Introduction

Today, it is generally accepted that all interpreters need some degree of training. While this is true for all settings, including public-service interpreting, the first specialized training programmes were devised for conference interpreting, mainly because this activity requires the development of a complex set of cognitive skills, but also bolstered by the increasing number of international meetings in trade, science, and politics.

There is a relatively broad consensus about the goals and methods of conference interpreter training, and it is generally acknowledged that the postgraduate level is most suitable for this type of training. However, a number of issues remain unresolved: Is the mastery of consecutive interpreting a prerequisite for training in the simultaneous mode? What are the limitations of interpreting into a foreign language? How can teacher training be improved? And how can research and practice be integrated with one another? In addition, pedagogical practice needs to be reassessed in view of current changes in the profession and in the training environment, including the use of information and speech technology, the spread of online learning, increasing specialization in many areas and the diversification of language combinations.

Historical development

Experience-based training

When the first conference interpreters were recruited for international conferences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, speeches were interpreted in the consecutive mode (see Bartłomiejczyk & Stachowiak-Szymczak, Chapter 2, in this volume). Interpreters were self-trained people who had comprehensive world knowledge, excellent language skills, a good memory and plenty of stamina. As the demand for interpreters grew, beginners learned from the example of experienced professionals. However, it was soon recognized that an individual master-apprentice model would not suffice, and that know-how had to be passed on in a more formal way.
**Early training efforts for consecutive**

Tentative training for consecutive was first introduced in the late 1920s by the ILO (International Labour Organization) in Geneva (Baigorri-Jalón 2000). The focus was on rendering the underlying meaning of an utterance rather than providing a literal translation. This has remained the crucial aim of all conference interpreting ever since.

The first training programmes for conference interpreting made their appearance in Europe soon after the Second World War, and the discipline was consolidated as the twentieth century wore on. While the curricula for written translation proficiency drew on contrastive linguistics and the principles of foreign-language teaching, conference interpreter training was largely informed by practice, as the demand for highly skilled professionals increased due to the globalization process in politics, business, science and technology. Although some programmes were established at university departments traditionally dedicated to language-related studies, the emancipation of translation and interpreting studies has led to an increasing trend towards the creation of institutions specializing in translation and interpreting.

In the early stages of this development, personalities like Jean Herbert became renowned interpreters although they had not received any formal training. He published a handbook (Herbert 1952/1965/1980) which established itself for decades as the basis for teaching consecutive. Another well-known interpreter was Jean-François Rozan, who was the first to publish note-taking recommendations (Rozan 1956/1979). Their contributions are still relevant for consecutive training in our day and age (see Ahrens & Orlando, Chapter 3, in this volume).

By the mid-twentieth century, some European universities had started to set up training programmes, with curricula focused largely on consecutive. The founder of the ESIT-based Paris school, Danica Seleskovicth, developed her théorie du sens (later renamed théorie interprétative de la traduction or interpretive theory), initially focusing on the consecutive mode. The main principle of this theory is that professional interpreters “deverbalize” the input, forgetting the wording of the original utterance before processing the message and rendering it in the target language. Her contribution was essential to raise public awareness of the interpreter’s cognitive processes. This school also claimed that interpreters should only work into their mother tongue (a warning against retour interpreting), that production comes quite naturally, and that simultaneous is not much different from consecutive (Seleskovicth 1968/1983) (see also Gile & Barranco-Droege, Chapter 25, in this volume).

Systematic training in note-taking was deemed counterproductive by the Paris school, as it was assumed to divert the interpreter’s attention from the comprehension process. Notes should be taken ad hoc by interpreters and were considered largely dispensable (Seleskovicth 1975/1983). However, other schools began to offer courses in note-taking techniques. Systematic approaches were advocated in Geneva by Ilg (1980, 1982; Ilg & Lambert 1996) and in Heidelberg by Matyssek (1989), who developed a sophisticated method with a catalogue of complex symbols.

