availability of interpreters and conference rooms with enough booths mean that it is impossible to provide interpretation for all official languages at each and every one of the meetings that are organised at the European institutions on a daily basis. Since most delegates' best second language is English, this has led to an increasing use of English as a lingua franca. The more recent enlargements to Central and Eastern Europe in 2004, 2007 and 2013 contributed further to this trend. In the past, French had a similar status to English, with many civil servants of the European Commission using it as a working language, but it rapidly lost ground with the arrival of a large group of new civil servants and delegates from Central and Eastern European countries like Poland, Hungary, Croatia or Latvia, where French is much less commonly taught.

That said, multilingualism is still promoted by the institutions and many meetings have bigger language regimes. Interpreters therefore, may find themselves working in two very different settings: either working group meetings with smaller language regimes where most delegates speak English, or meetings with full language regimes where they work from several different source languages. This poses two types of challenges to interpreters: being able to turn non-standard English into a cogent message that is as faithful as possible to the original has become the interpreters' daily fare, but at the same time, interpreters must keep up their knowledge of the other passive languages they work from, even though some of these languages may not be spoken very frequently in meetings.

The enlargement to 28 countries has also had other repercussions on the work of EU interpreters. In certain circumstances, in order to give all delegations the chance to present their positions, while at the same time preventing the length of meetings from spiralling out of control, it has become imperative to limit speaking times. This is especially true at ministerial level meetings. The response of delegations has been to read out written speeches, which can be timed more accurately. Read-out messages are inevitably denser than impromptu speech, as they lack the natural redundancy created by repeating certain points or stopping to rephrase a thought, and are often read out at a fast pace to fit into assigned speaking times.

At the same time, the files discussed at European level have become increasingly technical. Animal health, customs automation, radio spectrum, and cooperation in civil or criminal matters are only a few examples.

Technology has fortunately come to our aid. Online glossaries and documents facilitate meeting preparation and the internet makes it a lot easier to retrieve subject-specific information on specialised websites. Most interpreters nowadays work with laptops, tablets or smartphones in the booth and have direct access to all of these tools.

2. Old and new challenges for training institutions

Although there is no doubt about the fact that the advent of new technologies has made the work of interpreters much easier in many ways, it must also be recognised that it has some downsides.

2.1 General knowledge and command of mother tongue – the interpreters' ABC

Unlike the old days, when access to information was not so easy and a good knowledge of the world around us could help interpreters make sense of what they were interpreting, the younger generations have grown up with the idea that any information they might need is just a few clicks away and seem to attach less importance to solid general knowledge. This means that trainee interpreters may be more likely thrown off by unexpected references to facts they are not familiar with.

The increasing use of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter as main sources of information may also have a negative impact on attention span and critical thinking skills, as Facebook and Twitter posts rarely confront readers with opposing views and lack the complex reasoning of in-depth newspaper articles and opinion pieces.

In 2017 a group of over 700 Italian linguists, historians and university professors signed an open letter to the Italian government (Gruppo di Firenze, 2017) expressing concerns about the negative impact of globalisation and social media on language proficiency. The letter sounds the alarm about the worrying decline in language skills amongst Italian pupils and university students and calls for a reform of the education system that will counter this trend, rather than reinforcing it, as past school reforms have. Traditional exercises like poetry memorisation and summary writing, for instance, have been gradually abandoned, despite their undisputed benefits for vocabulary acquisition, memory training and the development of effective communication skills. The scholars that signed the letter warn that Italian university students are no longer able to write without making basic grammar or spelling mistakes and call for school curricula with clear and effective learning targets.

Thanks to an effective selection of students through strict entrance exams, some of the more reputable interpreting departments have been less affected by this problem, but juries at EU freelance tests have observed a weaker command of their mother tongue amongst candidates. This concern was confirmed by the staff interpreters interviewed for this article, who suggested that grammar and language usage mistakes have become a regular occurrence amongst young interpreters in recent years. 3 of the 7 virtual class reports filled in by EU trainers indicated that several students in the group did not seem to have a thorough knowledge of Italian and lacked the ability to adapt to different registers.

Several simple strategies can be applied to counter this trend with no need to resort to innovative solutions. In fact, most of the exercises listed below have been used by teachers in schools and universities for many decades, but they ap-

pear particularly valuable today to counter the general loss of language and communication skills amongst students.

First and foremost, thorough and attentive reading remains of the essence. Students must be encouraged to work on their general knowledge and to keep abreast of current affairs by reading well researched articles, background information and reasoned commentaries with solid lines of argument, rather than just flicking through newspaper titles or short news feeds on social media.

During interpreting classes, students can be invited to summarise newspaper articles and turn them into speeches that their fellow students can interpret in the booth. I personally remember giving speeches to my fellow students during the 1990s at the SSLMIT in Trieste. This type of practice has several benefits. Firstly, students need to make sure they fully grasp the content and logical structure of the articles they read if they want to summarise them correctly. The speech-giving part of the exercise will in turn strengthen their communication and public speaking skills, which will be extremely valuable in their future careers. And finally, their fellow students will be able to practise from different speakers who may have different voices and pronunciation (native and non-native), as well as different ways of expressing themselves. There may be fast speakers, slow speakers, very clear speakers and speakers that may not always make a lot of sense, just like in real life.

For the improvement of language skills and the ability to work with different registers, attentive reading with particular focus on vocabulary, collocations and idiomatic expressions should be encouraged during home and classroom practice. During sight translation exercises, students can be asked to find synonyms for key terms and expressions and to rephrase one idea in several different ways.

