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LET'S STRIKE A DEAL! MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS INTERPRETER TRAINING

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Abstract

Language and cultural mediation in business contexts is a clear career opportunity for Translation and Interpreting graduates in Spain, as globalised businesses increasingly value language skills. Interpreting trainers must then meet the challenge of equipping undergraduate students with the skills required to perform as competent business interpreters. Business interpreting is a complex activity that implies the ability to use different interpreting skills (dialogue interpreting, consecutive interpreting, sight translation and whispered interpreting) and acquire domain-specific knowledge (and subsequently terminology and phraseology in the two working languages). Furthermore, trainers must also very commonly face additional hurdles like few contact hours, large numbers of students and scarcity of training

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materials. In this paper we attempt to describe how we have risen to the challenge of business interpreter training in our undergraduate programme (in the language combination English-Spanish), chiefly by boosting autonomous practice both in groups and individually. Even though it cannot be expected that our graduates, after completing their training, are qualified to perform as business interpreters to the most professional standard, we argue that the training that we provide them with not only introduces them into business interpreting as a professional activity (which they may pursue after further training) but also equips them with skills that are highly valued on the job market and make them therefore more employable.

Keywords: business interpreting, business interpreter training, dialogue interpreter training, autonomous practice, self-assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language skills and intercultural awareness are key elements for the success of businesses that aim to go international or already operate at an international level. It has been repeatedly highlighted that the lack of language skills and intercultural competence results in the loss of business opportunities for companies and that hiring translators and interpreters can clearly reverse this loss (ELAN, 2006; PIMLICO, 2011). Simultaneously, language-based posts in internationalised businesses have become a clear

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careers opportunity for graduates in Translation and Interpreting in Spain. According to the most prominent studies conducted so far, around 20-30% of Translation and Interpreting graduates from Spanish universities wind up working in the field of international trade or as –mostly clerical– staff with language skills for companies somehow engaged in international operations (Calvo et al., 2008).

In this line, the *Libro Blanco del Grado en Traducción e Interpretación* (White Paper on the Undergraduate Degree in Translation and Interpreting), one of the documents –if not *the* document– which inspired the design of the study plans for most undergraduate programmes in Translation and Interpreting in Spain to be implemented according to the Bologna system, included not only language and cultural mediator but also liaison interpreter (both expressly mentioning the business sector) as two of the professional profiles the new degrees had better revolve around (Muñoz, 2010). Accordingly, some undergraduate university programmes in Translation and Interpreting in Spain currently include training that aims at students' acquiring (at least some of) the skills required for those jobs.

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This is particularly evident in the case of courses focussed on liaison or dialogue interpreting, which may encompass business-related settings in their teaching practice. Correspondingly, many trainers responsible for undergraduate interpreting training at Spanish universities must face the challenge of equipping their students with the skills that will make them fit for successfully pursuing such professional activities in business, all of this in a relatively short span of time and with additional hurdles like courses with a large number of students, scarcity of teaching materials in this specific field, shortage of face-to-face hours, students' insufficient competence in their two working languages, etc.

In this paper, we attempt to describe how we have risen to that challenge at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide of Seville, Spain (henceforth referred to as UPO), chiefly by boosting autonomous practice both in groups and individually. After briefly defining business interpreting, contextualising our teaching practice and outlining the basic tenets that guide our pedagogical approach to dialogue interpreter training, we describe how we conduct our face-to-face sessions and how student self-

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study is encouraged.

2. DEFINITION OF BUSINESS INTERPRETING

Business interpreting (hereinafter BI) has not received the same attention as other interpreting fields within Interpreting Studies, such as public service interpreting and, let alone, conference interpreting (Garzone, 2009, p. 49). However, despite being relatively small in number, there are very interesting contributions that shed some light on BI from different perspectives, the main points of which are outlined in this section.

Ko (1996), to our knowledge one of the first researchers to study BI, broadly defined it as “two or more business people discussing matters through an interpreter” (p. 116). BI can thus be understood as a type of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural mediation that allows a business operation to be undertaken between two or more individuals who speak different languages but share common ground in terms of commercial interests and objectives. Examples of such business operations include foreign trade negotiations, meetings between international partners, an interview

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between the head of a subsidiary company and the head of the financial department of the (foreign) parent company, shareholders' meetings... and many more. As underlined by the relevant literature, these various business operations are not only carried out around a meeting table in a clichéd meeting room, but also in many other settings, such as trade exhibitions (Trovato, 2013), guided tours (Wiśniowska, 2010, p. 154), visits to factories or sites, and even formal banquets (Ko, 1996, p. 120).

