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Pedagogical challenges in teaching simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting with notes to LLD students in heterogenous groups / Desafíos pedagógicos en la enseñanza de la interpretación simultánea y la interpretación consecutiva con notas para estudiantes de LMD en grupos heterogéneos

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Abstract: To guarantee access to professional interpreting services in the public sector (PSI), institutions and authorities must work together to detect, train, test, and monitor interpreter activity (Giambruno 2014, 96). With the world's first Interpreting Act (2021) and a relatively long PSI training and monitoring tradition, Norway is a pioneer in this field. This article explores how simultaneous and consecutive interpreting technique is taught at Oslo Metropolitan University. The authors draw on their own teaching experience, ongoing dialogue with colleagues, comments from students and language mentors, and the experiential-dialogic approach to interpreter training (Felberg and Skaaden, 2020) to analyze the challenges of (1) adapting the conference interpreting-centered training tradition to the needs of PSI; (2) dealing with heterogeneous student groups in terms of professional experience and previous qualifications; and (3) teaching heterogeneous language groups with a high presence of languages of lesser diffusion, where students also happen to be market competitors.

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Keywords: Interpreter training; Public service interpreting; Languages of lesser diffusion; Experiential-dialogic approach

Resumen: La interpretación profesional en el sector público (ISP) requiere de cooperación entre instituciones educativas y autoridades para detectar, formar, acreditar y hacer un seguimiento de los intérpretes (Giambruno 2014, 96). Como país pionero en este campo, Noruega cuenta con la primera ley de interpretación del mundo (2021) y con una tradición relativamente larga de formación y control de la ISP. En este artículo, las autoras parten de su propia experiencia pedagógica, del diálogo con colegas, comentarios de estudiantes y profesores externos para abordar, desde la perspectiva del enfoque dialógico-experiencial (Felberg y Skaaden 2020), la enseñanza de interpretación simultánea y consecutiva a grupos heterogéneos. Más concretamente, se analizan los retos de: (1) adaptar una tradición formativa centrada en la interpretación de conferencias a las necesidades de la ISP; (2) gestionar la heterogeneidad en cuanto experiencia y formación previa de los estudiantes; y (3) manejar grupos lingüísticos heterogéneos con lenguas de menor difusión, donde los estudiantes además compiten por encargos de interpretación.

Palabras clave: Formación de intérpretes; Interpretación en los servicios públicos; Lenguas de menor difusión; Enfoque dialógico-experiencial

Information on author contribution: Both authors contributed equally to all sections of this paper.

1. Introduction

In this paper we will explore BA training in public sector interpreting (PSI) at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet). More specifically, we will account for the challenges of teaching simultaneous and consecutive interpreting techniques to multilingual student groups with differing degrees of previous professional experience as interpreters, and a high presence of languages of lesser diffusion (LLD).

In Norway, PSI enjoys a rather privileged position with a system that is articulated around an Interpreting Act (Tolkeloven, 2021), a National Registry of Interpreters, and university interpreter training programs, where the highest level is currently a bachelor's degree (BA).

The Interpreting Act entered into force in January 2022[1]. The Act serves a double purpose: "to uphold legal safeguards and ensure the provision of proper assistance and services to persons who are unable to communicate adequately with public bodies without an interpreter"; and to "help ensure that interpreters uphold proper professional standards" (Interpreting Act, 2021). Its aim is to regulate the use of interpreters in public instances and contribute to the professionalization of the profession.

The National Registry of Interpreters ranks interpreters from A (highest category) to E (lowest), according to their professional qualifications. Interpreter training is provided by OsloMet (30-credit subject on PSI, and a 180 ECTS BA in PSI) and the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (a 30-credit subject on PSI, and a 15-credit course on remote interpreting). Norwegian is the language of instruction and a common working language

[1] There is, however, a dispensation until 31 December 2026, which can be extended by the King.

(WL) for all students. For the purposes of this article, we will use the WL1–WL2 nomenclature to refer to the two active languages that are typical of public sector interpreters' A–A/B combinations. We use WL1 to refer to Norwegian, and WL2 to refer to the other language in the students' combination.

2. Objective and methodology

Languages of lesser diffusion, also known as *languages of limited diffusion*, are "those languages that have *recently arrived in an area* (e.g. Karen in Europe, Dutch in Norway, etc.)" (Skaaden & Wadensjö, 2014, p. 24). LLD are not to be confused with *lesser-used languages*, also known as *minority languages*, which are concepts linked to language policy (see Balogh *et al.*, 2016). The reason behind the high presence of LLD in this BA is that language groups are chosen according to the language needs of the Norwegian public sector. These needs are, in turn, closely linked to migration and refugee flows into Norway. Immigrants make up 16.8% of the Norwegian population (Statistics Norway, 2024). The largest immigrant group (32.1%) are refugees or family members of refugees, followed by foreign citizens coming to Norway to reunite with their families (23.9%), for work reasons (24.3%), or to study (6.1%) (IMDi, 2024). As shown in the graph below, Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Somali, and Eritrean citizens are the largest immigrant groups in Norway. In line with these data, the languages with the highest demand for interpreting are currently Arabic, Polish, Russian, Norwegian sign language, Ukrainian, Tigrinya and Somali (ibid).