2.2 Other basic skills that will always be required

Professional interpreters who wish to work for the EU need to have outstanding language skills in their mother tongue and at least two or three foreign languages. They need to have a deep understanding of several cultures, be effective communicators, be able to work under pressure and, above all, master the art of interpreting. The world around us has changed and has had a huge impact on the work of interpreters, but the technique of interpreting has largely remained unchanged. Teaching basic interpreting technique should therefore remain the core business of any interpreting school.

So, what are the technical aspects that interpreting trainees have to work on? Some of the weaknesses observed by SCIC coaches during pedagogical assistance and dummy booth practice have not really changed in recent years and are in line with the normal learning process of students. As far as technique goes, the advice given to students has therefore remained fairly constant over the past decades.

Interpretation is about conveying the message and the intention of the speaker, and not so much about words. Interpreters should strive to find the most natural and effective way of expressing the speaker's ideas in the target language (Seleskovich 1975; Lederer 1981). Students are therefore often discouraged from reproducing the source language syntax in the target language, in other words

from translating word-for-word, particularly if source and target language have different grammatical set-ups. Trainers often attach great importance to this ability and some trainee interpreters seem to be anxious to rephrase at any cost. While this can be a useful exercise in a classroom setting, DG SCIC trainers point out that students sometimes devote too much energy to the quest for better style and end up losing sight of other more important aspects like, for instance, accuracy and completeness. In a professional setting, especially when dealing with very fast speakers, the ability to distinguish between situations where rephrasing is necessary and others where the source language syntax can be followed without any detriment to the correctness and the style of the target language is equally important. Other students, on the other hand, may find it so hard to free themselves from the influence of the source language syntax, that they lose sight of the overall message of the speaker.

Understanding what is being said can of course be a challenge, and even professional interpreters can have a hard time sometimes. Interpreters are rarely experts in mechanics, finance or chemistry and it is at times difficult to make sense of complex explanations about subjects that we are not familiar with, but interpreters must always be aware of the way they put words into a sentence and do their best to always convey a cogent message that will be understood by their listeners.

In order to find the right balance between word-for-word and free translation and to sound natural in the target language, the concept of *décalage* or ear-voice span must be mastered correctly by interpreters. Numerous scholars, such as Timarová *et al.* (2011), have studied the time lag between the source input and the interpreter's output, and there is not much to add to the insights that have already been acquired on the subject. Suffice it to say that developing effective strategies for managing *décalage* will always be a challenge for interpreting students. During pedagogical assistance activities, EU trainers regularly encounter trainee interpreters, who apply *décalage* as an aim in itself and sometimes wait for far too long before starting to speak, simply because they think that this is what they are supposed to do. *Décalage* should, however, be seen as a tool, a strategy that can be applied with a great degree of flexibility. It depends on the difference that exists between the syntax of the source and the target language, on how fast the speaker talks and on the degree of clarity or lack of clarity of the source language input. *Décalage* could be compared to an accordion that expands and contracts constantly, following the rhythm of the speaker.

One of the skills mentioned at the beginning of this section is the ability to work under pressure. Indeed, interpreters must be able to cope with speed, stress and long working hours. The evaluation questionnaires filled in by students who come on study visits to DG SCIC confirm that speed and length of meetings are seen as great stumbling blocks by trainee interpreters. 9 out of 12 declared that they had difficulties in coping with speed and 6 out of 12 felt that they lacked the stamina to cope with long and dense meetings. The only thing that can be said at this point, is that regular practice and exercise will allow novice interpreters to build up the necessary resilience. Interpretation is a bit like physical activity; even a short jog may seem daunting at first, but with regular exercise the body

will become fitter and the heart rate will fall accordingly. Experienced interpreters, who in the course of their career have developed the necessary stamina, may in fact sometimes forget how difficult it was for them at the beginning to sit through long meetings and keep up with speakers.

2.3 What's new

Coping with speed has undoubtedly become one of the biggest challenges for novice and experienced interpreters alike, albeit to differing degrees (see Gerver 1969/2002; Shlesinger 2003; Riccardi 2015). As was highlighted at the beginning of this article, interpreters have to deal increasingly with rapidly read out speeches.

The *tours de table* at EU ministerial councils are extremely draining for interpreters, but it is also worth mentioning the 'one-minute-speeches' at the European Parliament, where MEPs address the plenary session for one minute and often read out their statements at speeds that can verge on the unfeasible. Fast reflexes are the only thing that can help in these situations, but unfortunately there is a threshold beyond which even the most seasoned interpreters will not be able to keep up with the speaker. Interpreters, therefore, have to develop strategies that help them extrapolate the main points made by the speaker and present them in a coherent manner. Good summarising skills and analytical thought come in handy in these situations, hence once again, the usefulness of the practical summarising exercises mentioned previously. In addition to this type of practice, students should also practise working from very fast, read-out speeches. During such exercises, they should try to retain the important pieces of information and leave out everything else and then try to formulate a coherent, albeit summarised and simplified message in the target language.

