

ПЕРЕВОД И ПЕРЕВОДОВЕДЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

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TRAINING THE AUGMENTED INTERPRETER TODAY

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Abstract: Any interpretation training programme aspiring to excellence must be closely connected with the professional world and make effective use of innovative teaching methods, cooperation with external stakeholders, and modern technologies in order to ensure a high quality of learning. This paper focuses on the different aspects of ‘quality’ in light of the advent of new technologies and the changing nature of the interpreting profession. Interpretation training programmes must learn today how to prepare a widely employable interpreter to survive the pressures of the professional world. A scenario-based approach, that simulates work-like situations, is effective in interpretation training. The paper will focus on mock conferences, as its most effective teaching practice. Mock conferences help to enhance the authenticity and diversity of lifelike situations in class, provide the students with contextualised practice that helps to develop non-linguistic competences. The latest technologies, e.g. ICTs, AI, etc., offer a new degree of automation to all professional language mediation activities, calling for a rethinking of the interpreter’s skillset. The future will accommodate both artificial and human interpreting, and the bar for humans will be raised. The interpretation students must learn how to use the latest technologies for the benefit of the client. A new, augmented interpreter profile includes the combination of the classical competences (interpretation, language and cultural, interpersonal, ethical, etc.) and technological competences which must be used for the benefit of the client and the events at which the interpreter works. The paper also explores the value added by human interpretation to communication, such as depth of message comprehension, teamwork, shared responsibility and liability and, most importantly, the value of the ‘interpreter who cares’.

Key words: new normal; quality assurance; scenario-based approach; artificial intellect; human interpreting

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In a globalized world, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about sweeping changes in all areas of life and society. What seemed a remote future less than a year ago has now exploded into reality, creating a ‘new normal’. Interpreter training programmes are no exception. What is the future of conference interpreting (CI) training? What are the challenges and how can they be met in the emerging realities of the ‘new normal’? These are the questions that course leaders and CI trainers need to address today. Any interpretation training programme aspiring to excellence must be sensitive to the needs of the professional world and utilize innovative training methods, cooperation models and modern technologies. A couple of years ago, I would have said that training programmes were facing many challenges, that they were expected to foster existing standards while remaining dynamic, interactive, forward-thinking and pluralistic in their approaches to methodology and delivery by anticipating and innovating rather than reacting and adapting. Although this is still true today, there is also a new sense of urgency, as training programmes need to become:

1. even more dynamic, to address the paradigm shift occurring before our eyes;
2. even more interactive and innovative, so as to leverage new collaboration tools such as Zoom, Kudo, Interprefy and other platforms in ways that maximize the learning experience;
3. even more pluralistic in their use of methodologies and training solutions to equip students for a wide range of interpretation settings by going beyond the needs of international organizations, especially given that international organizations themselves are seeing monumental changes in their operating models.

Today, interpreter training programmes must learn to prepare the ‘universal’, widely employable interpreter with a broader skillset to survive the pressures of the professional world, because, as we all know, newly acquired interpreting skills tend to be fragile and require several years of practice before they reach maturity and become robust enough to meet the new, often conflicting needs of the current working environment.

Scenario-based Approach and Mock Conferences in CI training

Fully aware that there is not enough time to cover everything in detail during the course and bearing in mind the concept of a ‘widely employable’ interpreter, CI training programmes should widely employ among

others a *scenario-based approach* that simulates work-like situations for the students [Alekseeva, Antonova, 2021]. This approach is also called *situated approach* [Angelelli, 2004; Hatim and Mason, 1997; Napier, 2006; Roy, 2000; Setton, 2006]. It is highly effective, for example, to support regular classes with mock conferences, which maximize students' practical experience while still in training [Ardito, 1999; De Leat, 2010; Gillies, 2013; Kurz, 1989, 2002; Lim 2003; Lin, Davis, and Liao, 2004; Tsuruta and Naito, 2011]. There are other formats that can also be used for this purpose, such as negotiation scenarios, virtual classes and conferences, real-life conferences and other events organized both inside and outside the training institution, and so on.

In traditional interpreting classrooms, though there might be some elements of simulation, the instructor mainly uses speeches, either of his own, or produced by trainees, or from some speech banks (such as Speech Repository of the European Commission¹), audiovisual media, depriving trainees of the contexts vital for oral communication [Kurz, 1989], which substantially reduces the authenticity and diversity of lifelike situations [Straniero Sergio, 1998]. The development of most non-linguistic competences, however, relies on contextualised practice [Fernández Prieto and Sempere Linares, 2010]. That is why scenario-based approach is so important in interpreter training. One of its most effective teaching practices is organizing mock conferences.