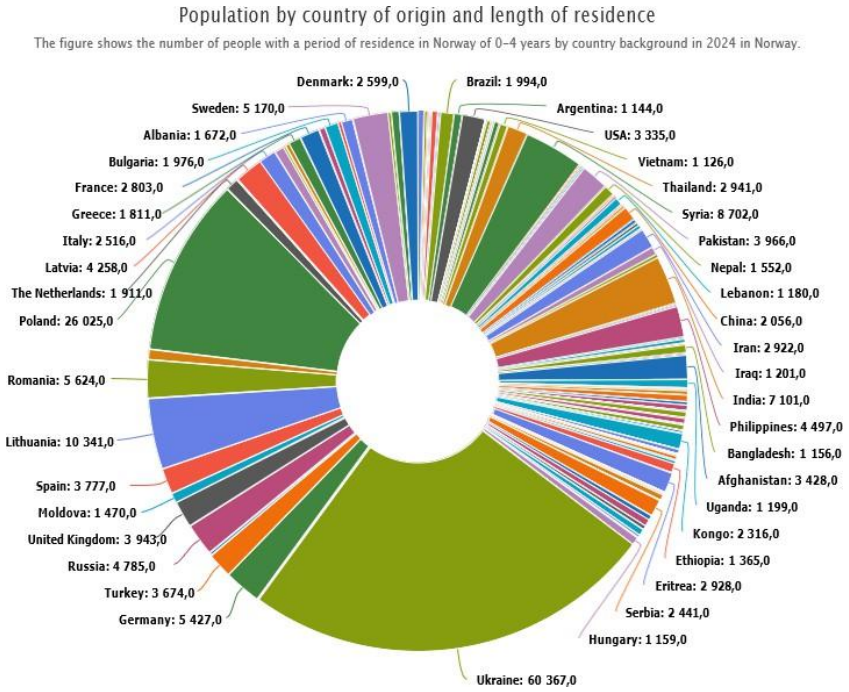

Figure 1. Population by country of origin (authors' translation from Norwegian). Source: IMDi 2024

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So far, students with the following language combinations have completed the BA: Norwegian and Somali, Sorani, Lithuanian (who graduated in 2017), Arabic, Turkish, Polish, Portuguese (2018), English, Mandarin, Persian, Russian (2019), and Romanian, Urdu, Vietnamese (2020). Currently, four classes are taking the BA, with working languages Norwegian and Amharic, Latvian, French (2021), Dari, Tigrinya, Spanish (2022), Polish, Somali, Thai, Ukrainian (2023), and Arabic, Russian, Pashto, Turkish (2024).

The objective of this paper is to explore the challenges of teaching simultaneous and consecutive interpreting with notes to heterogenous, mostly-LLD groups. The courses we focus on are TLK3200 Simultaneous interpreting (15 ECTS) and TLK3100 Monologue interpreting: memory and note-taking (30 ECTS). In our experience, having participated in developing and teaching these courses since the start of the BA, challenges can be divided into three main groups: (1) adapting the traditional, conference interpreting-centered training tradition to PSI needs; (2) dealing with heterogeneous student groups in terms of professional experience and previous qualifications; and (3) dealing with linguistically heterogenous groups with a high presence of LLDs, with the added complexity of students also being market competitors. In the discussion, we draw on our own teaching experience, ongoing dialogue with colleagues, and comments from students and language mentors from the two courses, as well as relevant pedagogical perspectives.

3. Challenge 1: adapting the traditional, conference interpreting-centered training tradition to PSI needs

Simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting with notes are traditionally associated with conference interpreting (CI) (Diriker, 2015). Simultaneous interpreting is "the process of interpreting into the target language at the same time as the source language is being delivered" (Russell, 2005, p. 136). Consecutive interpreting, on the other hand, can be defined as an "after the source-language utterance" (Pöchhacker, 2022, p. 18), meaning that the interpreter delivers the interpreted utterance *after* the speaker has spoken. In the CI tradition, consecutive interpreting usually implies that the interpreter interprets long sequences, even whole speeches. This requires using a note-taking technique specifically developed by and for interpreters (Gillies, 2017).

Within interpreting studies (IS), PSI is usually taught separately from CI programs. This has historical and institutional roots. CI courses are usually designed to fit the needs for interpreting in large institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, or even business settings. The languages taught are predominantly the large world languages, such as English, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese. In contrast, PSI courses are often designed to meet the needs of interpreting settings where public institutions or civil servants encounter language barriers. The previously mentioned LLD are more commonly taught in this type of interpreting setting. The kind of consecutive interpreting that is commonly relevant in PSI settings is sometimes referred to as "short consecutive" (Diriker, 2015) or "liaison interpreting" (Andres, 2015). CI has traditionally been taught at university, generally on MA level, to train candidates to work in conferences and international institutions. No such degree has ever been offered in Norway, although as mentioned there is a BA in PSI (*Bachelor i Tolking i offentlig sektor*), where the authors teach.