Interpreting students on study visits at the EU are also quite intimidated by what they describe as 'globish'. This reflects what was said previously about the increasing use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). It is undoubtedly true that the working environment at the institutions has changed compared to 30 years ago and that nowadays the biggest chunk of the work of EU interpreters consists of interpreting from non-native English speakers. Meetings at the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union still maintain a certain degree of multilingualism, but the use of ELF is undoubtedly on the rise in all EU institutions and in particular in Commission working groups where, despite the presence of interpreters, up to 95% or even 100% of the meeting may be held in English. In my daily work I regularly hear complaints of colleagues who find the use of ELF particularly demanding and question its communicative effectiveness. This is in line with the view expressed by some of the interpreters interviewed by Cristina Scardulla, an Italian free-lance colleague who is working on a PhD thesis on the use of ELF at the EU[1]. Michele Gazzola (2014: 5) even goes as far as suggesting that the extensive use of English in the EU context is detrimental to the democratic process:

1 Personal communication by Cristina Scardulla, 26/3/2019.

> […] l'utilizzo prevalente dell'inglese come lingua unica in Europa […] ostacola la costruzione di una vera democrazia europea più di quanto non la favorisca. L'inglese è infatti una lingua conosciuta molto bene solo da una esigua minoranza dei cittadini europei. […] solo il 7-8% della popolazione europea non madrelingua inglese dichiara di avere una […] competenza linguistica adeguata a partecipare alle attività politiche in una democrazia anglofona. […] Insomma una politica monolingue creerebbe diseguaglianze fra Stati membri e fra ceti sociali, alimentando sentimenti di lontananza verso le istituzioni europee[2].

However worrying this prophecy may sound, the trend is unfortunately unlikely to stop in future and interpreters will have to develop strategies to be able to cope with non-standard English input. Professor Albl-Mikasa from Zurich University has analysed the linguistic features of ELF and identified three main difficulties that interpreters are faced with, when trying to understand non-native English speakers: "a) lack of express-ability[3], b) greatly varying proficiency levels and register shifts, and c) massive L1 transfer[4]" (Albl-Mikasa 2014: 26).

Novice interpreters, who have had less contact with non-standard ways of pronouncing the English language, unorthodox syntax and ambiguous vocabulary, find it particularly difficult to tune into all the different ways delegates might pronounce English, depending on their country of origin. It is therefore advisable to familiarise students with different non-standard accents before they finish their degree and come to the EU, and to provide students with a wide variety of speeches delivered both by native and non-native speakers. 30 years ago, students mostly practised using speeches delivered by native speakers, as it was generally assumed that they would mostly translate mother-tongue speakers during their professional career. Nowadays, however, we have to conclude that coping with non-standard English is equally important. Regardless of the quality of the source input, interpreters always have to meet the same high-quality expectations for the target output. Practising with source language speeches delivered by non-proficient English speakers has, therefore, become more important in interpreter training.

2 "[…] the prevailing use of English as single working language in Europe […] hampers the construction of a real European democracy, rather than favouring it. The English language is well-known by only a small minority of European citizens. […] Only 7-8% of Europeans consider that their command of English allows them to actively take part in the political activities of an English-speaking democracy, […] A monolingual policy would strengthen disparities between Member states and social classes, thus fuelling a sense of alienation from the European institutions". (Translated by the author)

3 i.e. the ability to express ideas clearly and logically.

4 i.e. linguistic interference from the speaker's mother tongue (L1), e.g. use of literally translated idiomatic expressions that do not exist in English.

3. IT tools – the interpreters' companions

This article previously mentioned the pitfalls of the widespread use of the internet and social media. However, it goes without saying, that the availability of online glossaries, translation memories, dictionaries and encyclopaedias has made meeting preparation a lot easier. Young interpreters nowadays are internet savvy and know how to use online tools and platforms. This aspect, therefore, should not pose any particular problems for interpreting students.

DG SCIC trainers, however, wonder whether universities are making full use of the opportunities offered by the IT solutions developed at the EU. Online terminology tools, such as IATE[5], are well known and widely used inside and outside the European institutions, and both professional interpreters and universities use the Speech Repository[6] as a source of recorded speeches for practice purposes. According to one of the staff interpreters interviewed for this article, however, fewer people seem to use the My Speech Repository section, which allows users to create personal profiles, save favourite speeches, record their interpretation and get feedback from teachers or fellow students.

A new feature inside My Speech Repository is My Collection, which allows registered universities and international organisations to create their own speech banks in a dedicated, private space and create cross-university communities to practise with students from all over the world.

Last but certainly not least, DG SCIC recently launched the Knowledge Centre on Interpretation[7], a one-stop hub for the exchange of information on interpretation and best practices. The KCI provides a dynamic, collaborative space for interested parties such as partner universities, national administrations and individual interpreters and offers users the possibility to create forums and communities where they can discuss and share information. Students coming on study visits to DG SCIC will be regularly introduced to the new tool and the tool will be further disseminated in future contacts with interested parties.

4. Conclusions

This article cannot be considered an in-depth study on interpreting and interpreter training, and it does not qualify as sound scientific research, as it is solely based on the personal experiences of a small group of professional interpreters from the Italian booth at the European Commission. We hope, however, that our contribution will feed further reflection on the subject both in universities and at EU level. DG SCIC is always open to students and young graduates who wish to visit the institutions and learn more about work at the EU. The feedback received by students confirms that these visits are extremely valuable for trainee interpreters. Visiting students are generally very satisfied with the learning ex-

5 <https://iate.europa.eu/home>
6 < https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/sr/>
7 <https://ec.europa.eu/education/knowledge-centre-interpretation/knowledge-centre-interpretation_en>

perience and appreciate the possibility to practise in meetings covering a wide variety of subjects. Dummy booth practice is an excellent opportunity to experience real-life situations which are difficult to reproduce in a classroom setting, such as long meetings, different types of discussions and meetings with several working languages, where interpreters have to rapidly tune into different source languages or use relays.

The strong ties and the constructive dialogue that have always existed between Italian universities like Trieste and Bologna Forlì and DG SCIC is extremely beneficial for young interpreters who wish to embark upon an EU career, and it is also in the interest of our service, which is always in search of talented, well qualified young interpreters.