**Training in simultaneous interpreting as a new discipline**

Initial attempts to provide simultaneous interpretation were made at the ILO and at the Comintern Congress in Moscow in the late 1920s (Chernov 1999), and it soon became evident that this method could not be practised without systematic training. The first steps towards training interpreters were made in preparation for the Nuremberg Trials after the Second World War, although training efforts were largely based on the principle of “learning by
doing”, as training methods did not yet exist (Gaiba 1998; Kalina 2015). Many accomplished consecutive interpreters were reluctant to undergo additional training to enable them to work in a booth, and introductory training for the Nuremberg interpreters was designed on a purely ad hoc basis.

Given the high standard of interpreting expected from conference interpreters, a need for adequate training was felt, particularly in Europe. However, institutions such as the universities of Vienna and Geneva, which ran (post-)graduate courses in consecutive interpreting, were initially reluctant to offer training in the simultaneous mode. Moser-Mercer (2005) describes how the Geneva school introduced simultaneous interpreting only after students had designed their own technical equipment and trained themselves for the purpose. To this day, the adherents of the Paris school only start the teaching of simultaneous after a certain level of proficiency in consecutive has been achieved. The training manual published by Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989/2002) proclaims that the ideal of interpreting is to provide a faultless, fluent rendition in the interpreter’s mother tongue. Nevertheless, interpreting into one’s active foreign language is common practice in many countries, especially on the free market, and from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, the consolidation of international political institutions, the globalization of trade and the diversification of knowledge have made conferences much more technical and specific. This and other developments, like delegates speaking faster or in a lingua franca, pose new challenges to both professional practitioners and trainers.

Current training programmes

During the twentieth century, most conference interpreting schools were located in western Europe, but the first decades of the twenty-first century have witnessed a geographical diversification of interpreter training programmes, with particularly fast growth in China (Kim 2013; Wang & Mu 2009; see also Dawrant, Wang & Jiang, Chapter 15, in this volume). Many programmes are organized into specialized units independent of linguistics or modern-language teaching departments.

Several institutions have been instrumental in establishing standards of best practice, chief among them AIIC, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, and the academic alliance CIUTI (Conférence Internationale Permanente d’Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes). These standards revolve around such matters as admission requirements, instructional sequence, workload, number of practice hours and examination methods, as well as instructor and examiner qualifications. Moreover, prominent institutional employers, above all the EU institutions, have influenced university policies in different ways (see Graves, Pascual Olaguibel & Pearson, Chapter 8, in this volume). Some training programmes in Europe and elsewhere cater for the institutional demand for interpreters working from several “passive” foreign languages into their respective native tongue, whereas others focus on an “active” foreign language, especially in view of the need for retour interpreting not only on the private market, but also in the institutions, following the successive enlargements of the EU. In addition, some universities have participated in the United Nations MoU (Memorandums of Understanding) outreach programme (UN n.d.), and others have joined consortia like the EMCI (European Master’s in Conference Interpreting), jump-started and supported by the interpreting units of the European Union. The EMCI (n.d.) defines the core curriculum shared by one-year MA programmes established in a dozen different countries.

AIIC postulates that courses should be designed and taught by practising conference interpreters. Indeed, the teaching staff at academic training institutions normally consists of experienced professionals. Their approach may vary depending on whether they work mainly
for the private or the institutional market. This diversity is an asset, and trainees need to be introduced to both of them.

Training in conference interpreting has traditionally been provided on site, but distance courses are gaining ground. Online education has the potential to overcome geographical restrictions and ease agenda coordination, and to provide new opportunities for collaborative learning and inclusion. However, it involves forgoing some of the benefits of face-to-face interaction, in particular, informal exchange outside the classroom and the formation of a cohesive knowledge community. Moreover, students’ access to networks and equipment is unequal, and today’s videoconferencing systems, which were designed for monolingual exchange, are not always suitable for interpreting and interpreter training. In particular, switching between signals with different levels of quality increases cognitive load, stress, and fatigue (see Seeber & Fox, Chapter 35, in this volume).