Simultaneous and long consecutive with notes are modes often associated with CI, and sometimes thought of as different from the dialogical settings often associated with public sector assignments. However, students preparing to interpret in the public sector also need to develop techniques to face assignments in the simultaneous mode, as well as (longer)

consecutives with notes. For example, interpreters are expected to master the simultaneous mode in Norwegian courts. There are also conferences in the public sector that may require simultaneous interpreting. Another example of simultaneous in the public sector were the (at a certain point almost daily) governmental press conferences during the Covid-19 pandemic. As for consecutive with notes, interpreters are expected to handle longer sequences in a variety of public contexts, such as therapeutic settings, police interviews, or in court.

The courses in simultaneous and consecutive with notes make up 45 of 180 BA credits. The main challenge when adapting modes of interpreting traditionally associated with CI to PSI settings, is that it is difficult to find trainers who specialize in these techniques. This is a young program that started in 2017; prior to this, hardly any Norwegian institutions had offered simultaneous interpreting and long consecutive interpreting with notes. It has therefore been necessary to recruit teachers who have studied interpreting (especially CI) abroad. While simultaneous and note-taking techniques are transferrable to the PSI setting, there are also some differences between the two "genres" that play an important role in the way technique is taught to our students.

Firstly, translation fidelity (Setton, 2015) is accorded special significance in PSI, as interpreters are expected to interpret *everything* interlocutors say, in the same way it was originally uttered. According to the regulations of the Interpreting Act (2021) (described in section 4 of this article), Section 4. Interpreters' duties, "interpreters shall translate exactly what is said during a meeting, without changing, withholding, or adding any content". In CI, however, interpreters are often instructed to *shorten* messages and reformulate or even *improve* the message if needed (Jones, 2002, p. 4; Kalina, 2005, p. 773). Given the stakes of PSI, with its many legal implications, such practice could, of course, have serious consequences. For example, improving the speech of a client, making them more eloquent, in a social service meeting may make them come across as more resourceful than they really are. Similarly, in judicial settings such as court hearings or asylum interviews, instances of inconsistency and incoherence can be relevant for the judges´ decision. It is therefore necessary to make interpreter trainers with a CI background aware of the specificities of the social service *genre*.

In addition, there is also a perceived "breach" between the CI and PSI among students. This aligns with the "competition between peers" dimension that we delve into in section 5.3.[2], since our students are freelancers and often compete for the same assignments. As much as CI and PSI have in common, the substantial differences between the two play a key role in defining the outlines of each interpreting universe, from training to professional practice. The main differences were pointed out by Roberts (1994) and accurately summarized by Tiselius more recently:

> Already in 1994, Roberts identified community interpreters as (1) likely to work in institutional settings; (2) more likely to interpret in dialogue-like interactions; (3) interpreting actively to and from their working languages as default; (4) more visibly present in the encounter (than a conference interpreter); (5) representing a plethora of languages, not represented at an institutional level in the country where they work; and (6) often seen as advocates or brokers (Tiselius, 2021, p. 5).

As also mentioned by Tiselius (ibid), training has traditionally been much more easily available for CI students than for those wishing to specialize in PSI. This is rooted in the gap between the two traditions' development as professions and study subjects. Conferences

[2] This challenge is not specific to our students or to Norway – it was addressed by Holly Mikkelson in this blog post in 1999: https://acebo.myshopify.com/pages/interpreting-is-interpreting-or-is-it.

are international and mostly political or private in nature. Conference interpreters normally work from their C-languages (passive) into their A or B-languages (active). CI rose as a profession in the early 20th century, and conference interpreters have long enjoyed a high professional status, a wide range of training opportunities at BA and MA-level (albeit mostly Euro-centered when it comes to language combinations). Strong, national and international professional associations have been working for many years to protect the CI profession and its practitioners and ensure fair wages.

In contrast, PSI depends entirely on the allocation of public resources and is vulnerable to national policy changes. PSI received little attention until the 90s and is still far from consolidated in terms of social status, wages, and training opportunities. This is closely linked to the nature of PSI settings, where variation from country to country can be enormous, both in terms of language needs and available resources. Although PSI training options are increasing, possibilities vary greatly from one country to another. Training public sector interpreters is, in our experience, a more complex task than training conference interpreters. Not because their work is necessarily more difficult, but because (1) training must be adapted to the (changing) language needs of the society that interpreters will serve, and (2) public sector interpreters work mostly between two active languages. This has critical implications for the teaching staff, since trainers cannot possibly know, let alone specialize in, all their students' language combinations, as is often the case in CI. For a more detailed account of the challenges of designing and implementing language-specific PSI courses, see Rudvin & Tomassini, 2011, pp. 81-83.

This is not to say that our students do not have a methodological and practical lesson to draw from the CI tradition. For example, we have experienced that students' awareness of the "do not improve"/ "do not abbreviate" formula frequently leads to renditions that are longer than the source text. In addition, the interpretation is often flawed, and/or even more difficult to understand than the original.