Acquiring all the technical skills required to be an interpreter and learning to work under pressure may seem daunting for first year interpreting students, but generations of interpreters that have gone on to work for international institutions have proven that it is a reachable goal.

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Book review

Holcomb, Thomas K. / Smith, David H. (eds) (2018) *Deaf Eyes on Interpreting*, Washington DC, Gallaudet University Press, 318 pp. ISBN 978-1-944838-27-0.

Reviewed by *Graham H. Turner*, Department of Languages & Intercultural Studies, Heriot-Watt University, UK.

Interpreting that involves signed languages is often thought to stand out within the wider Interpreting Studies field in a number of respects – too many to rehearse here. One feature that frequently passes without comment, perhaps because it seems so 'natural' or familiar to many, is the fact that the majority of practitioners within the field have been hearing people. Yet this has many important consequences, given its concomitant implication of an enormous imbalance between interpreters whose first or preferred language is spoken (i.e. the vast majority) and those for whom it is signed. In academic circles, this has contributed to a parallel situation in documentation and discussion of relevant theory and applications: in short, most of the literature has been written by hearing people. Now, what might be the consequences of *that*? Writing in 2019, I am acutely conscious of the minefield of positioning and identities into which I step through agreeing to write this book review (which internet searches suggest may be the first to be published). The easy route would be a fawning paean to the courage of the editors and contributors for their forthrightness: but, being an academic, I remain less captivated by the 'authenticity' of authors' feelings than by the penetration and theoretical impact of their insights.

In this era of #MeToo, 'Black Lives Matter', state-your-pronouns requests and the like, readers may feel that I should identify myself before going any further. (Perhaps we should always be expected to do this. Discuss.) I was born hearing to two hearing parents, and have no known blood relatives who sign. I began to learn British Sign Language (BSL) in 1985 when, as an undergraduate linguistics student, I spent the second of my four years of study on a placement as a full-time classroom assistant in a school for deaf children in the north of England. Motivated by the character of the language, the complexity of its social circumstances and the issues of justice and politics associated with it, I continued to learn the language, research and write about it during the remainder of that programme and on into a masters degree dedicated to Sign Language Studies. I began working as a research assistant in sign lexicography in 1988, and have maintained a primary interest in social and applied aspects of Sign Language Studies through over 30 years as a full-time academic since. I was appointed Chair of Translation and Interpreting Studies, my present position, in 2005. I have never been an interpreter, though I have delivered educational programmes to such interpreters for most of that time, and have led the development of academic interpreting programmes which have received their share of recognition. I've researched and published in the field throughout my career. I will never attain the fluency of a preferred-language signer, but I am sometimes assumed to be deaf by BSL users who encounter me for the first time in signing environments. Readers will inevitably reach their own conclusions from what I have, and have not, reported here.

Clearly, then, I am reviewing as a hearing person a book that exists precisely to augment a literature challenged, through the very existence of this volume, for being 'too hearing'. Deaf people educate interpreters; undertake research on interpreting; live and work with interpreters throughout their lives; run interpreting businesses; represent service-users to interpreters and vice-versa; write policy for, plan and manage interpreting; and can also become interpreters. In and amongst all of that, of course, the ups and downs of interpreting provision get talked about frequently and intently. This generates opinions and ideas in abundance. The goal of this book, then, as the editors' preface (page xviii) expresses it, is to harvest and disseminate such material to advance the field: "to encourage out-of-the-box thinking as well as consideration of creative solutions to challenges that Deaf people encounter in their interpreted experience".

The result is a richly varied smorgasbord, combining the insights of nearly 40 contributors, 32 of whom are deaf. Five interpreters and interpreter educators were asked to critique the chapters, help to guide clarity and write a short foreword designed to set the stage for the volume. A sixth similar individual wrote a corresponding afterword. All of the editors and contributors are drawn from the United States of America, which implies an important caveat regarding the universal applicability of the discussion. Until comparable volumes are written elsewhere, we can only reach rather uncertainly for impressions of deaf people's experiences and perspectives in every other part of the globe, strongly suspecting, perhaps, that these will vary widely according to economic, social, educational and other circumstances.

In this instance, at least, the editors state that they have endeavoured to ensure that this should not "turn into merely an 'interpreter bashing' exercise instead of an educational effort" (page xix). This intention might have been an even greater risk given the fluid mixture of data-driven evidence, anecdotal lived experience and opinion from which the 20 substantive chapters are constructed. This was, we're told, some contributors' first experience of preparing a formal manuscript for publication, and a degree of analytical and expressive unevenness in the content is therefore not unexpected. Asserting that "epistemologies, or the 'ways of knowing,' of ordinary people should not be dismissed" (page 2) does not, in the output of an academic publisher, invoke *carte blanche* to claim equal validity for every ensuing claim. Whilst the resulting chapters have been editorially managed to prevent the occurrence of 'interpreter bashing,' a collection that begins with the premise that the Deaf community "slowly has been left behind" (page 1 of the editors' introduction) – despite the carefully passive voice adopted in that expression – has a lot of work to do if it is to avoid giving the impression that those outside the community were responsible for it thus being 'left behind'. In this respect, then, the volume is only partially successful. The availability online of chapter summaries in American Sign Language (ASL) is, on the other hand, a commendable practice and one that is sure to occur with increasing frequency (although we may be waiting for a number of years before 'mainstream' publishing houses emulate the Deaf/Sign Language specialist responsible for this volume, Gallaudet University Press, in this respect).