The mock conference simulates a real-life interpretation assignment, such as a conference, seminar, roundtable discussion, panel discussion or ceremony. It reproduces all the essential features of a real conference, including the chairperson's remarks, presentations, questions from the floor, etc. At the same time, while it imitates a 'real-world' assignment, it is not real work: it offers a safe environment where different interpreting strategies can be experimented with, where failure is acceptable, and where errors can be analysed and reflected upon afterwards. Simulations protect learners from otherwise severe consequences of mistakes [Garris, Ahlers, and Driskell, 2002], lower their anxiety level by providing a less threatening environment [Hyland, 1993], provide scaffolding and feedback from instructors and peers [Parush, Hamm and Shtub, 2002] and help to meet academic and personal growth objectives [García-Carbonell and Watts, 2010].

Mock conferences mark a transition from in-class learning to practice and can have a varying degree of approximation to real life. They help trainees experience the real world under controlled circumstances [Lim, 2003]. It has a positive backwash effect because it stimulates trainees'

¹ Speech Repository. European Commission. URL: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/sr/home> (accessed: 03.12.2021).

enthusiasm and autonomy, though trainees show different degrees of anxiety at the initial stage [Lin, Davis, and Liao, 2004]. It helps trainees acquire skills better, motivates them to learn interpreting by presenting the real need to overcome linguistic barriers that is absent in traditional classrooms, and prepares them for the market [Lee, 2005]. In the training process they can be roughly divided into quasi-conferences and spontaneous conferences [Yakovlev, 2012].

A quasi-conference recreates an actual event and can be as simple as a video playback of that event. The materials are made available to the students in advance and can be carefully studied. Thus, the element of spontaneity is intentionally reduced to a minimum. Students can not only study the topic, terminology and reference sources, but also work out each speech in advance. In doing so, it is possible to develop strategies to deal with different speeds and accents, maintain proper decalage, etc. This type of mock conference is a logical extension of in-class training, it simply uses more significant material. Quasi-conferences account for a higher share of the curriculum at the beginning of training, a share that gradually reduces as the course progresses.

A spontaneous conference offers little prior information or materials to the interpreters, reflecting common practice. Students in this case are usually provided with a programme of the conference, some PowerPoint presentations, reference materials, etc. The arrival time of materials may also vary, with some speeches or presentations offered at short notice or even during the conference itself. This approach requires different preparation techniques from the student. The share of a spontaneous mock conference obviously increases towards the end of the training process.

Work-like scenarios such as these help to build the interpretation, interpersonal, technological and service provision competences that form the core of an interpreter's skillset. The intended learning outcomes of mock conferences can be subdivided into skills that are most relevant before, during and after the conference.

The 'before' skills include the ability to analyze the reference sources available to the interpreter, develop the necessary grasp of various subjects, compile glossaries, coordinate preparation work with other interpreters, and so on. The 'during' skills are the numerous skills required of a conference interpreter such as the ability to concentrate, to listen and process messages, to maintain the appropriate decalage and voice control, to ensure accuracy and to deal with varying speeds of speaking. In addition, the mock conference offers the student a unique opportunity to develop skills that cannot be obtained during in-class or home training, such as coordination between partners in the booth, taking turns, booth etiquette, dealing with unpredictable situations, practicing relay interpreting, etc. The 'after' skills are equally important. They encompass the student's

ability to reflect on his or her own achievements and failures, formulate important lessons for the future, ensure future progress, etc. Another important ‘after’ skill relates to ‘knowledge harvesting’, or keeping the glossaries and other valuable materials developed for the mock conference on hand and using them in future practice [Yakovlev, 2012].

Mock conferences constitute the basis of a scenario-based approach, however CI training should be provided by practicing interpreters who can teach students the real skills of the profession and give a proper feedback, who can provide the necessary pluralism of methodologies and training solutions that will equip students for a wide range of interpretation settings. This diversity of practical approaches is a boon to the programme: it offers broader exposure and requires practical flexibility. Moreover, it provides graduates with greater career opportunities — a crucial benefit in a globalized world.

Mock conferences as one of the elements of the scenario-based or situated approach are widely employed by the Master programmes which are members of the *European Masters in Conference Interpreting Consortium*² and which are considered to be providing a high-quality conference interpreting training, and which graduates are successful in passing the accreditation tests to the language services of such international organizations as the UN or European Institutions.

Information Age: Interpreting and Interpretation Training

Quality assurance has always been a major challenge for interpreter training programmes. Today, this challenge is compounded by the realities of the Information Age in which the use of ICT and AI is transforming the language mediation industry, especially in the context of the COVID-19 lockdowns and other public health and social measures. This is affecting the interpreting profession and, as a consequence, the practice of interpreter training.

However, the years of 2020 and 2021 demonstrated that the key principles of quality training remain the same and that CI students still need to achieve certain standards in order to obtain a formal qualification.