To address this challenge, students must work on their ability to deliver utterances in a concise matter, as often highlighted in the CI tradition (Jones, 2002, p. 5). One way of working with this is through student-centered activities such as peer evaluation and self-evaluation, where students are given specific quality criteria to work with. In our experience it makes sense for students to be able to identify their own potential areas of improvement, although this should not be a substitute for teacher feedback, which they also appreciate. As pointed out by Baeten et. al. (2010), such an approach is popular among many students, albeit not all. Some may feel that they are asked to do the teachers' job themselves.[3] It is therefore vital for trainers to stress that students may in fact learn more from giving feedback than from receiving it, because evaluating peers requires a deep understanding of the assessment criteria.

Another approach that has been fruitful with our students is the integration of perspectives from linguistics (speech acts, politeness, and especially rhetoric) in theoretical lectures and practical activities. This is done, for example, when evaluating and discussing the "sameness" of the students' renderings in classroom roleplay, where students play all the roles: public servant(s), minority language speaker(s), and interpreter. Given the importance of "not altering" what has been said by the source language speakers, students often fixate on reproducing the individual words of the source utterance. The introduction of concepts such as ethos, pathos and logos can help them identify how speakers use their language to serve a purpose such as persuade or convey a professional image of themselves. When students are invited to reflect upon whether the interpreter's rendition was persuasive or convincing in similar ways as the users' utterances, the focus shifts away from individual words.

[3] As one student wrote in an evaluation: "What will be next, the students grading the exams?"

4. Challenge 2: dealing with heterogeneous student groups in terms of professional experience and previous qualifications

In order to guarantee access to professional interpreting services in the public sector, institutions and authorities need to work together in a four-phase cycle of finding, training, testing, and monitoring interpreter activity (Giambruno, 2014, p. 96). Norway is a pioneer in this field with a system for testing and training interpreters, as well as the world's first Interpreting Act. This system plays a key role in the protection of the life and rights of those who cannot interact with public institutions in Norwegian, and it is critical for public service users and providers alike. The Registry of Interpreters uses a "stepping-stone" system with 5 categories for practitioners that have completed some kind of interpreter training (see Figure 2 below). This means that even interpreters who have been practicing for years, can benefit from obtaining the BA degree, as this, thanks to the Interpreting Act, will ensure more assignments and higher remuneration. However, there are also students who enroll in the BA without any prior interpreting experience.

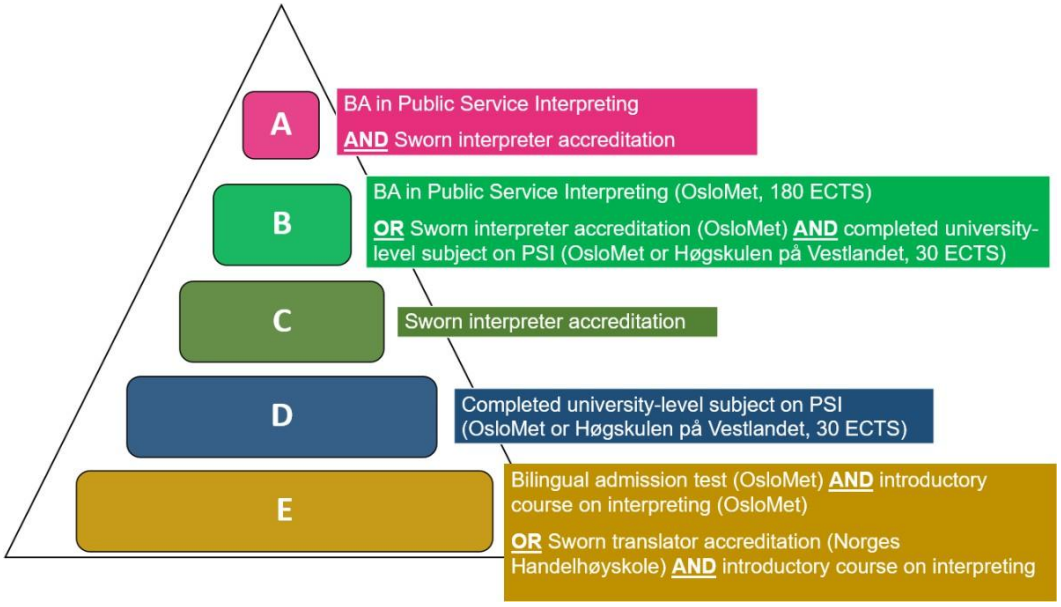

Figure 2. The Norwegian National Registry of Interpreters. Authors' image. Source: https://www.IMDi.no/tolk/om-nasjonalt-tolkeregister/

Consequently, student groups are very heterogeneous: from seasoned interpreters with over 30 years' experience to complete beginners. This challenge has traditionally been tackled by taking on an experiential approach to learning (Kolb, 1984; Skaaden, 2013) and relying on roleplay and group training sessions which are subsequently discussed, as is common in interpreting programs across countries (Tiselius, 2015). This approach allows for using the students' experiences from the classroom and from professional assignments. Since interpreting is a practical profession, students need to develop practical skills as well as acquire theoretical knowledge. Roleplay allows more experienced students to draw upon their knowledge of the market, as well as from concrete roleplay situations and speeches. Students with less experience from outside the classroom draw on their reflections on roleplay situations and discussions with more experienced peers. The often-unbiased approach and fresh perspectives that beginners bring into the discussions can be very enriching for experienced students.