So, does this volume advance the field? The book's chapters are organised into four sections. The first of these, 'Seeing Through Deaf Eyes,' introduces a number of key themes for the volume. Trudy Suggs tees off by reinforcing the value of narrative to disenfranchised communities' struggle for empowerment. Thomas Holcomb's contribution stresses the importance of deaf people and interpreters working collaboratively in the search for excellence. Transparency and accountability in business practices form the basis for Chad Taylor and colleagues' paper, encouraging the belief that these will assist service quality.

Section two, 'Understanding the Issues Through Deaf Eyes,' begins with John Pirone and co-authors engaging with students about their experiences of working with interpreters in mainstream educational settings, unsurprisingly identifying practitioners' ASL fluency, professionalism and intercultural skills as key factors. The next two chapters (by Kim Kurz and Joseph Hill, and then by Keith Cagle and colleagues) centre on ASL *and English* skills as being critical to interpreting in deaf people's life experiences. In a case study, Tara Holcomb and Araceli Aguilar try to show how the outcomes of interaction depend hugely on the decisions of any interpreters involved. Concluding the section, Leala Holcomb reports an experience whereby improved academic interpreting was found to arise as a result of 'crowd-sourcing' support through social media.

In section three, which looks at 'specialized areas of interpreting' (and here I'm intentionally signalling my own scepticism: which areas should we designate as non-specialized?), readers will find that the focus rests largely upon the education sector. Tawny Holmes discusses legal rights in the US to such interpreting; two pairings (David Smith/Paul Ogden and Patrick Boudreault/Genie Gertz) review challenges for Deaf academics on campuses and the conference

circuit; Thomas Holcomb describes an experience which enabled him to review interpretations into English of his own lecturing in ASL; and papers from Amy June Rowley and Fallon Brizendine interrogate the accessibility of interpreted mainstream schooling for children. Moving to the business world, Sam Sepah's experiences as a Google employee provide the context for reflections about good practice in workplace interpreting. Susan Gonzalez and colleagues stress the creativity and flexibility required to provide meaningful access for Deaf and Deaf-Blind people from diverse backgrounds in healthcare settings.

The volume's last major section, 'Moving Forward with Deaf Eyes,' is designed to centre on the identification of solutions to a number of the issues raised. Wyatte Hall zones in on an approach – *théorie du sens* in all but name – that foregrounds the notion of identifying underlying meanings and describes the result as 'Deaf-centred' interpreting. Familiarity with the norms of Deaf culture is presented by Marika Kovacs-Houlihan as a key element in an interpreter becoming a 'favourite' in education or the workplace, and by Naomi Sheneman as being demonstrable through competent interpreters' management of social encounters. In the last paper, Chris and Kim Kurz and Raychelle Harris review aspects of ASL usage that they suggest are under-exploited by interpreters, leading to inadequate service delivery.

Framing all of the above are two opening and closing contributions. The preface introduces the perspective of five prominent interpreters and interpreter educators (all hearing) invited by the editors to "read and critique each chapter [in order] to minimize the possibility of confusion or misunderstanding" (page xvi) of the points being made. Lastly, an afterword by educator and past president of the US Conference of Interpreter Trainers, Carolyn Ball, underlines the forward-looking intentions of the volume as a whole, and encourages readers to work towards raising standards.

Within a canon of Interpreting Studies literature that has expanded hugely over the preceding half-century (assisted by the pressure upon academics to 'publish or perish,' the burgeoning range of outlets, and the blurring of lines between robust, expertly peer-reviewed material on the one hand and blogs, vlogs and commentaries on the other), there is little in the present volume that shines out for its originality or perspicacity. A clear opportunity is missed, for example, to connect this work to a much wider field of 'client/stakeholder expectations' research (see Downie 2015, 2016 for details) within which parts of it could otherwise sit very comfortably and informatively, explicitly extending the scope of the literature. Nevertheless, no-one can read everything that's written these days, and for many readers, there will be observations here that seem new and provocatively insightful. On the whole, the volume retains a constructively critical spirit, though contributors' "raw feelings" (page xii) are occasionally evident, and a sense that interpreters are being 'bashed' re-emerges as early as page 4 ("the importance of honoring Deaf people and listening to them [is] frequently suppressed by interpreters").

There is, however, unequivocally high-quality research by Deaf authors on interpreting topics emerging elsewhere with increasing frequency today. It is associated with the same unapologetic adherence to traditions and standards of scholarship that has re-invigorated the cultural and social aspects of Deaf Studies

in the short course of our new century (e.g. Bauman 2008; Bauman/Murray 2014; Kusters *et al.* 2017). The same level of informed, rigorous and original contribution would be an exciting addition to Interpreting Studies, but that is not the nature of this volume. We must, though, understand this volume in context. Now, I don't spend any time in the USA, so I can't comment informedly on the place a volume like this may occupy there. These papers may represent US responses indicating US solutions to US problems. But as I read that context, from my experienced, hearing, Scottish/British/European perspective, then taken *not* fundamentally as scholarship, this volume embodies a useful contribution which may contain some valuable pointers to Deaf opinion and some provocations that will help anyone engaging in this field hold up a mirror to certain aspects of received wisdom and reflect on various assumptions.

What would be needed to make this book of broader value to the field? In short, a greater sense of context. There is real potential for the wider discipline in engaging with the point of view foregrounded in these chapters – primarily, that of Deaf participants in interpreted interaction. I have already noted that the volume makes little attempt to connect American experiences with those of the rest of the world here, but this would already promote a more rounded and significant discussion. Given that it is Deaf people's identities as members of a linguistic minority that are foregrounded here, one might anticipate that comparison and correspondence with the experiences of members of other such minorities – in the US or more broadly – could be revealing. And identities being as complex and fluid as we know they are, it would help us to see the kaleidoscopic shifting of identity relations, and their realisation through the communicative choices of interpreters, were *both* sides of the interpreted equation to be considered in this way. A well-crafted book dedicated to hearing non-signers' insights into sign language interpreting could – though undoubtedly different in character – be every bit as revealing as the present volume. From the texts collected here, one might be forgiven for thinking we had lost sight of the foundational point that interpreting serves *both* primary participants in an exchange (in our case, Deaf and hearing), and is not provided for the benefit of either one alone.

