

## Self-Assessment in Teaching Interpreting Auto-évaluation en enseignement de l'interprétation

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Résumé de l'article

L'évaluation des performances est un problème controversé tout au long de la formation universitaire (Riccardi, 2002). La période de formation demeure un moment clé qui vise à amener de futurs interprètes à prendre conscience de leurs forces et de leurs faiblesses, du manque de connaissances spécifiques et de l'application des compétences acquises. Par conséquent, si l'auto-évaluation est intégrée dans le processus d'enseignement comme facteur essentiel, elle aura un effet positif à la fois sur le comportement des étudiants envers l'autocritique et sur leur rendement. Les méthodes et les technologies d'aide à l'enseignement facilitent le travail grâce au matériel préenregistré et permettent aux professeurs et aux étudiants d'échanger ce matériel efficacement. Des grilles d'évaluation ont été utilisées par nos étudiants au cours de l'apprentissage de l'interprétation, à l'étape initiale de formation. Les étudiants ont également participé activement à l'évaluation de simulations en classe. Ces méthodes d'auto-évaluation ont eu un effet positif sur l'engagement des étudiants dans le processus d'enseignement, sans compter que leur rendement à court terme en a été amélioré.

# Self-Assessment in Teaching Interpreting

**Encarnación Postigo Pinazo**

## **Teaching and Assessment in Interpreting: State of the Art**

Traditional approaches to assessment and self-assessment (Atkins *et al.*, 1993) mainly relying on the teacher as a higher authority are revisited by less conformist tendencies (McMahon, 1999) which advocate more active participation of students who should be expected to make a judgement themselves, obviously being provided with meta-cognitive tools or guides (Arumí and Esteve, 2006). As long as the training progresses they should be able to develop more sophisticated knowledge and the teacher should as a result find useful feedback on students' opinions and his/her role will turn into more of a moderator than a judge. The European Portfolio of Languages<sup>1</sup> which favours self-assessment tools is used as a model in some training projects with successful results (Almahano Güeto *et al.*, 2007).<sup>2</sup>

Recent studies on assessment in Higher Education favour the fact that students take control of their own learning process. Taras (2008) suggests students should be given two models for self-assessment, one that permits them to be included in the self-assessment process of Higher Education and the other giving

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1 [http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?M=/main\\_pages/levels.html](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?M=/main_pages/levels.html) [page viewed on April 29, 2007]

2 <http://www.cilt.org.uk/elp.htm> [page viewed on May 29, 2007]

them access to grade production and negotiation. Both models provide a different form of expertise to students and subsequently have a similar vision to that of the tutor.

The training of future interpreters should necessarily include some psycholinguistic training, taking into account the fact that a major part of the work depends on self-preparation by the students. The instructor's role, to aid self-preparation, is to provide some useful guidelines, strategies and exercises that can be used outside the language laboratory, without an instructor and without sophisticated equipment. (Kornakov, 2000, p. 248)

In the case of interpreting, the students must strive to attain quality skills. There are many ways in which quality can be improved. Chiaro and Nocella (2004) proposed three basic areas: training, specialization and technological innovation, emphasising the need for specialists involved in training interpreters to focus certainly more closely on quality. Within training, assessment and self-assessment procedures play an important role for interpreters by encouraging self-regulation processes in consecutive interpreting trainees (Arumi and Esteve, 2006).

This claim for quality has been in full swing for a long time and has been the subject of many academic works. Quality interpreting includes many competences and components. Researchers doing empirical work have paid attention to assessment to evaluate quality (Bühler, 1984; Kopczynski, 1994; Kurz, 1989a, 1989b, 1993, 2005; Garzone, 2002; Gile, 1990, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2005).

Among these, Gile (1995, p. 162) presents an experiment focusing on students who assessed performance on fidelity. He found that students were not reliable fidelity assessors of their peers. He proposes replicating the experiment in different schools, with different language combinations, through holistic empirical research with the help from various disciplines including qualified psychologists or communication science specialists. Gile (1999) emphasises expanding common ground in research between Interpreting Studies and empirical work in other disciplines (namely neurophysiology, cognitive psychology, and linguistics).

In a similar line, Shlesinger (2004, p. 118) regrets the fact that interdisciplinary work has not lived up to its word. Empirical studies like those reported by Barik (1969), Gerver (1976), Goldman-Eisler (1972) and others in the 1960s and 1970s have not been widely followed. Shlesinger (2004, p. 118) foresees a more promising situation when it comes to less cognitively oriented disciplines like discourse analysis, pragmatics, anthropology, sociology, communication studies, and legal studies. She points to the rapidly increasing field of medical interpreting where discourse analysts and intercultural communication specialists have been focusing on the interpreter's role in the interaction.

Fortunately, current studies show that teaching interpreting, although being complex and interesting, could benefit from new teaching approaches, especially since it is being influenced by new technologies and multicultural societies. Both suggest interesting possibilities for trainees' production feedback and both raise standards and demands for quality practice.

Research on providing sound training and guidelines either for trainers and trainees is necessary. Ilescu (2003, p. 171) describes the profession as demanding and versatile and considers it common sense for interpreters to engage in Continuous Learning, which should address interpreters' self-awareness. And, as Hurtado Albir (1999, p. 199) states, students must be fully aware of the professional aspects of their future career, the market and its regulations to anticipate what they would need to enter in the profession.