However, as mentioned earlier, there will always be students who feel reluctant about this approach. We sometimes face an "old dogs, new tricks" challenge, since experienced interpreters with no formal training can have suboptimal habits that they are (at least initially) reluctant to revise. For example, some have developed an impressive ability to write very quickly and write down entire monologues in sentences, horizontally. These students can be reluctant to rely on their memory and analytical skills to make their notes more efficient and save energy for other phases of the interpreting process. Many times, these students' performance is still very good, which makes it extra challenging to convince them that improving their notes is a worthy effort. In simultaneous, some experienced students tend to repeat the same idea several times, trying to improve their own first version, even when there is no need to do so. This way, they leave the responsibility of choosing the right formulation to the audience, instead of choosing themselves, as also noted by Mørk, 2019, p. 241.

Another challenge is that new students may be overshadowed by experienced students, and become shy and retractive. We find that being open about the benefits of group heterogeneity from the start can help motivate everyone to share and participate.

4.1. The experiential-dialogic approach: roleplay, group practice in simulated and real settings, and individual practice online

The use of roleplay is an integral part of this BA, especially in the first-year introductory course. The roleplay dynamic within the experiential-dialogic model at OsloMet has been described in detail by Felberg and Skaaden (2020), among others. Even if roleplay is not as present in these two subjects as it is in the introductory course, student participation and peer feedback, the backbone of the experiential-dialogic model, are just as important here.

The simultaneous course includes an obligatory full day of roleplay at the Oslo district court, based on an adapted transcription of a real, criminal case. The goal is for students to familiarize themselves with court terminology and phraseology, as well as the physical layout of the judicial setting – i.e. where in the courtroom each party typically sits or stands, and where interpreters are expected to work from (usually the booth or the witness stand).

The course also includes a mock conference with mixed language groups. Students prepare 5-10 minute group presentations on a given topic (e.g. experiences from the pandemic or experiences related to migration) that they then present in their working language. Our groups usually comprise around 40 students and four WL besides Norwegian, so the mock conference includes several presentations in each language. Students with the same WL as the presenters interpret their peers' presentations into Norwegian, from the booths. The rest can either listen, or practice relay into their own working languages from the booth. Presentations are followed by a Q&A session. This way, students get to experience presenting for an audience while being interpreted, being an interpreter user, listening to their peers' interpretation from and into their working language, and from and into languages they don't understand, interpreting from a booth in a conference setting, managing turn taking, interpreting in relay mode, and listening to relay interpreting. This exercise is popular and thought-provoking regardless of how familiar students are with CI.

Consecutive interpreting classes consist mostly of language-specific group practice on live speeches in WL1 and WL2. The students practice interpreting in tandem-teaching sessions with two facilitators (Skaaden & Felberg, 2020, p. 90): a *facilitator of interpreting strategies* (someone with a background in CI) and a *facilitator of language strategies*, known to the students as a *language mentor*, whose role we will analyze in the next section. In

simultaneous most of the on-site language-specific practice – apart from court roleplay and the mock conference- happens in the booths, using live speeches and recordings in WL1 and WL2. Group size in both subjects varies from one language to another, as groups tend to be smaller for certain WL2 such as Tigrinya or Amharic[4], and larger for European and world languages such as Arabic, English, Spanish, Polish, or Latvian. Students are encouraged to interpret in front of their peers, and they then get feedback on their performance from facilitators and fellow students. Emphasis is placed on the importance of constructive criticism, and students are encouraged to draw on their own experiences to contribute to their peers' learning process. We find that talking openly about competitiveness and the importance of collegial teamwork can have a very positive effect and make students feel more comfortable with showing vulnerability, dare to try new things and make mistakes in front of others (see section 5.3 on the complexities of working with students who are also competitors in the interpreting market).

This is a blended BA program, so online work is an important part of these two subjects. Besides writing essays and participating in individual and group activities on interpreting theory and technique, students spend a significant amount of their time doing consecutive and simultaneous interpreting exercises on online platform GoReact. This platform was not specifically created for interpreter training, but its features suit the needs of our courses well, and it has been a permanent part of the courses since 2021. We find GoReact to be significantly much more user-friendly for teachers and students than other interpreting practice software that we have tried.

On GoReact, students can interpret consecutive and simultaneous speeches from various sources (speeches uploaded by the teachers, by peers, linked from external platforms such as YouTube, etc.). Teachers can listen to the students live or play their recordings after they are done interpreting. Students can give each other feedback and assess each other's work using teacher-defined rubrics. Teachers can write comments, record audio and video, and even create their own sticker sets to mark specific occurrences in students' speeches. We have, for example, a sticker set for consecutive interpreting that includes labels such as "contradiction", "wrong term", "content error", "imprecise", "grammatical error", and "good solution!"[5]. The stickers are timestamped, so the students can see exactly what minute and second of the speech the teacher is referring to when they replay their recording. Students can also see a statistical summary of the occurrences of each sticker in a speech, which is useful to identify recurring peaks and pitfalls in performance.