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, full-fledged training programmes were forced to switch to an entirely online format. Prior to the crisis, distance courses had been organized largely in the context of continuing education, notably for active interpreters wishing to add another foreign language or specialization to their portfolio. Only a few of them were permanent, like those offered by the University of Geneva (Class & Moser-Mercer 2013), and most came in the guise of short courses intended to complement on-site training, such as the Virtual Classes laid on for partner universities by the interpreting units of the European Union (European Commission n.d.), and the online workshops organized by various interpreter associations.

Theories and research relevant for training

The théorie du sens referred to earlier was the first to be conceived as the basis for a curriculum in conference interpreting. While Seleskovitch initially argued that simultaneous interpreting relies on the same processes as consecutive, with the time factor as the only distinctive characteristic, Lederer (1981) later conceded that interpreter strategies are bound to differ in the two modes. Given the impossibility of observing mental processes directly, the Paris school focused on the quality of the interpreting product. Its approach did not remain undisputed, and other researchers stressed the value of empirical research and the need to capitalize on established disciplines, including a number of branches of psychology, linguistics and social sciences, to investigate interpreting processes (e.g. Gile 1994). The rigid stance on deverbalization has given way to a more nuanced perspective regarding the effects of the prolonged presence of source language words in memory (Kohn & Kalina 1996) and the usefulness of memorizing equivalent expressions in different languages (Chmiel 2007).

In the mid-1980s, interpreting scholars started importing ideas and methods from other disciplines. In an initial phase, pioneering conferences provided impetus for research on training (Dollerup & Appel 1996; Dollerup & Lindegaard 1994; Dollerup & Loddegaard 1992; Gran & Dodds 1989). Since then, meetings have diversified both geographically (e.g. Hung 2002) and in terms of perspectives and research topics (Sawyer et al. 2019), and scholarly exchange on training has benefited from the notable dynamism of the broader field of translation and interpreting studies.

It is not possible to draw a clear distinction between profession-centred and training-oriented research. In fact, a fair share of the theories and models describing professional practice originated in training institutions. Modern research relevant for interpreter training encompasses a variety of topics, including the product of an interpretation, the context and varying degrees of personal interaction, and especially the interpreter’s mental processes (see Hodzik & Williams, Chapter 26, and Riccardi, Chapter 27, in this volume).
The study of these processes has borrowed heavily from psycholinguistics and discourse analysis. In all interpreting modes, and in simultaneous in particular, the interpreter carries out an iterative process, continuously identifying relevant information, trying to anticipate and readjusting her/his mental model of the discourse (Chernov 1979; Setton 1999). In particular, discourse processing lies at the heart of the note-taking phase of consecutive interpreting. The need for instruction in a specific system remains a matter of contention. Modern theoretical analyses of this question can be found in Andres (2001, 2002) Ahrens (2005), Albl-Mikasa (2007, 2008, 2017) and Dingfelder Stone (2015).

One of the major challenges of simultaneous, but also of consecutive interpreting, is that several non-automated processes (efforts) compete for the interpreter’s attention, which explains the difficulty of listening and speaking at the same time. Moreover, the mental capacity required by each effort fluctuates as the speech progresses. As a result, the interpreter is forced to constantly gauge her/his resources in handling the inflow of information. This was illustrated by Gile (1995/2009) in his effort models (see Riccardi, Chapter 27, in this volume), which he designed with a pedagogical purpose in mind after observing that sometimes an interpreter’s mistakes are not due to the intrinsic difficulty of the speech, but to the momentary misallocation of attention, which is particularly likely to happen under high cognitive pressure. Specifically, attention splitting involves deliberate use of short-term memory resources, which have been investigated in a number of experimental studies (e.g. Christoffels et al. 2006; Padilla et al. 2005; Shlesinger 2000; Tzou et al. 2012; see also Hodzik & Williams, Chapter 26, in this volume). Furthermore, evidence suggests that interpreter training leads to physiological changes in the brain (García 2019; Hervais-Adelman et al. 2017; see also Hervais-Adelman, Chapter 34, in this volume).