In that future career second language competence also plays an important role. Therefore this competence must be accomplished in early stages of Translation and Interpreting academic programs. Blasco Mayor (2005, 2007) emphasises the need to observe the correct acquisition of crucial skills such as the comprehension in the second language to determine the cognitive processes and the role that understanding of the second languages plays in interpreting. Previous studies (Burton Sawyer, 2001) also find that commitment of students and serious engagement in the practices will help facilitate the automatization of comprehension processes of real speeches or oral materials when interpreting.

For that reason Hurtado Albir (1999, pp. 217-218) suggests the following training sequence. Once trainees have a good competence in a second language, we should start with sight translation, dialogue or bilateral interpreting, and finally, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. Along similar lines Zainer Visintin (2006, p. 34) provides methodology and materials for consecutive interpreting, some closely related to second language competence, for example, “be grammatical”, “make sense in every single sentence”; “do not translate ‘words’—work with unit or chunk of meaning”. Actual professional practice challenges interpreters to meet new quality standards. Academic teaching should help interpreters meet these challenges.

As Moser-Mercer (1997, p. 194) points out, novice trainees have incomplete perceptions of input when listening. They can be distracted by superficial problems like unknown lexical units. Therefore, this author proposes further investigation on the human mind’s use of time, especially in interpreting. Subsequently, Moser-Mercer (2005) broadened her research to focus on remote interpreting and its influence on human factors like psychological and physiological stress and fatigue.

Thus, trainees notice the calls for innovation and student motivation strategies (Sandrelli, 2003). During the last decade certain training and self-assessment projects have produced positive results. Among many others, Sandrelli and Hawkins (2006) report on projects at the University of Hull that use technology for interpreting. They cite different versions of the *Black Box* program. They find many advantages in this tool, and highlight self-assessment activities like identifying pauses and hesitations, comparing target language versions with source language transcripts, identifying errors and omissions and assessing their relative importance in the overall rendition of texts.

As Riccardi (2002) points out, evaluating interpreter performance is a controversial professional issue. Therefore, the training period is of key importance for introducing future interpreters to the habits of recognizing their strengths and weaknesses. Most students are not really aware of their actual

competence in the target language as used in interpreting exercises. Trainers often find students' poor performance in their own mother tongue a problem. Shaw, Grbic and Franklin (2004) undertook an experiment in two different teaching settings—the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and the University of Graz in Austria—to hear students discuss education programs in interpreting. The authors found that these programs did not take into account crucial aspects of learning: for example, personal and social components. In the students' testimony they found a "call for the reorientation of the education methodology towards a more holistic, communicative and collaborative learner-centred pedagogy, with teachers as guides for student interpreters on their way from novice to experts" (Shaw, Grbic and Franklin, 2004, p. 95). They saw a need for a constructivist approach (Kiraly, 2000, p. 194) "for emancipating learners and to making them able to think for themselves and to depend on each other, on their individual capabilities for independent learning." Collaborative approaches (Kiraly, 2000, 2003) and appropriate technologies may make it easier to work with recorded material and to enable teachers and students to exchange their materials effectively. Teachers should use evaluation strategies from the start and trainees should evaluate simulated situations in class.

Some other recent works state the need to find options for students to practice intensively their skills and reflect on their performance to improve it. Errico and Morelli (2006) agreed, as a result of their teaching experience, that inter-lingual interpretation is a holistic and complex activity and the input of semi-class outside class activities will enable learners to reflect on their role both as interpreters and conscious mediators. They suggest that students do a camera recording of their own oral production, bearing in mind that it is not only meaning or formal accuracy that is important but also extra and para-linguistics features which are also vital in the communication process. They state that changes in curricula, large groups, fewer hours for class interaction all urge trainers to find alternatives.

Gorm Hansen (2006) also puts forward how the reduction of class contact hours in the Copenhagen Business School has emphasised the need for students to engage in self-

study activities using and interpreting e-library resources with different material including video files. Thus, self-assessment constitutes a requirement for those groups. The result up to now has been the increase in student motivation which has improved exam success rates.

### **A Comprehensive Approach for Self-Assessment Criteria: An Overview**

Interpreting assessment started with an emphasis on linguistic mistakes, omissions, etc. (Barik, 1969). Subsequent models add different topics and new features. Kopzcynsky (1981) emphasises deviations from the linguistic norm in the source language and expressions that hinder communication from the original speaker to the listener. Altman (1994) also classifies errors not only related to type (content, form and production) but also according to degree of seriousness. Schjoldager (1996) develops an error hierarchy and designs a feedback or assessment sheet for student use in and outside the lab and to explain criteria used in class and final exams. She emphasises comprehensibility and delivery as priorities in the hierarchy. If a listener cannot understand the interpreter, other qualities are not relevant at all.

Falbo (1998) considers several competences in the complex interaction and focuses on the product. She distinguishes error of content and error of form and separates analysis of interpreted discourse as an autonomous product from comparisons between analyses of the original and interpreted discourse. She shows that most errors include omissions and lack coherence, cohesion, information and fluency in lexis and expression.<sup>3</sup>

In Spain, some universities offer evaluation protocols that include percentages for marking (Soler Caamaño, 2006). The University of Salamanca gives 50% to content, 20% to style and 20% to presentation. The University of Vic gives 40% to fidelity to the message, 30% to form and target language competence and content and 30% to the communicative capacity of the interpreter.

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3 The same was acknowledged by our students when they corrected their own production in the 2007 academic year.

The University of Granada (Martin and Abril, 2002, p. 85) suggests criteria that emphasize inter-textual coherence, graded with 60%, linguistic expression with 20% and presentation with 20%. Although this last protocol is intended for students training to become accredited interpreters in their fourth year, it could be followed as a model from the beginning of instruction. We agree with both authors that teachers must record students' production for teacher control and student self-reflection. Fortunately, new technologies such as digitalised recording in labs enable teachers to give students copies of all exercises.