[4] Interestingly enough, there are few interpreting students in these languages, even if migration flows from Eritrea and Ethiopia into Norway are significant (see IMDi, 2024).

[5] A special thanks to Professor Aída Martínez-Gómez at the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at John Jay University College (CUNY) for the introduction to GoReact and inspiration for sticker sets.

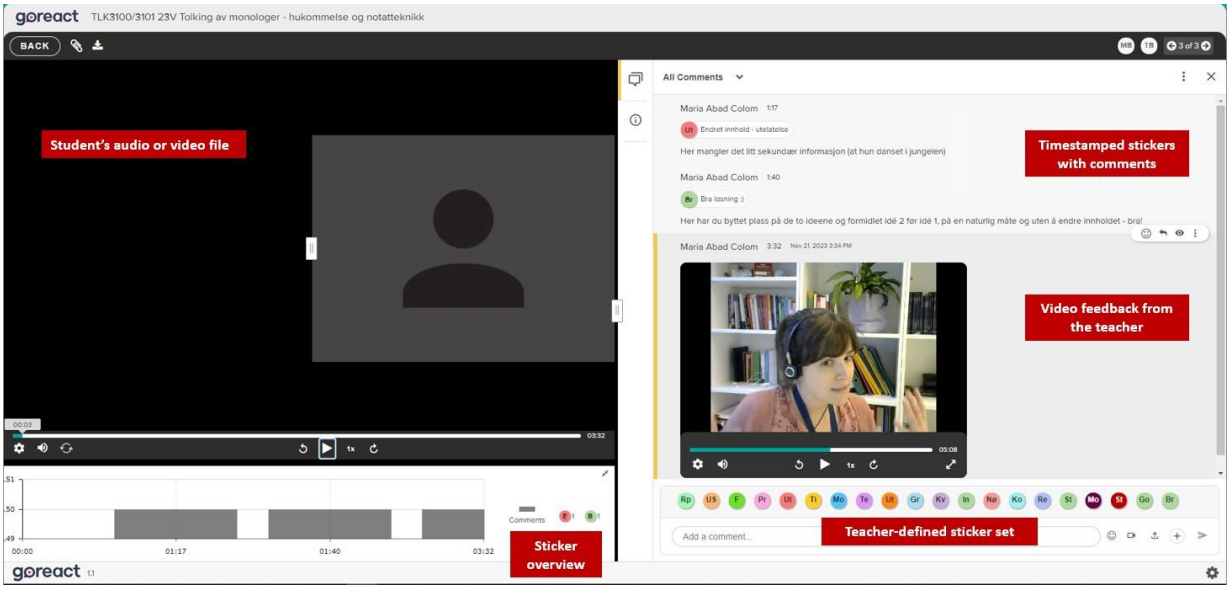

Figure 3. Example of feedback on GoReact from course TLK3100 Monologue interpreting: memory and note-taking

5. Challenge 3: dealing with linguistically heterogenous, mostly-LLD student groups, with the added complexity of students also being market competitors

Working languages at the BA vary every year and are chosen according to the needs of the Norwegian society, in dialogue with the Norwegian Directorate of Diversity and Immigration (IMDi). As explained in the introduction, students with Norwegian and 14 other languages, many of them LLD, have completed the BA since its inception in 2017. However, interpreter training at OsloMet (earlier known as the Oslo and Akershus College of Applied Sciences) has a longer history. Before the BA was implemented, there was already an established one-year introductory course in interpreting in the public sector (30 ECTS). Nowadays, this course is a part of the BA, but it is still offered independently to students who either just wish to take 30 ECTS in PSI or who are waiting for their language pair to be offered in the BA. The introductory course has been held in 54 language pairs since 2007[6].

5.1 Language mentors

In their analysis of interpreting skills testing, Skaaden and Wadensjö (2014, pp. 24–25) lay out the challenges of finding qualified individuals who can participate in certification and testing processes when LLD are involved. One of their recommendations is the use of bilingual individuals who are not interpreters themselves (ibid p. 24) to avoid pitfalls such as competition and legal incapacity. For example, we once unknowingly hired a language mentor who turned out to be the sibling of one of the students in the group. We now have a set of guidelines in place to avoid such pitfalls. In our case, we need bilingual language

[6] Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Azeri, Berber Tarifit, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian/Montenegrin, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Chechen, Czech, Dari, Dutch, English, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Igbo, Italian, Japanese, Kirundi, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Nepali, Northern Kurd (Kurmanji), Northern Sami, Oromo, Pashto, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Somali, Sorani Kurd, South Sami, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Uighur, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Vietnamese, and Wolof.

mentors who can: write interpreting materials (mostly speeches), listen to and assess the students' interpretations both on the online platform and in face-to-face classes, write and record texts in WL2 for the exam, translate exam texts into Norwegian[7], and select YouTube videos that can be used for practicing simultaneous interpreting.