In view of the complexity of the skills involved in interpreting, some scholars have tried to deconstruct the interpreting process in the interests of a stepwise development of trainee expertise. Inspired by models of learning theory and cognition (Anderson 1995; Massaro & Shlesinger 1997), Moser-Mercer (2000) advocated that the complex task of interpreting be broken down into individual subskills that should be trained separately. Along similar lines, Kohn and Kalina (1996) developed their model of strategic discourse processing, which encompasses the strategies employed by interpreters for comprehension (e.g. inferencing) and production (e.g. compression, monitoring, repair). Based on this model, Kalina (2000) proposed a set of systematic preparatory exercises for both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, advocating that these should start as soon as trainees had understood that the main purpose of interpreting is rendering intended meaning and not words. Strategic processing continues to play a central role in training and may go from conscious to unconscious as procedural competence is improved (e.g. Riccardi 2005), and choices may vary with language direction (Bartłomiejczyk 2006) (see also Riccardi, Chapter 27, in this volume).

Some interpreter trainers take an interest in theory and research (see Gile & Barranco-Droege, Chapter 25, in this volume), but the requirement to be active on the professional market limits their opportunities to further their academic education. Training institutions could offer more flexible working conditions and foster interdisciplinary research to advance towards a more evidence-based interpreter training, in which strategies can be substantiated at a level that transcends personal experience and casual observation.

Curriculum design

During the past few decades, a fairly standard tradition has established itself in conference interpreter training, especially in Europe and North America (Mackintosh 1999). Although the
educational policies of individual institutions may be shaped by their specific circumstances in
terms of culture, professional market and legislation, the most renowned programmes do share
a number of features.

Conference interpreting is usually taught full-time at postgraduate (MA) level, with a dur-
ation between one and two years. Candidates are selected on the basis of an initial aptitude
test, and the final examination attempts to determine whether the candidate is ready to enter
a highly competitive marketplace (see Russo, Chapter 23, and Dawrant & Han, Chapter 20,
in this volume). Most courses focus on simultaneous and consecutive interpreting between
spoken languages, with some attention also given to relay interpreting, remote interpreting, and
sight translation, and the occasional inclusion of *chuchotage* or whispering and simultaneous
consecutive.

The emphasis on specialist/technical knowledge in areas relevant to conference interpreting
(e.g. engineering, politics, law, economics or medicine) varies from one programme to another,
as do language combinations and the depth of academic education. New languages, in par-
ticular from Eastern Asia, have been incorporated, and many degrees include a master’s thesis
requirement, and some of them open a pathway to participation in a doctoral programme.

The challenges involved in curriculum design include: the sequencing of content and skills
training, in particular, how much practice in consecutive should precede training in the simul-
taneous mode, and the choice of materials of increasing difficulty; the question whether com-
ponent skills should be addressed separately and reintegrated later into realistic interpreting
exercises; and the role of self-controlled learning. A very detailed description of day-to-day
training classes and their content is given in the two volumes by Setton and Dawrant (2016a,
2016b).

**Good learning and teaching practice**

Modern curricula put more emphasis on competence building than on the formal transmission
of knowledge. The competences to be developed by trainee interpreters have been classified in
a variety of ways (cf. Sawyer 2004). Most approaches address language, culture and subject-
area knowledge, interpreting technique, real-world practice and collaborative learning. Each of
these aspects is discussed separately in the following sections.

**Language, culture and subject-area knowledge**

Conference interpreters are required to have a very good command of the languages and
cultures involved in the interaction they have been hired to facilitate, and they need to possess
basic knowledge in areas relevant to the given conference topic, such as engineering, law, eco-
nomics or medicine, as well as documentation and self-study skills to prepare an interpreting
assignment on short notice.