Some institutions, like the University of Prague, rate fidelity first, then presentation, then language. The Monterrey Institute of International Studies rates meaning and clarity first, style second and presentation third. None of these institutions provide percentages for marking.

There seems to be consensus about abilities an interpreter—roughly speaking for all modes—must acquire (Martin and Abril, 2002). The standards set up by several professional associations or interpreters' accreditation organizations like *AICE*,<sup>4</sup> Association of Conference Interpreters in Spain, *AIIC* professional conference interpreters worldwide, The IOL (Chartered Institute of Linguistics),<sup>5</sup> *AUSIT*<sup>6</sup> and others require:

- Excellent skills in the working languages
- Intercultural competence
- Ability to deal with non-verbal elements
- Fluency
- Negotiation skills

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4 <http://www.aice-interpretes.com/esp/colabora/uni.phtml>. [page viewed on April 10, 2007] They include a self-assessment sheet in their web page that can be used as a reference by trainers.

5 Chartered Institute of Linguistics: <http://www.nrpsi.co.uk/> [page viewed on April 30, 2007]

6 <http://www.ausit.org/eng/showpage.php3?id=650> [page viewed on April 2, 2007]



We recommend the taking into account of criteria from official accreditation bodies. They should set standards for developing and implementing assessment criteria, self-assessment questionnaires and tools. One example in Europe is the EMCI, an institution supported financially by the European Commission (DG SCIC) and European Parliament (Directorate for Interpretation). In 1997 EMCI started to design a common curriculum for post-graduate interpreting training with eight universities. It now serves 14 institutions. It seeks to guarantee quality and to adapt the professional training to new needs in society. Nevertheless, according to further research (Peng, 2006) EMCI criteria are too vague. For interpreter training at a post-graduate level the EMCI core curriculum specifies assessment criteria for both CI and SI<sup>7</sup>:

For Consecutive interpreting:

At the end of the programme students will be capable of giving a fluent and effective consecutive interpretation of a speech lasting at least 10 minutes into the target language, accurately reproducing the content of the original and using appropriate terminology and register.

For Simultaneous interpreting:

At the end of the programme students will be able to provide a fluent and effective simultaneous interpretation of speeches of at least 20 minutes into the target language, accurately reproducing the content of the original and using appropriate terminology and register.

Some recent research (Peng, 2006; Soler Caamaño, 2006)<sup>8</sup> suggest there should be more specifications in the assessment objectives, since they are too general, and on the fidelity of content, the use of adequate terminology and register, but there is not any explicit criteria hierarchy. Soler Caamaño (2006, p. 126)

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7 [http://www.emcinterpreting.org/resources/pdf/Core\\_Curriculum.pdf](http://www.emcinterpreting.org/resources/pdf/Core_Curriculum.pdf) [page viewed on April 30, 2007]

8 <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/cts/research/theses/leeds-cts-2006-04-peng.pdf> [page viewed on April 30, 2007]  
[http://www.tdx.cbuc.es/TESIS\\_UPF/AVAILABLE/TDX-0314107-175223//tesc.pdf](http://www.tdx.cbuc.es/TESIS_UPF/AVAILABLE/TDX-0314107-175223//tesc.pdf) [page viewed on April 30, 2007]

believes the SCIC is the appropriate scenario where to establish criteria and evaluation guidelines. Peng (2006, p. 38) suggests an analysis and clarification of the EMCI criteria components for final exams as a guideline for interpreters' trainers.

We suggest assessments based on insights from various fields, designed to be practical, rich and comprehensive. Clifford (2001) shows the limits of assessment based on a lexical-semantic approach and looks for alternative assessment tools in education and discourse theory. He suggests that anthropological insight may also help the interpreter to understand attitudes and actions in other cultures. Consensus about an established model or rubric may enable accreditation bodies, teaching staff and service providers to select successful candidates with skills based both on linguistic competence—important to the rendering of the content—and skills to contextualize (Clifford, 2005).

Trainees should know in advance what competences they must master and what other ones will be expected. They should have tools to guide their learning. These tools should not discourage them but make them aware of their progress or weaknesses and should direct them to solutions before final assessments at various stages.

### **A Proposal from Practice**

Hurtado Albir (1999, p. 199) presents an accurate picture of Translation Studies in most Spanish universities where translation and interpreting are integrated into the same degree although some universities also offer postgraduate programs for conference interpreting or community interpreting, for example the University of Alcalá de Henares, La Laguna, Granada.

Consecutive interpreting occupies a reduced niche in the market and therefore in research work it is not given much attention in present times although it is vital in many professional situations. As Gillies (2005, p. 3) claims, it is considered as a fundamental skill by many.

Consecutive interpreting has not disappeared, however. It is still an essential part of an interpreter's repertoire and is

considered by many to be the superior of the two skills. Indeed on the free market it is also better paid! Although simultaneous interpreting has replaced consecutive almost entirely at the meeting room table, where conference facilities are often able to supply the equipment required providing simultaneous interpreting, there are many situations where consecutive survives and will continue to survive.

In our case, interpreting is included in the degree. We form groups of 25 to 30 Spanish students and accept additional European students in the Erasmus exchange programs if they decide to enrol. To introduce students to professional and methodological aspects of the discipline we teach a theoretical module for both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. That represents 30% of our teaching. We devote the remaining 70% to practice in the lab. We follow Hurtado Albir (1999) and progress from sight translation to dialogue translation, then to consecutive and simultaneous modes.