Finding suitable individuals and recruiting them for the mentor role can be challenging, especially for LLD. This is a demanding and multi-faceted role, where even the apparently simple tasks, such as selecting YouTube videos for simultaneous interpreting, are more complicated than they seem. Finding videos that are on-topic, not excessively fast, without too much background noise, and containing natural speech that is suitable for simultaneous interpreting, is no easy or quick task.

To make matters even more complicated, university regulations establish that final exams are to be assessed by two examiners: an internal evaluator in WL2, who is also in charge of assessing interpreting technique and who may or may not be the course leader; and an external evaluator that assesses the students' performance into WL2. Despite the temporary nature of their engagement, mentors are regarded by our university as internal personnel, and therefore cannot take on the role of external evaluators. This means that, every year, there is a need for not only one, but two WL2 experts for each language group taking simultaneous and consecutive interpreting – even three sometimes, if students contest an exam result and exercise their right to having the exam assessed by a new committee.

Language mentors play an essential role in the BA, as they are the only ones who can give our students feedback on their WL2, which the rest of the teachers usually do not even understand. One of the most significant challenges in the work with these professionals is how much variation there is from year to year, and mentor to mentor, in terms of prior knowledge of interpreting, and professional background, which course leaders need to adjust to. Most frequently, language mentors and examiners have a background in linguistics or philology, but they can also be translators, interpreters, language teachers, or other professionals whose resume shows proficiency in the language in question.

Given the current public sector landscape in Norway, with several budget cuts in the last few years, the resources available to train and support language mentors' work throughout the academic year are scarcer than we would like. The department is currently working on an online short course for mentors (MOOC-style), which we believe will save us time and resources, while at the same time providing a consistent framework and a clearer role definition for language mentors across the BA – and most importantly, a tool that mentors can always go back to when they need it.

For the time being, mentors receive a short training before the start of the semester, where we introduce the subjects and the techniques we work on, explain how interpreting classes are usually structured, how the focus of the courses is not on conveying words but meaning, and provide specific information on what they should focus on when giving feedback to the students (grammar, terminology, register, idiomatic conveyance of meaning, voice and prosody etc.). We also do a walk through the digital platform we use for the students to practice (GoReact), and mentors learn how to leave written, audio or video comments for the students.

[7] So they can be used by the person correcting exams from WL2 into Norwegian.

As mentioned above, to become proficient in simultaneous technique and note-taking technique, students need extensive training in the form of monologues that they can interpret both at the university, and at home. Therefore, both subjects have a need for a wide range of training materials in WL1 and in the four -occasionally three- WL2. Many of the Norwegian materials can be reused from one year to the next, as our students always have this language in common. We course leaders are full-time teachers with a background in conference interpreting, and we have been responsible for these courses for years. We are used to writing interpreting exercises in Norwegian, and we can tell from experience what kind of exercises, speeches, topics, reading prosody, etc. work best for our students. In contrast, the four WL2 vary yearly, and new mentors start afresh every year, and need training to face the challenges related to producing materials for interpreter training.

An important part of the work of language mentors is to write materials in WL2 and record their speeches so they can be uploaded to GoReact. For the simultaneous interpreting course, the texts we commission are approximately 600 words long, while speeches for consecutive interpreting are shorter (around 300 words) and are divided into four sequences of around 75 words, with a pause in between sequences so the students can interpret. Some speeches are read live in class, while others are only used on GoReact, where the students work on their own.

Most speeches in both WL1 and WL2 are related to public services or institutions (doctor's appointments, recommendations from a nutritionist, immigrants sharing their experiences with the Norwegian welfare system, etc.). Preferably, texts are written in the first person. Text writers can choose whether to write their speeches from scratch or base them on already existing materials, such as a compilation of news articles on the same topic. In such cases, emphasis is placed on the importance of adapting the original so that the resulting interpreting exercise is written in a natural style and read in a manner compatible with a natural oral delivery.

Pace is an important factor that mentors usually struggle with, especially at the beginning of the year. Our goal as course leaders is to steadily increase the speeches' difficulty to support student progress, and so texts should be read at a pace that can pose *reasonable* challenges for the students at each particular point in their skills development process. During training, mentors are taught about the importance of pace and naturality in interpreting exercises, and we explain how talking too slowly can actually make interpreting more difficult (especially in the simultaneous mode) but that at the same time, reading a speech at the same speed as one would usually talk can also be very challenging, since written texts tend to have high information density (even if they have been specifically written to be read aloud). Mentors also learn about the impact that tone can have on information processing for interpreting students and are encouraged to avoid reading speeches in a monotonous voice. Students are taught to attach importance to aspects such as not flattening out a lively tone of voice, as prosody conveys important cues to the emotional state of the speaker, and linguistic cues to augment the verbal or communicative component (Monrad-Krohn, 1947; Nilsen, 2022). Moreover, it has been shown that monotonous delivery of text affects both interpreters' and interpreter users' ability to perceive spoken text (Holub, Elisabeth, n.d.; Horváth, 2017).