The second aspect of context one might welcome would be an enhanced sense of historical depth and conceptual engagement. Contributors to this collection rarely diverge from the preface's summary in its invocation of an "interpreter-centric model" which has "kowtowed to translation" and "dominant culture rules over true communication access" (pages x-xii). Something is going badly wrong if such modelling can be taken as the default basis for the papers that follow, because every aspect of this image has been de-constructed, analysed in detail, re-framed and re-theorised extensively over the last 30 years. How can this fail to be acknowledged in an influential work of this kind? Part of the answer to that question must be that these ideas and discussions are not reaching every part of stakeholder communities. It is vital – in signed and spoken language interpreting circles – that we address this vexed issue.

Perhaps paradoxically, in light of all of the above remarks, it is just possible that this could be something of an era-defining book: era-defining in the sense that it just might mark the closing of one era in order to usher in the next. The new era one would hope to see would be characterised by serious and substan-

tive discourse, across all of the divisions of identity, geography, community and ideology implied by the foregoing paragraphs. Let's face it: we do need to get beyond 'business as usual'. We live in fragmenting societies, with misaligning and diverse (too often contradictory) values, and identities that are confused and frequently contentious (to the point where we don't even know which spaces we can safely share with whom). Amplified by technologies driven by artificial intelligence that we barely control, we misengage and talk past one another – Deaf and hearing; interpreters and consumers; researchers and other stakeholders; nation failing to speak unto nation… Too much information, too little time and space to think, too many voices, too little attention, too much spin, too little trust, too many 'authorities', too little sense of history and perspective, too many 'facts'. Meanwhile, the planet around us is imploring us to re-prioritise, to rediscover frugality, empathy and humility. Will we do it?

In its way, then, it is clear that this book offers something unusual and timely in the scholarly literature on ASL-English interpreting, and that must be unambiguously welcomed. Interpreting is a collaborative exercise or it is – quite literally, in my view (as expressed in original papers published on both sides of the millennium e.g. Turner 1995; Harrington/Turner 2001; Turner 2005, 2007; Turner/Merrison 2016) – *not interpreting at all*. We share or we stall. The more we promote mutual engagement by all relevant parties in the objective of making effective interpreting services routinely available worldwide, the sooner we're likely to attain that goal – and perhaps play a part in working towards much greater humanist goals. To achieve this, though, we will need to exhort foregrounding of informed, realistic and forward-looking dialogue throughout. At present, Deaf authors and analysts participate in little of this at the global level, and it is not easy to envisage any simple change in that situation. To the extent that the existence of this volume acts as a stimulant to interaction across stakeholder communities, it is a significant contribution to the field.

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Runcieman, Alan James (2018) *The Identity of the Professional Interpreter. How Professional Identities are Constructed in the Classroom*. Singapore, Springer, 184, ISBN: 978-981-10-7822-4, ISBN: 978-981-10-7823-1 (eBook), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7823-1

Reviewed by *Raquel Lázaro Gutiérrez*, University of Alcalá de Henares

The study of professional identities has been very productive within Interpreting Studies in the last decades, usually linked to aspects related to role boundaries (Grbic 2010; Hsieh 2007; Merlini 2009; Morris 2010) and even ethics (Baixauli 2017; Li *et al.* 2016; Nakane 2009; Pym 2012; Rudvin 2007; Snellman 2016). Particularly focusing on dialogue and public service interpreting, there has been an increasing concern amongst both scholars and professionals motivated by new communication needs provoked by recent demographic and social changes (Angelelli 2010; Hale 2005). However, professional identities have also been explored for translators and interpreters in general (Badalotti 2010; Bahadir 2010; Coracini 2006; Ferreira-Alves 2011; Katan 2009; Meylaerts 2010; Monzó Nebot 2009; Neather 2012; Pajarín Canales 2017; Sela-Sheffy 2014; Setton/Linanliang 2009; Torto 2008; Voinova/Shlesinger 2013; Yoo/Jeong 2017; Zwischenberger 2017). Also very popular are those studies focused on audiovisual translation (Kapsaskis 2011; Pérez González 2017), another field which, together with public service interpreting, is characterized by underprofessionalization and amateur interpreting.

The Identity of the Professional Interpreter is a monograph that, instead of focusing on the identity of practicing professionals, pays attention to how higher education students understand the profession of interpreter. This is done by means of a case study framed within the Department of Interpretation and Translation at the University of Bologna, Italy, and following a methodological approach based on micro narratives. This study presents similarities with others, such as Voinova's (2013), who qualitatively analyses materials (weekly reports and end-of-year assignments) written by five cohorts of students of a community interpreting course at Bar-Ilan University in search of self-presentations, or Skaaden's (2017), who focuses on an experiential-dialogic e-learning experience exploring the discourse of students about interpretation professional knowledge in text-only chat meetings of 45 to 60 minutes. However, Runcieman opts for an ethnographic approach and analyses micro narratives of first year interpretation students which occurred during a set of semi-structured individual and group interviews.