Our students normally share a common background. They belong to the group that chose English as a second language. They are usually the ones who showed the highest success rate in the annual university entrance exam. The scores are slightly lower for any other language combination. Most of our students come from state or private high schools that emphasize languages. Some have received additional instruction. We usually have a few bilingual students, some of them immigrants. This year they constitute 6% of the whole group of trainees. We expect the same percentage next year. Erasmus students normally have various language combinations and their rates are not predictable. We occasionally have graduates from other fields like health, communication or tourism. Some are fascinated by the popularity of Translation Studies, some have extrinsic motives (Kelly, 2005, p. 49). Most hope to improve their chances of finding a good job that will be related to the discipline for which they were trained.

All of our students receive intensive second language input for two years before they start interpreting. We expect from them at least a higher intermediate level of proficiency across all four language skills—reading, writing, listening and speaking. In

addition, they receive instruction in analysing English texts using a comprehensive model (Corpas Pastor, 2002).<sup>9</sup>

This model provides a framework and competencies for understanding and analysing the text which can be helpful especially in the first stage of consecutive techniques. Any oral or sight translation text in the interpreting class must be analysed in order to be understood and rendered in the target language. The aforementioned model comprises key features which are observed in any interpreting evaluation protocol as content (macro-textual level), form and communication strategies (micro-textual level, context of the situation and skopos). Gillies (2005, p. 17) draws an accurate picture of what speech analysis means when starting to be trained for taking notes in consecutive interpreting:

Throughout your work as an interpreter you will listen to speeches in a quite different way to the ordinary listener. You will not be only listening to the words and the content as the normal listener does, but you will also be dissecting the speech in your head, analysing its structure and progression to find out what fits with what and why. You will recognize the main ideas and the secondary ones; you will spot the links between them; and more besides.

Our proposal of using this well-known framework for these particular groups of students to work in the first steps of their training is justified by the practice of adapting strategies to specific situation.

1. Extra-textual level	Skopos, context of the situation (participants, means, channel, mode, time, and motive for communication).
2. Macro-textual level	Theme, macro-structure, textual function, text act, text type, super-structure patterns according to text type, rhetorical devices, non-verbal elements.*

<sup>9</sup> The application of this model first appeared in Corpas Pastor (2002). The same model was used for designing the European Standard for Translation Services CEN 2006 in the EU. (Corpas Pastor, 2007)

3. Micro-textual level	Pragmatics, syntax and grammar, lexis and semantics, supra-segmental elements, speaker's intention.
4. Anticipation of possible translation problems	Legal, cultural, translation and linguistic restrictions that are found in texts.

\* Non-verbal elements are placed in the macro-textual level according to Corpas Pastor's (2002) model for text analysis, namely for written texts. However for the analysis of oral texts in interpreting those non-verbal elements should be included within the micro-textual level .

### Figure 1

The model of text analysis, based on functionalist approaches (Nord, 1997), is intended first for translation tasks, however, as Diaz Laborda (2003) states a classification of speech acts in the two working languages of the interpreters is a precious tool of anticipation for certain type of texts and speeches and allows trainees to concentrate on the interpreting task itself. We put special emphasis on discourse analysis<sup>10</sup> in two working languages, English and Spanish. We introduce students to various genres and discourse markers. Literature on English language discourse analysis is so rich that we find it an asset for our teaching. Fraser's (1999)<sup>11</sup> work on speech markers, Blackledge (2005), who researched on discourse and power in a multilingual world, or Fairclough's<sup>12</sup> (1995, 2006) considerable work on interaction and discourse are outstanding examples.

10 <http://www.discourse-analysis.com/>. [page viewed on April 12, 2007] A comprehensive bibliography and documents to be published are available for downloading from Fairclough's academic webpage. <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/profiles/263>. [page viewed on April 12, 2008]

11 <http://vaporiser.student.utwente.nl/~timmie/afstuderen/fraser.pdf>. [page viewed on April 3, 2007]

12 <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/norman.htm>. [page viewed on April 11, 2007]

This same background knowledge is vital to produce the target text with inter-textual and intra-textual coherence and to analyse and understand the text before oral production. Background knowledge should lead to strengthened competence in understanding, processing automatic feedback and controlling anxiety. Successful communication means that the message has been effectively delivered and understood by the audience or recipient.

The aforementioned model provides a framework and competencies for understanding and analysing the text which can be helpful especially in the first stage of consecutive techniques. Any oral or sight translation text in the interpreting class must be analysed in order to be understood and rendered in the target language. This model comprises key features which are observed in any interpreting evaluation protocol as content (macro-textual level), form and communication strategies (micro-textual level, context of the situation and *skopos*). Likewise, Jones' (1998) guide for consecutive interpreting emphasizes the rendering of the main ideas:

In the analysis of a message, the interpreter has to identify the main ideas and give them their proper relevance in the interpretation. Moreover, owing to the intrinsic difficulty of a speech or to the speaker's speed, he/she might be forced to omit one or more elements of the original. It is clear that if the interpreter doesn't translate some details, the interpretation will not be perfect but still adequate, whereas, if he/she misses out significant points of the discourse, the result will be a seriously flawed performance.<sup>13</sup>

Our proposal of using this well-known framework for those particular groups of students to work in the first steps of their training is justified by the practice of adapting strategies to specific situations.