All this information can be, and very often is, overwhelming for the mentors. Many struggle with finding the right tone, achieving the right reading speed, etc. Most need some time to get a sense of the difficulty level in the speeches, and most start out writing texts that are very challenging for the students to interpret. In this sense, student feedback is essential for us to be able to help the mentors adjust the texts they produce to the needs and abilities of the group.

Over the years the courses have also become increasingly reliant on student participation and peer evaluation. Both subjects now combine speeches written by mentors and course leaders with student-produced materials, which we believe is very beneficial for the students.

The first times the courses were offered, language mentors would be present in every teaching session to listen and comment on the students' performance. Nowadays, due to financial restrictions, mentors participate in fewer classes throughout the semester; in addition, they listen to one or two interpreting exercises per subject on GoReact and give feedback to the students on the platform. At the same time as mentors' duties have shrunk, the students have been given a more active role in these subjects, the most significant being speech writing and peer feedback provision as per a series of quality criteria provided by the course leaders. Despite some initial resistance, students seem to be starting to see the beneficial effects of these enhanced student-centered learning methods.

5.2 *WL2 examiners*

Many of the challenges described in the previous section also apply to WL2 examiners. When assessing the final exams, the internal and external examiner first work individually, evaluating students' performance from the WL2 into Norwegian and from Norwegian into the WL2, respectively, and grading them in on the basis of an A-F scale[8]. Both examiners set a grade for their half of the exam, and then they meet and discuss each student individually and set a common grade. To pass, students must achieve a pass grade on both halves of the exam.

Before starting the evaluation process, examiners receive a detailed document on assessment and grading interpreting performance in the two subjects. They are also invited to an online meeting where course leaders present their subjects, explain how the exams work, introduce assessment criteria, and answer questions.

Assessment criteria are very similar in both subjects, with some obvious mode-specific differences, and cover three main areas: (1) information transfer from the source language into the target language (candidate's mastery of the target language, syntax, grammar, terminology, changes in content such as omissions and additions, etc.); (2) candidate's ability to convey information in the target language (pronunciation, intonation, tempo, speech flow, volume, use of prosody and pauses to create meaning, etc.); and (3) interpreting technique, this is, use of interpreting strategies and mastery of note-taking.

In our experience, a common pitfall for examiners is the tendency to overly focus on literality, mistaking it for fidelity. This leads them to label what we interpreter trainers would consider as *strategies* (typically reformulation, compression, and explanation) and value positively, as mistakes. Grading meetings tend therefore to take some time, since they often require further explanations on the differences between translating a written text and interpreting a spoken text that one hears only once.

[8] A-E are pass grades, while F is a fail grade.

5.3 *Students as market competitors*

When they first start out in the BA, many of our students are on "defense mode" and quite skeptical to participating in roleplays and group practice sessions. This is understandable given the special circumstances surrounding enrollment in this program. Whereas other programs get mostly inexperienced students who are curious about interpreting and start out from scratch, most of our students not only know about interpreting, but have been practicing it for years, if not decades. Many feel like they have nothing to learn. Others feel, perhaps, intimidated and scared. Interpreting is a lonely profession, so to suddenly become a part of a class where you are expected to perform in front of people you regularly share the booth with, and/or people who compete for the same interpreting assignments as you, can be quite daunting.

Despite this challenging starting point, students are very good at finding common ground and focus on the benefits of a united front, on all levels: they share glossaries, give each other feedback, share symbols, write speeches for each other, send interesting articles to the teachers to share with the whole group, recommend each other for assignments, and much more. This is not a quick process, and it does not always happen, but for most classes there is a sense of belonging and collegiality at the end of the four-year training period.

As teachers, we do our best to visibilize the importance of peer support inside and outside the classroom. It is very satisfying when students embrace the power of coming together as a group, especially with those who have the same WL2. It makes us proud to see how well our students deal with the vulnerability of learning among other interpreters, and how so many of them thrive, grow, and become even more solid professionals than they were when they started out.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this article was to describe the challenges of teaching simultaneous and consecutive interpreting to LLD students. These techniques are often considered to be more relevant to CI than PSI, but this is not our view. Our own experience and student feedback show that these subjects are highly relevant for PSI professionals, given their practical nature. Students see them seen as difficult, yet motivating, important and interesting subjects.

Teaching LLD students is a complex task that comes with a special set of vulnerabilities. Perhaps the most important one is that teachers can rarely fully assess student performance into both working languages. This is probably the most significant difference between CI and PSI training, and a very complex challenge for training institutions to tackle. The language landscape in PSI is constantly changing, and it is difficult for the training offer to keep up with market demands. However, with a full BA in PSI, students engage in a variety of courses, allowing them to have many skills in their "interpreting toolbox", including techniques that were, for a long time, reserved for CI interpreters. Five years after the first BA graduates received their diplomas, we can already see the positive effects of structured, university-level training in PSI. The support of the public apparel, both in terms of financial support for training, and awareness raising in public institutions, is essential to keep strengthening the PSI professional landscape.

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