Runcieman's monograph is, as he declares, based on his PhD dissertation and, thus, presents the fruits of a thorough piece of research matured and developed along five years. As the author includes a short biography or auto-ethnography, as he calls it, readers are informed that he is a native speaker of English who moved to Italy more than 25 years ago and worked as an English language teacher from then on for a private school first and later for university language centers. Eventually, Runcieman won a position at the Department for Interpreters and Translators at the University of Bologna and completed his PhD at King's College University in London. This self-presentation provides us with information about a participant researcher and also allows us to better understand his motivation for

the research, particularly for the perceptions of students in their way of becoming interpreters.

The monograph offers a table of contents, a list of figures and a list of tables. It is structured into twelve chapters and more than 130 short subchapters (the book contains 184 pages) followed by a list of references. The author's schematic style results in a comfortable, clear and fast reading experience, and the inclusion of lists and tables makes the document very easy to navigate.

In the first chapter, Runcieman summarizes his piece of research and the reader learns about the object of his study (professional identities), and its setting (the University of Bologna). The author's main aim is "to explore how [higher education] institutions attempt to construct the characterising attributes, skills and the social role of a professional figure for students, and how students in turn interpret these constructs to develop their own sense of self and place in the social world" (p. 1), and he achieves it. He does so by means of an ethnographic methodology, embodied as a year-long case study studying a group of first-year B.A. students through a series of semi-structured individual and group interviews and detailed observations in the field. The data obtained is analyzed from a small story research approach to find out how students construct the identity of the professional interpreter as they interact with dominant discourses present in curricula and teaching practices. As Runcieman states, "by adopting this lens we can also explore how this dialogue with the institution influences the students' own social identities [and] how they position themselves in the social world in terms of what they perceive themselves as being capable of doing and capable of being in their future professional lives" (p. 3).

The second chapter deals with interpreting as a profession. First, a historical overview of the role of the interpreter in society is offered, to later present current professional debates, such as the differences between community and conference interpreters, with a main focus on identity development. The chapter finishes with an overview of the development of Interpreting Studies in general and in Italy in particular.

The third chapter contains the theoretical background of this study, which is based on Bourdieusian theories about professional development, to finish with an attempt of definition of the interpreting profession today. This last section, in my opinion, could have been further developed to include more recent references, such as Gentile (2013, 2016, 2017).

Chapter 4 is one of the most complete and interesting ones in Runcieman's monograph. It consists of a revision of the literature related to his methodology and revises concepts related to narrative research, identity, and discourse and interaction. About narrative, Runcieman states that it is "as a way by which people make sense of their lives, and [...] individuals' narratives are an essential means for (re)constructing and interpreting experience" (p. 29). It is in this chapter that the concept of small story is presented and described as stories which emerge during talk-in-interaction. They are often co-constructed with others who have shared knowledge, and take the shape of the fragmentary and contingent telling of events, and present reflections about past, present and future events. Indeed, Runcieman analyzes the small stories about the interpreting profession that appear in individual and group interviews with students as well as in some casual encounters outside the interview setting.

The concept of identity is also developed in Chapter 4, where a distinction between self and social identities is made. The following sections describe how talk-in-interaction and discourse constitute the object of analysis of this study. Runcieman uses the narrative positioning analysis suggested by Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), which is structured in three levels: "the talk-in-interaction (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008), how the narrative emerges in turn by turn talk and how the characters are positioned in relation to each other in the 'narrative event'; the second is concerned with the actual telling, how the participants interact and co-construct the narrative in the 'narrative-telling event'; and the third looks to how the first two levels come together in relation to wider socio-cultural contexts and Discourses circulating in society" (p. 41).

The literature revision of Chapter 4 is completed in Chapter 5, where Runcieman approaches ethnography as a research method. Ethnography is introduced, criticized, and contrasted with the concept of ethnographic perspective. The author claims that he adopts an ethnographic perspective in his study in that his approach is less comprehensive and aims at analyzing aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a group of students.

Chapter 6 leaves behind the theoretical framework of this study to focus on the empirical research and, particularly, its methodology. With the description of the research plan, readers learn that data collection took place in 2012 and 2013. The project was presented to first year interpretation students with English as their main language of study as seeking "to investigate the students' changing views towards their studies, with a view to proposing potential changes to the institution's curricula" (p. 51). Participant students were required to commit to two sessions of one-to-one interviews and two sessions of group interviews over the academic year 2012-13. A total of 5 students took part in the study.

The setting was prepared to avoid formal interrogative situations and foster, instead, a comfortable environment enabling participation, communication and the co-construction of roles and meaning. Interviews were unstructured and following the model of ethnographic interview suggested by Spradely (1979), where the researcher departs from ignorance and starts without hypotheses. The first interviews were more exploratory than the second ones. Some topics which emerged during the first interviews were salvaged and offered to the interviewees for further exploration. Interviews were conducted in English, which was not the mother tongue of any of the interviewees. This implied, as the author comments, that students viewed their English native speaker interviewer as an English teacher or as a foreign researcher, probably influencing their answers.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and field notes were used to complete the information, that included the following details:

"1. The date, time and place of observation
2. Recorded facts, details of what occurred at the site
3. Personal responses to the fact of recording field notes, thoughts and impressions
4. Attention to specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations
5. Questions about the people or behaviour at the site for further investigation
6. Page numbers to keep all observations in chronological order" (p. 58).

The discourse of the interviewees was divided into stories or narrative episodes and examined following a mixed approach comprising a categorical and a holistic content analysis (Lieblich *et al.* 1998). This fits the object of analysis, small stories, which are often fragmentary, unfinished and co-constructed by more than one narrator. The author is particularly interested in emotionally charged discourse and, thus, pays attention to "difficult episodes" (p. 64), emotive appeals to the interviewer, adverbs and verbs, repetitions and the chronological structure of the story.