However some attempts to find ways to improved performance are born from practice such as Arumí and Steve

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13 <http://interpreters.free.fr/consecnotes/joneslink2.htm>.  
[page viewed on April 3, 2007]

(2006) that offer evidence of the positive results obtained by using meta-cognitive *guides* when teaching consecutive interpreting. Those guides are research methods using instruments containing a series of more or less open questions regarding the skills and abilities which are being developed through practice. The awakening of consciousness that Vygotsky (1978) proposes can be obtained by the administration of those strategies adapting them to different levels. A similar attempt is Darías Marrero's (2006) proposal of a model to develop strategies by means of using redundancy and anticipation in communicative situations. This author presents self-assessment sheets that could be negotiated with students' needs and he found that trainees did greatly improve their interpreting competences and became able to administer and prepare autonomously previous strategies to the interpreting session.

The same interest to promote students' motivation and autonomous learning led Baigorri, Alonso and Pascual (2004) who developed materials, transcriptions and guided strategies for students to work individually to improve their skills. They tested the material in the classrooms first in order to see if it was suitable for each of the stages of learning.

Therefore, we see a need to create self-assessment tools for future professional interpreters. In our case this research focuses mainly on conventional university courses taken to obtain a bachelor degree in Translation Studies for Spanish students, most of whom aim at attaining a professional status either as translators or interpreters. Interpreter trainers who are responsible for the quality standards of future professionals must be conscious of the following facts:

1. Some students suffer from low self-esteem, lack skills for analyzing texts, and cannot take full advantage of their training sessions.
2. For those students, belonging to large groups also makes their active participation in classroom activities difficult.

Thus, we want to emphasise strongly how the integration of self-assessment is capital for trainees and it may have positive

effects on learners' attitudes to self-criticism and to their own interpreting performance since:

1. An improvement of students' competence may increase their motivation and active participation in learning.
2. The syllabus should prepare students to see it as a dynamic process—poor performance will be met by effective solutions like electronic resources for documentation, recommended reading, resources for phonetics, language variation, listening and comprehension, practice, etc.
3. Self-assessment provides a scope of professionalism and guidelines to improve their skills progressively.
4. It creates a setting for meta-awareness in the trainees as they progress in their training. It is also likely to promote a more general tendency for the trainees to adopt a user's perspective.

Students' command of these abilities and their motivations vary. Interpreting is compulsory within Translation Studies for our students and is extremely popular in Spanish universities.

We focus our model on the first stage of a consecutive interpreting course that consists of 120 hours. Trainees face interpreting activities for the first time in this course. Some of them plan careers not as professional interpreters but as professional translators. These students tend to avoid active participation and dismiss interpreting as a career though they have excellent abilities.

They should be encouraged to practice and to develop commitment. We emphasise the importance of interpreters as elite professionals and as socially important social actors in communities. Following De Manuel Jérez (2003), we train professionals for the market and for society. We expect students to take jobs related to their training<sup>14</sup> when they obtain their

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14 The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs administers highly competitive exams for sworn translators and interpreters. These professionals do official translation and interpretation, mainly in legal contexts.



degree, for example in a publishing company or tele-interpreting for hospitals or in emergency services.<sup>15</sup>

We concentrate on new European pedagogical trends based on constructivism and autonomous learning like those encouraged by the Declaration of Bologna in which the student's participation is central. Learners should be conscious of their strengths and weaknesses and trainers should guide them in order to reach established standards for academic requirements and market needs. We use a self-assessment model based on motivation, strong cultural and linguistic knowledge, and skills handling discourse analysis strategies in both working languages.

First, we introduce novice learners to the theoretical part of the discipline and to observing material that interpreters provide. We hope to promote admiration, motivation and shared feelings. We use real testimony and face new and unknown instances. We could use excellent samples of this kind of material to raise interest, for example, *The Whisperers*<sup>16</sup> film.

Second, we teach note-taking and memory tasks using mind maps, paying specific attention to links, using symbols etc.

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The fact that these exams have the reputation of being very difficult discourages many students from pursuing professional interpreting. <http://www.mae.es/es/MenuPpal/Ministerio/Tablon+de+anuncios/Int%C3%A9rpretes+Jurados.htm>. [page viewed on June 3, 2007]

15 The Spanish health service is introducing translation services in hospitals via mobile phone. In Andalusia it provides services in English, Arabic, German, French and Chelja-an Arabic dialect containing many Spanish terms which is spoken in the north area of Morocco (Tangiers, Larache, Tetouan): <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/servicioandaluzdesalud/principal/noticia.asp?codcontenido=4031>. [page viewed on June 5, 2007]

16 <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article1484.htm> A comment on the resource can be found in the previous website. [page viewed on July 13, 2007]

Third, we ask students to hand in a set of course goals. We give lab exercises and record students' production digitally. Students evaluate their production and collect a *self-assessment folder*. Teachers may ask for this folder at any time during the year and students hand it in for final results and marking. After each exercise during lab sessions we choose a student production, replay it, and then it is appraised by the teacher and other students appraise the production. Students can access transcripts of the text after each exercise.

We allocate a percentage of marks to self-evaluation and improving ability which implies continuous work and reflection, and serves as a bonus to motivate students. The teacher records and keeps all class productions. We see self-assessment exercises as supplementary input. We also add extra material to the virtual campus *Moodle* which is made available by our academic institution. Students can also use exercises and practice working with Internet resources. Material that includes texts for sight translation, audio and video archives and their transcriptions tend to pass their date. For that reason, we change this material periodically to give all learners equal opportunities.