At the same time, evaluating interpreter performance is a complex task because quality is not an absolute notion. According to Ildiko Horváth, “interpreting as a kind of language service is considered to be of good quality if it fulfils the client’s or user’s expectations” [Horváth, 2018: 123]. The problem is that different clients have different expectations in different communicative situations [Bühler, 1986; Gile, 1983].

² European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) Consortium. URL: <https://www.emcinterpreting.org/emci> (accessed: 03.12.2021).

For example, professional interpreters are keenly aware that so-called UN-speak, diplomatic discourse, the language of banking and finance, etc. are all very different from each other and require different strategies while interpreting. The following are just a few examples of the many discourses that students should master during CI training:

UN speeches are mostly written and prepared speeches (with the text available for interpreters in the booth), featuring a high density of information and delivered by fast speakers with diverse accents. Many clichés are used as terms: every phrase should often have only one meaning and lend itself to be back-translated, however there is mostly an established set of topics. Thus, the main strategies that should apply here are learning the clichés, employing sim+text strategies and performing sight translation. Diplomatic discourse is characterized by a high frequency of vague expressions with a hidden meaning, and it is important not to miss anything. It is also important to constantly remain close to the original, with no deviation or explication. Thus, the main strategies that should apply here are avoiding assumptions, always knowing the background, always keeping abreast of current events, studying the speaker and favouring literal over phraseological translation.

Banking and finance discourse is characterized by figures that must not be missed, shorthand and abbreviations, and intermittent use of English and Russian terms for the same concepts. Interpreters should learn to apply the following strategies here: shortening the decalage, being well prepared for the subject, maintaining a glossary of ‘what they actually call it’ and keeping up with the speaker (changing sooner in a booth). This means that to achieve success in today’s environment, interpreter training programmes must be sufficiently flexible, as well as pluralistic in their methodologies and training solutions, to offer students broader exposure to the different interpretation settings in modern multilateral society and to provide graduates with greater career opportunities, a crucial advantage in a globalized world.

Given that interpreter training programmes are challenged with departing from business-as-usual and developing universal, multi-employable, variously skilled interpreters for a changed market, the inevitable question needs to be asked and answered: will it be artificial or human interpreting that will drive the market of tomorrow?

As early as in 2016, McKinsey showed that currently demonstrated technologies could automate 45 percent of the activities people were paid to perform and that about 60 percent of all occupations could see 30 percent or more of their constituent activities automated with the technologies available today [Chui, Manyika, Miremadi, 2016: 61]. Game-changing technologies such as remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) are expected to continue revolutionizing the interpretation landscape.

In September 2019, before the pandemic, I took up the invitation of the Shanghai International Studies University to attend a meeting at iFLYTEK, a Chinese leader in AI translation and interpretation software. I remember how my colleagues and myself were genuinely impressed by the ground-breaking advances achieved by the company in voice recognition, speech translation and synthesis. Arguably, the quality of the output delivered by their systems went far beyond the state-of-the-art solutions offered anywhere in Russia or Europe. We had a one-hour meeting during which the two sides communicated in English and in Chinese, relying exclusively on iFLYTEK's speech translation device displaying translations on a number of screens around the room. Overall, we greatly appreciated the clarity and effectiveness of communication in this mode courtesy of iFLYTEK, despite a few linguistic snags that did not generally impair our understanding of each other.

Thus, it is now fairly clear that the future will accommodate both artificial and human interpreting. Although automated interpreting can be expected to eventually garner a solid market niche, interpreting is bound to remain a very human process. That said, the bar for humans will certainly be raised, as survival in the market will depend on the interpreter's ability to stay far ahead of machines by bringing a 'human' value proposition to the market.

While accuracy, whether assured by a machine or a human, will always be a key requirement, the human input could make the difference between hiring an interpreter or relying on a machine. This is amply demonstrated by our own professional experiences and the lessons learned by our students and graduates. Interpreting involves judgement calls, drawing associations between different ideas, linking the current situation to the wider world, understanding culture and sometimes even having the people skills to manage speakers [Downie, 2020]. It is "situation-embedded human communication developing in a continuously evolving context" [Horváth, 2021: 179]. These form some of the basic professional and behavioural competences that need to be consistently addressed through training.

At the same time, interpreter training programmes must produce graduates who know how to use technology for the benefit of their customers and how to make a positive contribution to the events at which they work.

Therefore, besides the classical interpreter competencies (interpretation, language, cultural, interpersonal skills, etc.), basic technology and service provision awareness, interpreter training programmes must familiarize students with cutting-edge commercial solutions, such as remote interpreting, the emerging hub- and home-based models of delivery, new interpretation management systems (IMS), etc. It is expected that students

must learn to stay on top of research and development into AI systems as they are applied to interpreting. For example, since 2020 EMCI programmes introduced training in the use of platforms such as Kudo, Inteprefy, etc., mainly to conduct online mock conferences within and across EMCI schools. The platforms became indispensable and efficient tools during lockdowns and border closures, enabling partners across various European countries and in Russia to offer students interpreting opportunities through a range of virtual training events.