It is also in Chapter 6 that readers discover the interest of the researcher to use narrative positioning (Bamberg 1997) as a framework to analyze his data. In particular, Runcieman bases his methodology on Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), who used narrative positioning analysis to explore identity work, and develops his own method of analysis structured in three levels. Level 1 deals with the positioning of characters in the narrative event ("Where is the narrative situated and how does it develop? How are the characters portrayed and relationally positioned?"); level 2 tackles positioning in the narrative-telling event ("How was the narrative occasioned in the surrounding talk and why was it told? How do the participants position themselves in the interactive telling and how does the narrative develop in that interaction?"), and level 3, which connects levels 1 and 2 to salient discourses ("How do levels one and two relate to individual stances towards Discourses? How are these stances common to other positioning across the whole data, which might suggest collective positioning processes in relation to certain Discourses?") (p. 68-69).

Chapter 7 presents the principal themes and subthemes found in the analysis. As it was stated in the previous chapter, the author carries out both a holistic and a categorical content analysis. In this chapter, it can be read that, for the categorical content analysis, the author focuses on his research interests: the identity of the professional interpreter; the resources required to become a professional interpreter; and student experiences in the institution (i.e. with peers and institutional representatives, such as teachers) (p. 72). Four themes, 12 subthemes in two different levels and four overarching categories are established:

TOPICS:

1. The professional interpreter is a language expert.
2. Only students who speak like native-speakers can become interpreters.
   2.1. There is not enough time to become like native-speakers in the three-year degree.
   2.2. To become like native speakers, students need to live abroad for long periods of time.
3. Students are the best language students because they are in the best institution in Italy.
   3.1. Students are always under pressure to study more.
   3.2. Students study all the time and have no time to relax.
   3.3. Students are highly competitive in the classroom, more than any other students in any other institution.
      3.3.1. Competitiveness helps improve language learning.
      3.3.2. Competitiveness creates a bad working environment in the classroom.
      3.3.3. Competitiveness prepares students for their future careers.

4. The relation between teachers and students in the institution is very different from other Italian higher education institutions.
   4.1. Teachers have too much power over students.
   4.2. Teachers do not respect students' rights.
   4.3. Teachers do not treat students as mature students.
   4.4. Teachers are sometimes unprofessional (p. 72-73).

CATEGORIES:

1. Reporting teacher talk about the professional interpreter.
2. Talk about language learning.
3. Talk about the character of the interpreter-student in the institution.
4. Talk about teacher-student relations (p. 73).

The author offers a description of the categories and a summary of quantitative data organized in 14 tables.

The following chapters include the analysis of the small stories using the narrative positioning approach. The author aims at drawing connections between local narrative episodes and salient discourses related to the interviewees' construction of their identities as students, on the one hand, and of the identity of the professional interpreter on the other. Instead of organizing the information according to the themes or the categories listed above, Chapter 8 deals with the teacher talk about interpreting, Chapter 9 addresses topics about language levels and interpreting, whereas Chapter 10 tackles the relationships between the students and the institution. In each chapter, the author develops the three levels of analysis he described in Chapter 6, offering and describing examples from the transcription of the interviews.

Chapter 11 contains the conclusions of this piece of research in subsections which follow the same thematic structure as the chapters that presented the analysis. Thus, in the subsection Teacher Talk About Interpreters, the author summarizes the teachers' discourse about interpreters reported by students. The interpreter is presented by teachers as a language expert on the one hand, and a visible agent in the interpreted communicative event on the other, the former image being the dominant one. Teachers also emphasize the prestige of the institution, which makes students reflect upon their own capacities. As students, they feel pressured to achieve the high standards attributed to the institution and reflect on their present life devoted to studying and a future professional life full of stress as interpreters.

The title of the following subchapter is The Professional Interpreter and the Native Speaker, and deals with discourses about linguistic competence as the principal competence needed to become a good interpreter. Students feel time devoted to complete their studies is not enough to acquire both a native-like linguistic competence and the skills and abilities needed to perform as a professional interpreter.

Finally, the subsection Interpreter-Student Identities in the Institution offers insights into the relationship between students and the institution. The first salient topic is a dichotomy between studying and having fun, which seems to divide students into good future interpreters and bad drop outs. Once again, the pressure of studying at a prestigious institution appears as a central concern, as

well as some criticism towards those students who even neglect their physical and mental health if they devote their time only to studying, and who compete with their classmates to become better students (and interpreters).

The last chapter (Chapter 12) includes a concluding summary where the author states that "[t]his book is concerned with how HE institutions train future professionals, and in particular professional interpreters", and "with how certain Discourses may be out of sync with the professional world, and how HE institutions need to reflect more on how they construct professional figures for their students in order to respond to changes in contemporary society (i.e. the growing importance of the role of community interpreting in the world, and the need to address that interpreter identity in HE degrees)" (p. 167). Runcieman concludes that salient discourses are varied within HE institutions and sometimes even contradictory. On the other hand, students may perceive these discourses differently from what might have been the institution's original intention, which might impact on their social identity. In this chapter, Runcieman also offers suggestions for changes in curricula and institutions, regarding the methodological approach and for further research.

To sum up, *The Identity of the Professional Interpreter* presents a thorough piece of research carried out in the framework of a PhD dissertation. It offers interesting insights concerning a methodological approach based on the narrative positioning analysis of small stories for the study of students' perceptions about interpreting training.

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Topics of interest include but are not limited to the following areas:

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