In what follows, we will focus on two important elements which relate to BI and –we believe– have a major impact on BI training: interpreting modes and thematic domains.

2.1. Interpreting modes in BI

BI normally takes place in the form of dialogue interpreting, which can be defined as the interpreting mode “with a (bilingual) interpreter assuming the pivotal mediating role between two (monolingual) clients” (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 16). This interpreting mode implies the consecutive mode, i.e. the interpreter renders the message in the target language “after the source-language utterance” (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 18), and, since

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utterances tend to be short, there is no note-taking. Unlike in diplomatic settings, in which each delegate is normally assisted by their own interpreter, in most BI situations there is only one interpreter to facilitate communication between the speakers; this results in the interpreter constantly interpreting into and out of the two languages involved, which poses an obvious challenge (Sandrelli, 2005, p. 82). Sometimes, the meeting is not bilateral but multi-party (e.g. when there are two representatives of the companies involved in the event, making it four people to interact with), which again impacts on aspects related to dialogue interpreting performance, like the use of the first or the third person (Takimoto, 2009).

Even if dialogue interpreting is clearly the most frequent interpreting mode, there are other modes also present in BI. During business meetings, reference is often made to documents that are not necessarily translated to the other language, and interpreters are then required to convey their content –or a summary thereof– into the other language. Sight translation therefore plays a prominent role within BI (Sandrelli, 2011, p. 211).

It is also possible that one of the speakers produces

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a long rendition (say, they are giving a presentation of a report essential for the business operation in question). In these cases, the interpreter seems to have three options: firstly, as noted by Wiśniowska (2010, p. 152), they can resort to classic consecutive interpreting (i.e. taking notes of the whole of the speech delivered by the speaker and then reproducing it from those notes into the other language); secondly, as put forward by Sandrelli (2011, p. 211), the interpreter can opt for whispered interpreting or *chuchotage* (i.e. simultaneous interpreting –while the speaker is still delivering their speech– in a low voice); third, if technological equipment is made available to the interpreter (normally in the form of bidule, that is, a system consisting of a radio pocket transmitter, several receivers with headphones for the audience and microphones for both the main speaker and the interpreter), simultaneous interpreting can be expected as well in business settings (Linkterpreting, 2020).

Finally, it goes without saying that the new information and communication technologies are also gaining ground in interpreting (Fantinuoli & Prandi, 2018). Within BI, remote interpreting, whether as telephone interpreting or as

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videoconferencing, is on the rise as a means to overcome language barriers in cross-linguistic business operations, especially thanks to the benefits in terms of interpreter availability and cost reduction that it entails (Russo, 2018, p. 48). In fact, remote interpreting is becoming common practice for the running of certain business activities, as evidenced by projects like the one led by Lázaro (2019) on telephone interpreting and roadside assistance, which is based on a corpus of authentic telephone interpreter-mediated conversations between insurance agents and clients.

2.2. Thematic domains in BI

As already noted, the settings in which BI can take place are well varied, which carries implications for linguistic aspects such as register and tone, with the interpreter needing to “master not only domain-specific terminology and formal language but also colloquial registers” (Sandrelli, 2011 p. 211). Nonetheless, diversity in BI also applies to this *domain-specific terminology*, since interpreter-mediated business events can cover “such things as commercial arrangements, production and warehousing techniques, contracts and deadlines,

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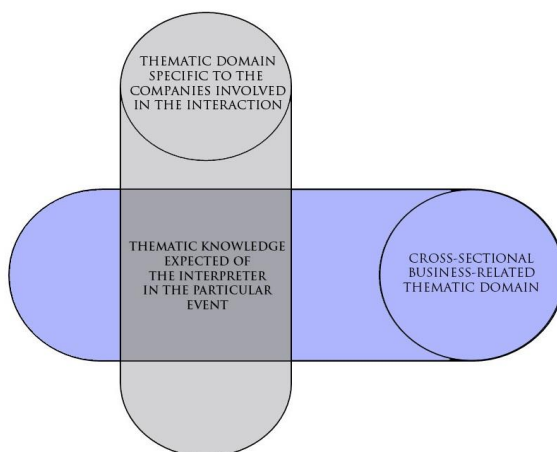
specific description of products or detailed arrangements for delivery and payments” (Ko, 1996, p. 118). As pointed by Wiśniowska (2010, p. 156), the interpreter working in BI must be competent in –or at least familiar with– specialised terminology in fields as diverse as consulting services, trade, banking, finance, economics, law and marketing, as well as the specialised terminology related to the specific business operation discussed in the interaction –which can involve shipping, delivery and production, for instance.