Effective source-text comprehension and listener-friendly target-text production benefit
greatly from the interpreter’s familiarity with the linguistic, cultural and technical backgrounds
of the speakers and delegates. Before and during an assignment, the interpreter needs to take
substantiated decisions with regard to style, register, regional and corporate-specific culture,
and technical language. The Paris school is not alone in emphasizing that the “mastery” of
the languages envisaged should be a prerequisite for enrolment in a conference interpreting
course. However, the improvement of native-tongue skills is a lifelong task, and most inter-
preter training programmes foster the development of foreign language skills that go beyond
general linguistic competences.
Moreover, language use at international conferences is becoming increasingly diverse as
delegates frequently use a lingua franca, which is often, but not always, English (see Albl-
Mikasa, Chapter 39, in this volume). In addition, the past decades have witnessed a considerable
increase in the speed, information density and specialization of conference speeches. To address
these challenges, interpreting courses usually incorporate speeches on a variety of topics, world-
views and accents (both regional and foreign). However, rather than rely on a merely serendip-
itous acquisition of knowledge, programmes, as a rule, include general, culture-specific and
subject-area knowledge, carefully sequenced and attuned to the practical exercises.

High-quality training also addresses instrumental skills from fields such as documen-
tary research and information management (Rütten 2007), discourse analysis, text typology,
corpus linguistics (e.g. to identify frequent collocations in a subject area) (Fantinuoli 2018b;
Straniero Sergio & Falbo 2012), terminology extraction and management, and computer-
assisted interpreting (Fantinuoli 2018a). The acquisition of these technical competences
complement, rather than replace, a sound academic foundation aimed at the development of
critical thinking.

Interpreting technique

Given the formidable cognitive challenges involved in conference interpreting, it is only
logical that the greater part of classroom time is dedicated to interpreting technique. Although
in large conferences the demand for simultaneous is much higher due to the availability of
sophisticated technology, in today’s curricula, the consecutive and the simultaneous mode (see
Bartłomiejczyk & Stachowiak-Szymczak, Chapter 2, in this volume) receive a similar amount
of attention. As we shall see, there are sound pedagogical reasons for this.

Consecutive interpreting

Courses in consecutive interpreting enable students to develop their discourse-analysis and
production skills without imposing stringent time pressure on them. Thus, they have the added
benefit of indirectly improving performance in the simultaneous mode.

Although the demand for consecutive interpreting at conference level has diminished, there
is still a need for high-quality consecutive. In earlier decades, training was focused on lengthy
consecutive interpretation of formal speeches, often of a ceremonial character. This format still
exists in high-rank meetings, but the trend today is towards shorter passages of up to a few
minutes (cf. Pöchhacker 2004). Moreover, speeches are becoming increasingly technical, and
sometimes only a summary is needed, but utmost precision is essential. Therefore, memory
alone is not sufficient, and excellent note-taking skills are indispensable to guarantee a precise
analysis of the speech, identifying its crucial elements and its information structure (theme/rheme).

As mentioned earlier, there are several paradigms for note-taking (see Ahrens & Orlando,
Chapter 3, in this volume), but there is a consensus that the notes should convey ideas, not
words, and that the method must be consistent, unequivocal and ergonomic. To avoid slipping
into verbatim rendition, the general recommendation is only to start with note-taking after
extensive practice in consecutive interpreting from memory. It is also advisable to make
students interpret without notes once in a while even after they have acquired the technique.

Most professionals still take their notes on paper, but, considering the current digital trans-
formation, it seems necessary that students have the opportunity to familiarize themselves both
with different note-pad formats and with dedicated apps for tablet computers. Moreover, new
technology can be useful in illustrating the process of note-taking. For instance, document cameras facilitate the rapid sharing and discussion of notes, and digital pens film handwriting while recording speech (Orlando 2010).

Naturally, vocal skills and voice care play an important role in all interpreting modes, but body language and public speaking skills are also crucial for effective communication and credibility. From the very beginning of the course, students are acquainted with rhetorical and stylistic principles, learning to present their material not only with a clear structure but also with appropriate emphasis, fluency, good articulation and superior voice quality (Ahrens 2009; Rennert 2010; Setton & Dawrant 2016a).

Dialogue interpreting in conference settings
Although this mode is usually not included in the curriculum of conference interpreting programmes, there are some arguments in favour of devoting a few course units to it. Dialogue interpreting is often used in bilateral meetings (e.g. EU representatives meeting member-state politicians), mostly at a higher or diplomatic level, or for small expert groups in political, business and technical settings. In these special settings, this mode requires the interpreter not only to manage the communication situation, but also to have excellent information processing and note-taking skills.