It is, however, important to remember that technologies will remain tools, while interpreters should be master craftspeople. A great sculptor is great even with a rusty old chisel. Thus, interpreter trainers, as practicing interpreters themselves, should be committed to making the best use of technological developments while championing the power and skill of human interpreters because professional interpreting is about more than understanding the language, it is about understanding the implications carried by that language through cultural habits, norms and beliefs. Humans know that different cultures have different ideas about the world and that this can affect how something is translated or interpreted. Machines do not understand this. Automated term-mining still relies on humans deciding which terms are worth noticing and how best to understand them.

It does not degrade our profession at all to admit that we can benefit from technology in the same way that many translators have benefited from the growth of computer-aided translation, and just as we benefited from the iFLYTEK speech translation device while visiting the company.

Today, a new kind of interpreter is coming on stage, often called an *augmented interpreter*. Being accurate, terminologically exact and impartial is not enough anymore. Interpreters today do not try to disappear into the background, making the audience completely forget that they exist; pretending that speakers have miraculously started speaking in another language, as was often considered to be the ideal in the past. Interpreting “requires an array of soft skills, for example, interpersonal skills, communication and listening skills, empathy, the ability to cooperate and work in a team, etc.” [Horváth, 2021: 180]. Augmented interpreters make a difference to events by focusing on teamwork and shared responsibility. Only interpreters who care will make a difference today. In this respect, the approach not only elevates the position of interpreters but emphasizes their shared humanity, too.

Therefore, in addition to being ‘techie’, interpreter training programmes today must substantially reconsider the range of service provision competences that they target. Through courses addressing interpreter ethics and the realities of interpretation as a modern profession,

they must instill the values and behaviors that deliver a game-changing experience to the modern customer.

Interpreter training programmes should equip their students with tools that enable them to continuously learn and improve their performance by getting out of their comfort zone and focusing on the customer in order to produce the best communicative outcome, however that might be measured. For human interpreting to really matter to the customer, interpreters should share a moral duty of care for the outcome of communication.

Thus, any interpretation training programme aspiring to excellence must be closely connected with the professional world and make effective use of innovative teaching methods, cooperation with external stakeholders, and modern technologies to ensure a high quality of learning. ‘Quality’ is an elusive notion, especially in light of the advent of new technologies and the changing nature of the interpreting profession. The latest technologies, e.g. ICTs, AI, etc., offer a new degree of automation to all professional language mediation activities, calling for a rethinking of the interpreter’s skillset. A new, augmented interpreter profile is coming to the fore, combining the classical competences (interpretation, language and cultural, interpersonal, ethical, etc.) with mastery of technologies for the benefit of the client and the events at which the interpreter works. It is also important to take into account the value added by human interpretation to communication, such as depth of message comprehension, teamwork, shared responsibility and liability and, most importantly, the value of the ‘interpreter who cares’.

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ПОДГОТОВКА УСТНЫХ ПЕРЕВОДЧИКОВ В ЦИФРОВУЮ ЭПОХУ

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Аннотация: В современном мире программа подготовки переводчиков может стать успешной и эффективной только в том случае, если она тесно связана с профессией, использует инновационные методы обучения, оснащена современным оборудованием и имеет широкую сеть сотрудничества с различными партнерами. В данной статье рассматриваются различные аспекты качества подготовки переводчиков в свете прихода новых технологий и изменений, которые сегодня переживает профессия. Программа подготовки переводчиков должна готовить переводчиков широкого профиля, чтобы затем они были востребованы на рынке переводческих услуг. Особенно продуктивен в этом свете сценарный подход, имитирующий профессиональные сценарии, наиболее эффективным из которых является сценарий учебных конференций. Учебные конференции максимально приближаются к профессиональной ситуации и позволяют студенту отработать весь набор компетенций, необходимых переводчику, а также взаимодействие с коллегами. Новое время требует нового переводчика с расширенным профилем, который владеет как классическими компетенциями, так и новыми технологиями, основанными на искусственном интеллекте, поскольку в будущем для устного перевода будут использоваться как технологии распознавания речи, так и перевод, осуществляемый человеком. При этом планка для устного переводчика существенно поднимется. Выпускники переводческих программ должны уметь использовать новейшие технологии для пользы своих клиентов. В статье говорится о «добавленной» ценности устного переводчика для осуществления успешной коммуникации, который способен не только точно передать смысл высказывания, но и нести ответственность за свою работу, работать в команде и болеть за общее дело.

Ключевые слова: новая нормальность; качество подготовки переводчиков; сценарный подход; искусственный интеллект; устный переводчик

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