Curso: Técnicas de la interpretación consecutiva. Aplicación a la lengua inglesa (b) (2006-07, grup - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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direcciones audio  
página de radio que envía Laura García González

**tablón de anuncios**  
horario del grupo  
material  
horario de tutorías septiembre 2006  
horario de tutorías 2006/2007  
calificaciones finales consecutiva 2007, C, revisión viernes 13 julio de 11 a 13 horas  
calificaciones erasmus 2007  
descripciones prueba septiembre

**Discursos**  
Discursos español/español 1: La mujer y la publicidad  
Discursos español/español 2 TRIATLÓN-IRONMAN  
Esquema. Trayectoria de la disciplina  
Ejemplo de código deontológico de intérpretes  
Algunas direcciones útiles para práctica de lengua y fonética inglesa

**Personas**  
Participantes  
Grupos  
Editar información \*

**Actividades**  
Foros  
Recursos

**Buscar**  
Buscar foros

**Administración**  
Crear asignatura  
Copiar asignatura  
Activar edición  
Configuración...  
Preferencias...  
Alumnos...  
Borrar asignatura

Figure 2

speech accent archive - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Archivo Edición Ver Favoritos Herramientas Ayuda

Atás Busqueda Favoritos

Dirección: <http://accent.gmu.edu/learn/learn.php?function=detail&speakerid=185>

# the speech accent archive

how to browse search resources about

new search

**Biographical Data**

birth place: rimouski,  
quebec, canada (map)

native language: french  
(fra)

other language(s): none

age, sex: 18, male

age of english onset: 5

english learning method:  
academic

english residence: canada  
length of english  
residence: 18 years

**French7 Elicitation Paragraph:**

Please call Stella. Ask her to bring these things with her from the store: Six spoons of fresh snow peas, five thick slabs of blue cheese, and maybe a snack for her brother Bob. We also need a small plastic snake and a big toy frog for the kids. She can scoop these things into three red bags, and we will go meet her Wednesday at the train station.

**Phonetic Transcription:**

[pliz kal stjelo ask hɔ ʁu blɔ̃  
diz ʁingz wi ɔ fʁam dɑ stœ  
siks spɔ̃nz ʁ fʁɛʃ snu ʁiz  
fʁɛʃ tɪk slɛbz ʌ blɔ̃ fʁiz æn  
mɛbɛ ɔ snæk fɔ hɔ bʁəd  
bɔʁ wi ʁlsœ nɪd ʌ smɔ  
plastɪk snæk ʌndɑ biɔ ʁi  
fʁɔɣ fɑ dɑ kɔdʒ ʁi kœn skɔp  
diz ʁingz ʁntu tɪ ʁed bægz  
ænd wi wi ɡœu mɪt hɔ  
wɛnzdeɪ æt dɑ tœm stɛʁʃɑ̃]

**Key:**

blue = potential areas for this generalization  
red = actual areas for this generalization

**Generalizations**

**Consonant:**

- final obstruent devoicing
- interdental fricative to stop
- consonant voicing
- dentalization
- non aspiration

**Vowel:**

- vowel shortening
- vowel raising

**Syllable Structure:**

Close

Figure 3

## **Reflecting on Strengths and Weaknesses from the Very Beginning: A Practical Case**

After the students have had a month of practice, we administer an exercise on coral reef bleaching to 30 students. These students have just started their instruction in consecutive interpreting after two previous academic years of intensive training in English as a second language. One student had prepared a memory exercise in Spanish on the topic to work with the whole group in a previous session, so all of them were quite familiar with the information on coral reefs. The whole group took notes. We recorded students' productions and they assessed their work using a self-evaluation sheet. The results were anonymous and could not influence future marks or evaluations. Students researched the topic again; we gave them a comprehensive glossary in English and Spanish and asked them to evaluate the following:

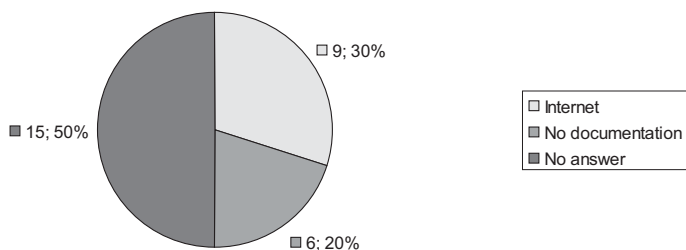
- The aid of previous documentation,
- The use of note-taking and problems,
- Their ability to obtain core ideas from the text macro-structure and coherence devices from the ST into the TT,
- Their ability to produce inter-textual coherence and accuracy in the content (Nord, 1997) while remaining faithful to the communicative situation (speaker's intention and the user's needs),
- Their knowledge of terminology,
- Their ability to recognize serious mistakes affecting the sense of the text and their own emotional control. Therefore we ask them to assess their emotions, and train them to control feelings like fear, whether brief or otherwise. (Coleman, 1995, pp. 301-302)

## **Results**

These were the results of our findings:

### ***Previous Research***

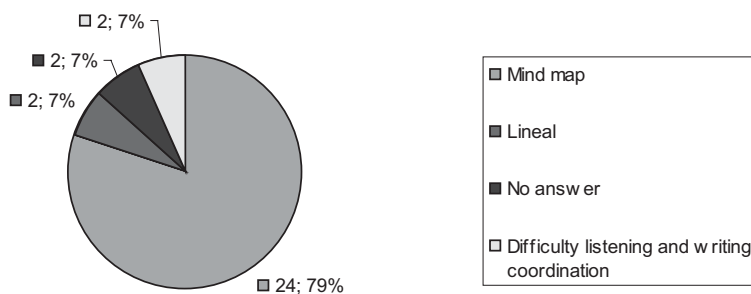
Only 30% used the Internet as a source, 20 % admitted they did not do any previous research, the rest did not answer. Some had neglected the previous documentation task, pleading other academic obligations or just because perhaps they felt too self-confident with the topic. As we believe this first step to be so important, we plan to emphasize the need for documentation in all situations although students do not seem to pay much attention to it.