It can be argued, then, that the interpreter working in business settings will always come across two axes in terms of thematic domain. Firstly, a cross-sectional axis relates to the sub-domains that are to be found, to a greater or lesser degree, in all types of businesses. This includes thematic knowledge on management, production, employment relations, marketing, accounting, banking, international trade, economics, stock exchange, etc. Secondly, there is an axis that circumstantially intersects with the former and relates to the thematic knowledge specific to the products or services involved in the particular BI event, which may range from nanotechnology and aerospace engineering through

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to organic meat products and agricultural fertilisers. These thematic domains are reflected in the terminology and phraseology that the main speakers are likely to use.

Figure 1. Thematic domain in BI



As illustrated in Figure 1, it is precisely the terminology and phraseology related to the area where the two axes meet that the interpreter is expected to be competent at in order to successfully perform at the particular interaction. Consequently, interpreters engaged in BI can be expected to have knowledge on the business-related sub-domains and their terminology, but it cannot be taken for

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granted that they have a fully-fledged knowledge on all specific products or services. This, in turn, stresses the importance of properly briefing the interpreter, as it is by preparing a specific interaction that they can develop the thematic and linguistic competence in relation to the products or services provided by the companies taking part in the particular interaction, and familiarise with the domain-specific terminology and discourse in their two working languages in order to perform successfully (Sandrelli, 2005, p. 81).

3. UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS INTERPRETER TRAINING AT UPO

As mentioned above, business interpreting offers careers pathways for Translation and Interpreting graduates in Spain and, accordingly, training prospect graduates in the skills required for this activity boosts their employability. In this section, we first describe the context in which business interpreter training takes place at our university. Then, after outlining the basic pedagogical tenets behind our approach to interpreter training, we provide an account of our teaching practice, which includes face-to-face sessions and student

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autonomous practice.

3.1. Interpreter training at UPO: institutional and curricular context

Curiously, the study plan of the four-year undergraduate Degree in Translation and Interpreting offered at UPO only includes two compulsory subjects on interpreting in the first foreign language or B language¹. In the first semester of the last academic year (semester 7), students take one course in interpreting techniques, named *Técnicas de Interpretación B* (6 ECTS credits), which mainly focusses on consecutive interpreting and sight translation from B language into A language (in our case, English and Spanish respectively). This course is chiefly aimed at the development of basic skills related to interpreting, such as active listening, speech analysis in the B language, speech production in the A language, memory management and note-taking. In the following semester, all students must also take a course on dialogue interpreting, named *Interpretación Bilateral B/A/B* (6 ECTS). Content-wise, the module consists of two major blocks: BI

¹ B languages offered at UPO include English, French and German.

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and public service interpreting (chiefly healthcare and police/court interpreting), each with the same number of teaching hours.

There are two further elective courses to complete interpreter training at UPO. This means that students wanting to deepen their training as interpreters can also take an introductory course on conference interpreting (6 ECTS), which largely consists in advanced consecutive interpreting and sight translation and an introduction into simultaneous interpreting, and a course on dialogue interpreting in the C language² (6 ECTS), very similar in scope and methodology to their counterpart for the B language.

Therefore, as far as BI is concerned, students at UPO must acquire the skills necessary to successfully perform as interpreters in business settings in *Interpretación Bilateral B/A/B*. In order to better understand the teaching context, it must be explained that this compulsory course, as already mentioned, comprises 6 ECTS credits, which implies 150 hours of student work (including contact hours, independent study, assessment time,

² C languages offered at UPO include the aforementioned ones (English, French and German) plus Italian and Arabic.

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etc.). In practical terms, students enrolled for this course at UPO only have 42 contact hours of dialogue interpreter training in 14 teaching weeks. Bearing in mind that the teaching load is equally divided between BI and public service interpreting, all the training that students receive in interpreting for business contexts must be provided in roughly 7 weeks, totalling just 21 contact hours.

It must be remembered that, as outlined in Section 2, BI “is a very complex activity that involves domain-specific knowledge, technical and terminological preparation, and the ability to use various interpreting techniques, each of them requiring specific skills” (Sandrelli, 2011, p. 212). Evidently, therefore, it cannot be expected that the students who successfully complete our 7-week training will be competent business interpreters to the highest professional standard. However, we believe that this training should not only introduce them into dialogue interpreting as a professional activity (which they may like to pursue after extensive training, most frequently in the form of a master's degree) but also equip them with skills (e.g. oral expression in their two working languages and intercultural communication management) that are highly valued on the job

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market and will make our graduates employable for jobs that do not necessarily advertise as interpreting³ (Shaw, 2011).