In addition to the technical skills related to conference interpreting, this mode calls for special empathy and tactfulness. Trainees will have to develop these in the course of their training and later. As this mode is the most common in public service interpreting, some of its approaches could be adapted for conference interpreting courses, in particular, the simulation of social interaction and the interpreter’s role in turn-taking by means of role-play (Wadensjö 2014).

The interpreter’s understanding of the power relations between the participants is crucial, as is the ability to sense what each client expects from the interpreter. Sometimes s/he has to switch between dialogue interpreting and whispering, and in the latter case, the intensity of contact with the addressee of the whispered parts has to be handled in a way that neither snubs the other delegates nor restricts elbow room.

In this mode, it may also be necessary to help with the wording of a draft passage or to provide a rough translation of text excerpts. In all this, the interpreter must be aware of her/his role and its limitations. When a participant asks for the interpreter’s opinion of a proposal made, s/he has to refer to the principle of impartiality (as specified in professional codes of ethics; see Horváth & Tryuk, Chapter 22, in this volume), whereas if the question refers to a linguistic or cultural point, the interpreter may indeed offer advice.

Simultaneous interpreting
Adherents of the Paris school maintain that simultaneous should not be taught before students have reached full mastery of consecutive (Seleskovitch 1975). However, other training programmes run both courses in parallel from the beginning, because of the challenges associated with the management of memory and split attention.

In the simultaneous mode, the interpreter’s comprehension process is made more difficult by the fact that, while listening to the original, s/he has to plan her/his own output in the target language. More ultra-short-term memory is at work, and time constraints are more apparent. Processing decisions have to be made at very short notice and without a clear picture of subsequent text segments, so processing pressure and stress can be expected to build up.

For this reason, a number of trainers and researchers have advocated splitting up these complex processes into component skills or subskills (e.g. Kalina 1992, 2000; Kurz 1992;
Moser-Mercer et al. 1997). These may start as soon as trainees understand that the main purpose of interpreting is rendering intended meaning and not words. These exercises may involve paraphrasing, identifying the theme of an utterance, generalizing and condensing. However, other authors favour an integrative approach. For example, Setton and Dawrant (2016b) proposed solutions such as spoonfeeding, which may involve pausing the source speech repeatedly, and when Hoffman (1997) described the stages from novice via journeyman to expert and master level, he noted that exposing trainees to a variety of cases may induce them to develop refined or specialized reasoning strategies.

One monolingual exercise that has been controversially discussed is shadowing, where trainees repeat an orally presented text with a décalage (or ear-voice span) of less than one sentence but more than just a few words. It is still widely used to acquaint trainees with conditions in the booth and with simultaneous listening and speaking. However, there has been criticism of this type of exercise, especially by the Paris school, on the premise that it encourages verbatim rendition of the speech to the detriment of complex information processing. Other scholars have advocated combining shadowing with cloze tasks, in which missing words must be replaced either from knowledge, context or in a process of anticipation or inference (Kalina 1994; Kohn & Kalina 1996; Kurz 1992). Shadowing, cloze and paraphrasing are also discussed from the perspective of selective attention and cognitive processing in Lambert 1992a, 1992b, while Christoffels and de Groot (2004) offer a comparative study of the three activities, and Chen and Dong (2010) propose shadowing with a gradually extended ear-voice span.

Most trainers and scholars agree that sight translation (or impromptu translation) entails a number of benefits as a preparatory exercise (Agrifoglio 2004; Kalina 2003; Lee 2012; Martin 1993; Moser-Mercer 1996; Viaggio 1995; Viezzi 1989). Although reading ahead is possible to some extent, this activity shares some of the swift-processing requirements of the simultaneous mode, such as identifying information segments, getting an idea of the text structure in the absence of an overall view and of any opportunity to plan the target text, language-transfer skills, situation-appropriate expression and avoidance of too many repairs.