**Figure 4**

### ***Note Taking***

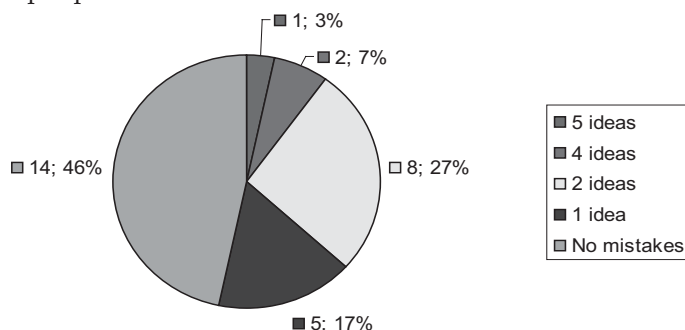
Students took note-taking seriously. 79% used the mind map we had taught them how to use. 7% used linear notes, another 7% claimed difficulties in listening and writing at the same time and the rest did not answer. We offered remedial tasks for them to do in class or outside the lab. We plan to follow-up individually or in tutorials.



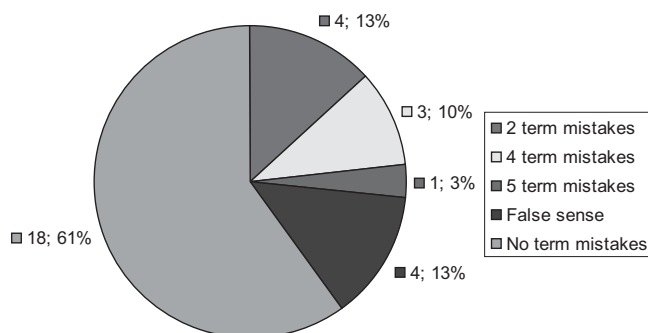
**Figure 5**

***Macro-Structure: Main Ideas of the Text Missing in the Production***

An interpreter should convey the main ideas of the message and the intention of the speaker. Five students missed 1 idea, eight missed 2, two missed 4, one 5 ideas and the rest, 14 students, didn't miss anything. They were starting to use materials for self-evaluation and trainers should emphasize content and fidelity using some of the protocols that evaluate content skills in professionals. We make remedial and practice exercises available through *Moodle*. Students must be able to discern central ideas from peripheral ideas.

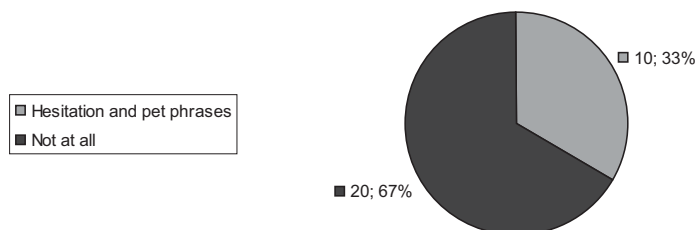
**Figure 6*****Terminology and Serious Errors***

One student reported 5 mistakes, three 3 mistakes and one a misleading meaning, a serious mistake.

**Figure 7**

### ***Controlling Emotions***

33% of the students admitted they were too nervous about their own performance when they were recording the piece. They acknowledged that the teacher should provide strategies and advice.



**Figure 8**

### ***Getting to Work***

Once students start self-assessing every activity, a mandatory requirement, production improves in a few months. Most students who have not felt fully involved became engaged. They become important actors in their own learning and learn how to evaluate their production more consciously. Practice improves the skills of self-assessment. Teachers who follow the process we have described and use the folder we suggest find higher student commitment. Students recognize the reward, achieving their own goals.

We support the idea that Martin and Abril (2003, pp. 201-202) propose to make teaching and assessing interpreting flexible. Our teachers follow up with individual students and make recommendations to each one on the most useful aspects to work on at any time. Teachers synchronise the progress of the whole class and attend to each student's weak points. They highlight the importance of self-assessment done in class: "It is our belief that clear explanation of assessment criteria in class promotes the learning process because it helps students to understand what the course seeks to achieve and what is expected of them. This



system does not only involve explaining assessment criteria but also asking the students themselves to apply those criteria; thus they become directly involved in judging the quality of their own work” (Martin and Abril, 2003, p. 202).

For the self-assessment of the previous exercise we used the sheet below which was partly inspired in Riccardi (2002, p. 12) and later adapted from Postigo Pinazo (2006b, p. 299). Users or trainers might change or improve this sheet to meet the needs of the groups in different didactic units. We follow the protocol of the University of Granada (Martin and Abril, 2002) encouraging students to listen twice—both as potential client and to evaluate. We suggest giving 60% to inter-textual coherence,<sup>17</sup> 20% to language and expression and 20% to delivery. As the aforementioned authors explained in their proposal, language, expression and delivery became more important and relevant as the training progresses and therefore it must be the trainer who would be flexible to adapt sheets and tools to different stages of learning. In our case, we consider it is a good example and guide for the very first stage, and for our students in particular it could represent a smooth transition from the translation task, going to the beginning of interpreting tasks. Further tools must be developed based on our first findings. Also, some other tools based on meta-cognitive approaches should be implemented gradually such as learning diaries or guide concentrating on different skills (note-taking, memory, listening, attention, concentration etc.)

We encourage peer assessment when evaluating production in class. First, the students in each booth suggest what to improve, note what was missing, and, in the case of liaison interpreting simulation, what to correct in gestures, body language etc. When peers ‘reshape’ the message, the teacher adds what is missing and offers a global appraisal. The teacher hands out transcriptions for each student to assess his or her own work fully.

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17 Obviously, rendering a coherent message implies a good command of two languages, both Spanish and English in our case.

Self-assessment is capital for interpreting teaching, as recent research found, and in our case it poses a challenge to lead to better results and to better professionals. Trainers and teachers who use comprehensive methods and models to help students reflect on their work:

- Motivate students to increase their linguistic and cultural knowledge and improve their interactions and rhetorical abilities,
- Make students responsible for their own learning,
- Set goals based on professional standards,
- Improve students' individual and group self-esteem,
- Encourage direct communication between students and trainers and improve the learning environment.

As trainers, we observe that new technologies and active student participation are a challenge. They promote collaboration and develop positive attitudes in academic communication. Our results throughout the academic year proved a positive attitude towards learning. At the end of the academic year, 90% of the students scored 8 marks out of ten (Spanish assessment system), from which 50% scored 9 marks. They carefully paid attention to their weak points, asked for help when necessary and were able to discuss learning strategies and results sensibly with the teachers for the final marking.

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## APPENDIX

## Self Assessment Sheet

1. Listening to the speaker
2. Student's production
3. Listening to self-evaluate the whole production as potential client

Score 1 to 10: .....

Give reasons: .....  
 .....  
 .....

4. Listening to assess all the aspects of the production (full correction)

<b>Documentation</b>	<i>Topic of the exercise...</i> <i>Date.....</i>	Not at all	Some	Specify
<b>Note taking</b>	<i>Technique:</i> Mind map; subject-verb-object group etc. Specify	Did you note down all relevant information?	Problems	Make a list
<b>Macrostructure</b>	<i>Basic information</i>	All	If missing, how many ideas?	Specify

<b>Microstructure</b>	<i>Specific Terminology</i>	Correct	If errors, how many?	Specify
	<i>Coherence</i>	Correct	How many errors?	Specify
	<i>Syntax</i>	Correct	How many errors?	Specify
	<i>Register</i>	Correct	How many errors?	Specify
	<i>Omissions</i>	None	Number	Specify
	<i>Additions</i>	None	Number	Specify
<b>Equivalence problems</b>	<i>Solutions and strategies</i>	Correct	Number of errors	Specify
<b>Supra-segmental features</b>	<i>Intonation Accent Rhythm</i>	Correct	Numbers of errors	Specify
<b>Phonological features</b>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	Correct	Number of errors	Specify
<b>Rhetorical techniques</b>	<i>Visual contact Pet phrases Stammering Control of gestures and posture</i>	No mistakes	How many?	Specify
<b>Verbal agility and fluency</b>	Poor	Good	Very good	Excellent

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**ABSTRACT: Self-Assessment in Teaching Interpreting**

— Evaluating interpreter performance is a controversial issue throughout a professional degree (Riccardi, 2002). The training period is vital for introducing future interpreters to habits of recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, lack of specific knowledge and application of learned skills. Integrating self-assessment into teaching and treating it as essential will have positive effects on learners' attitudes to self-criticism and on performance. Collaborative approaches and technologies make it easier to work with recorded material and enable teachers and students to exchange materials effectively. We have used evaluation sheets for teaching interpreting to our students. We used them in the first stage of training and had students participate actively in evaluating simulated situations in class. This strategy had a positive effect on student commitment and learning and led to better short term results in their performance.<sup>18</sup>

**RÉSUMÉ : Auto-évaluation en enseignement de l'interprétation**

— L'évaluation des performances est un problème controversé tout au long de la formation universitaire (Riccardi, 2002). La période de formation demeure un moment clé qui vise à amener de futurs interprètes à prendre conscience de leurs forces et de leurs faiblesses, du manque de connaissances spécifiques et de l'application des compétences acquises. Par conséquent, si l'auto-évaluation est intégrée dans le processus d'enseignement comme facteur essentiel, elle aura un effet positif à la fois sur le comportement des étudiants envers l'autocritique et sur leur rendement. Les méthodes et les technologies d'aide à l'enseignement facilitent le travail grâce au matériel préenregistré et permettent aux professeurs et aux étudiants d'échanger ce matériel efficacement. Des grilles d'évaluation ont été utilisées

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18 In the case of Spain, given the huge presence of immigration and tourism, the provision of quality professionals is of key importance. As part of this effort, the research reported in this paper has been carried out within the framework of R&D Project for Excellence: *La contratación turística electrónica multilingüe como mediación intercultural: aspectos legales, traductológicos y terminológicos* [Multi-lingual tourism e-contracts: legal, translational and terminological aspects]. Funding source: Andalusian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Ref. no. HUM-892 (2006-2009).

par nos étudiants au cours de l'apprentissage de l'interprétation, à l'étape initiale de formation. Les étudiants ont également participé activement à l'évaluation de simulations en classe. Ces méthodes d'auto-évaluation ont eu un effet positif sur l'engagement des étudiants dans le processus d'enseignement, sans compter que leur rendement à court terme en a été amélioré.

**Keywords:** self-evaluation, technologies, performance, commitment, interpreting

**Mots-clés :** auto-évaluation, technologie, rendement, engagement, interprétation

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