Due to its complexity, simultaneous interpreting is particularly prone to error. Therefore, output monitoring and repair operations need to be trained as well, to help students develop a feeling for when self-correction is essential and when a slip can remain unrepaired (Dailidénaité 2009; Kohn & Kalina 1996; Petite 2005; Van Besien & Meuleman 2004).

Following such preparatory exercises, the core of training programmes consists in full-fledged interpreting assignments of increasing difficulty. Some of the skills essential for the simultaneous mode are anticipation and décalage, mentioned earlier. While anticipation is a component of communication in general, its strategic use in simultaneous interpreting enables the interpreter to process elements of utterances before or simultaneously with incoming text (Chernov 1992). There are many ways of training this skill in this phase (cf. Kader & Seubert 2015; Kalina 1992; Moser 1978; Setton & Dawrant 2016b).

When allocating his/her attention resources, the interpreter needs to account for a variety of factors, including comprehension (non-standard accents), formulation (cultural gaps, differences in world-view), multiple sources of information (slides, transcripts, computer-assisted interpreting), additional time constraints (relay interpreting, media interpreting) and reduced social leverage (distance and remote interpreting). Trainees need to be acquainted with these situations and develop strategies in a variety of typical situations. In particular, international organizations with a multilingual regime will resort to relay interpreting, especially in the case of less widely spoken languages, even though this mode may sometimes result in a loss of quality (Čeňková 2008; Shlesinger 2010; see also Graves, Pascual Olaguibel & Pearson, Chapter 8, in this volume).
Real-world practice

In addition to the acquisition of a sophisticated interpreting technique, trainee professionalization also requires extensive practice in a variety of conference settings (cf. Sawyer 2004). Students need to gain experience with different types of conference and communication situations and learn to identify and handle the different goals and expectations of participants. In particular, they are confronted with a number of typical problems that may arise during a conference, including high information density and speech rate, poor technical conditions, and missing or last-minute documentation.

Since traineeship and supervised internship opportunities are not easily available in the conference interpreting industry, many training institutions provide for real-world situations by organizing in-house conferences open to the public, where the speeches are held by external speakers, or simply mock conferences (De Laet 2010). Before and during such a conference, trainees learn to cooperate with team mates in their own booth (noting down figures or terms) and also with neighbouring booths. In the role of a team leader or consulting interpreter, they also learn how to approach organizers or speakers for information and documentation, how to conduct briefings and how to mobilize extra resources when no support is available. Moreover, they have the opportunity to put into practice the guidelines and principles of professional ethics for interpreters (e.g. AIIC 2018, see Horváth & Tryuk, Chapter 22, in this volume).

Collaborative learning

The incumbent interpreter’s road to expertise requires many hours of practice, and trainees need to work outside class-time, both on their own and with their peers. Their teachers can guide them to some extent, but the students’ proactivity is crucial for success.

One framework in which self-controlled learning can take place is that of learning diaries or portfolios, where students collect course documents such as speeches, preparation material, notes, recordings of their own performance and assessment results to identify the progress made in a given period of time. This can be useful in improving motivation, identifying learning goals, for self-evaluation and to evaluate learning outcomes (Gross-Dinter 2007).

However, it is important for students to understand that practising alone, without anyone listening, is counterproductive, and that small groups can best cover the need for feedback. Engaging in teamwork will also help them to develop other soft skills such as motivation, empathy and a spirit of helpfulness and cooperation (Timaróvá & Salaets 2011).

Collaborative learning is easier for consecutive than for simultaneous, as students can follow their own or their peers’ notes (or, for that matter, the original manuscript) while listening to the interpretation. When practising simultaneous, peers may find it difficult to listen to source and target text simultaneously and write their notes into the body of a source-speech transcript. One sound piece of advice is to focus on particular components of a given performance, e.g. content, language, delivery, correctness of names and figures, repairs, etc. They will learn how to word critical remarks and discover that, though initially unwelcome, critical feedback has its merits.

When trainees practise in non-supervised groups, it is essential to choose materials that match their current skill level to prevent frustration. Students are advised to seek guidance from their teachers, who can help them to navigate so-called speech repositories or speech banks, as well as other online sources. Source speeches can be selected in terms of their degree of difficulty and of goals such as memory training, processing of figures, knowledge activation,
etc. For the consecutive mode, students can use contributions of their own, which may be more or less spontaneous or thoroughly prepared.

Other self-study opportunities involve CAIT (Computer-Assisted Interpreter Training), which may take the form of multimedia exercises and of VLE (Virtual Learning Environments) (Sandrelli 2015). Such solutions mainly emerge in the university context, probably because interpreter training is a relatively small market compared with foreign-language learning, and therefore such technologies are not very profitable for commercial companies.

Competence development over time

The practical skills required for conference interpreting include linguistic proficiency, the ability to transmit a speaker’s intention over and above the mere wording, fidelity and impartiality, conscientious preparation and professional ethics (Tiselius 2010). For the student, the ultimate goal of all training, self-controlled or teacher-supervised, is to draw upon all these competences more or less automatically and thus to acquire expertise. To this end, the student will work towards clearly defined goals, engage in deliberate practice (cf. Ericsson 2000) and seek feedback and advice on her/his actions. This topic is discussed in detail in Moser-Mercer (Chapter 28, in this volume).

The first step towards converting declarative into procedural knowledge is self-reflection. In their practical courses, students apply (and critically scrutinize) the insights gained in theoretical seminars. After all, the difference between improvisation and best practice lies in the interpreter’s ability to justify the decisions s/he makes when carrying out an interpreting assignment.

One important asset for trainees is being aware of the benefits of criticism. It is not only a matter of learning to cope with such criticism, but of seeking feedback proactively from both teachers and peers. In the classroom, teachers undertake diagnostic assessment and provide feedback to students after their renderings are over. Such comments need to be substantiated and accompanied by specific advice on what can be done to overcome the weakness in question. First, asking the students to assess themselves may help them to compare their expectations with their performance and to become aware of their mental processes. To motivate the students, teachers start by emphasizing positive aspects before turning to more critical comments.

A look ahead

Over the past decades, interpreter training has evolved in the face of enormous changes, including higher information density and technical complexity of source speeches, but it has also benefited from the widespread availability of audiovisual recordings. Current trends point to an increased use of lingua francas, accompanied by a diversification of language regimes, and the spread of remote interpreting (see Albl-Mikasa, Chapter 39, and Seeber & Fox, Chapter 35, in this volume). These developments will require the swift adaptation of teaching and learning practice, which is even more important as it might also open up underserved market segments.

Furthermore, increased specialization in all areas of knowledge will also entail an increased demand for communication experts able to mediate between specialists from different areas, and between specialists and generalists. In this context, conference interpreters’ documentation and information-processing skills can make him/her indispensable as a communication broker, but they also need to be complemented by skills traditionally associated with other types of mediated communication.
Conference interpreter training enjoys a very good reputation with institutional and private clients. However, to enable the profession to face future challenges, the credentials of interpreting studies need to be strengthened. To this end, trainers must be in a position to combine professional practice with the pursuit of an academic career (i.e. doctoral and postdoctoral studies). They should have the opportunity to contribute to research in cooperation with scholars from fields such as psychology, cognitive linguistics and education, both at classroom level and in active research (Gile 1994; Gran 1989; Moser-Mercer & Setton 2000).

**Further reading**

Andres, Dörte & Behr, Martina (ed.) 2015. *To Know How to Suggest... Approaches to Teaching Conference Interpreting*. Berlin: Frank & Timme.


**References**


Learning and teaching


Kalin, Sylvia 2015. Interpreter training and interpreting studies—Which is the chicken and which is the egg? In D. Andres & M. Behr (eds) *To Know How to Suggest…. Approaches to Teaching Conference Interpretation*, Berlin: Frank & Timme, 17–41.


Viaggio, Sergio 1995. The praise of sight translation [And squeezing the last drop thereout of]. The Interpreters’ Newsletter 6, 33–42.