Trainers must therefore rise to this challenge of BI training by making the most of our available resources and our average student profile. With regard to the former, it must be noted that contact hours are divided into two types of weekly sessions at UPO: one 90-minute large-group lecture (with up to 50-60 students in class) and one 90-minute practical seminar (normally 20-25 students). In our specific case, this means that the 21 contact hours allotted to BI imply 10.5 hours of lectures and 10.5 hours of practical seminars. With regard to the average student profile, the typical student taking this course is a final-year student, aged under 25 (hence quite inexperienced in many daily and professional activities⁴), a native speaker of Spanish but with a sound knowledge of English (in terms of grammar and vocabulary, but rather limited exposure to oral production in English) and prone to suffering from performance anxiety due to

³ Some of our graduates find (sometimes temporary) jobs in multilingual call centres or as tourist guides and end up interpreting more often than they would have ever imagined.

⁴ Some of our students have indeed been full-time students and never had any previous professional experience at all.

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the fact that they are being assessed by both their trainers and their peers.

3.2. Basic tenets of BI training

Dialogue interpreter training, in general, must be oriented towards the students' acquisition of the skills required to perform this interpreting mode to a successful standard, which include language competence, professional protocols (e.g. use of the first person), thematic competence, professional ethics, etc. As to teaching methodology, there seems to be a consensus that role-play simulations (i.e. making the student play the role of the interpreter at a simulated scenario and interact between at least two speakers, one of each language) are widely used to prepare students for real-life situations in which dialogue interpreting may be needed, and *make* them practise interpreting techniques, deal with specifically challenging situations and rehearse a certain vocabulary and discourse (Wadensjö, 2014, p. 437).

In fact, as argued by Cirillo and Radicioni (2017, p. 119) specifically for BI training, role-play helps students to familiarise themselves with linguistic

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and interactional aspects related to business settings, acquire (semi-)specialised content and terminology, practise different interpreting modes and strategies, and also reflect on the complexity of the interpreter's role and performance. However, it is very important to recreate the interpreter-mediated scenario as realistically as possible. Consequently, "the teachers should have a spontaneous (although partly planned) conversation rather than reading a fully-scripted dialogue" (Sandrelli, 2001, p. 175) and the teachers must also "respond to what [interpreter] students say, even though it may mean straying from the script" (Sandrelli, 2011: 2013).

However, according to Ozolins (2017, pp. 48-49), the dialogue interpreting curriculum can also cover many other activities besides role-play. These activities may include contextual knowledge of the areas of interpreter engagement, discussion and practical exercises in professional ethics and conduct, feedback activities and discussion on theoretical aspects of interpreting practice, to name but a few, the choice of which activities to include depending on time constraints and available resources.

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Two unfortunately frequent constraints mentioned by interpreter training scholars relate to limited contact hours (Gorm Hansen & Schlesinger, 2007, p. 96) and large student numbers (Sandrelli, 2011, p. 226), which reduce the opportunities for individual practice and assessment during the face-to-face sessions. Given these constraints, it is crucial for interpreter training programmes “to equip the students with the ability to learn autonomously, to reflect and to assess their performance” (Li, 2018, p. 52). Self-study activities must be then encouraged, especially using technology-based materials due to their advantages, as suggested by various authors, like (Gorm-Hansen & Schlesinger, 2007; Sandrelli, 2011).

Autonomous practice –both individual and in groups– is also essential if a student-centred approach to teaching is sought after, i.e. if the interpreting trainee is intended to become an active subject, prone to retrospective reflection, with a greater emphasis on the process rather than on the product (Morelli, 2008, p. 446). As has been already suggested, self-assessment is essential for individual autonomous practice to be efficient, as it enables the student to identify their strengths and

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weaknesses and thus reflect on the areas that require improvement (Russo, 1995). Identifying areas for improvement in individual performance also enhances group-work efficiency thanks to peer feedback. The advantage of this student-centred approach to interpreter training is that the study process becomes a self-paced exercise which adapts to the student's skills level, transforming the learning process into an experience in which learning is achieved by self-assessment and peer assessment and not only by passive delivery of feedback from trainers.

3.3. BI training at UPO

At UPO, conscious of the limitations posed by the institutional and curricular context (as described in Section 3.1.), as trainers we attempt to rise to the challenge of equipping our students with the skills necessary to successfully perform as dialogue interpreters⁵ in business-related contexts (and therefore boosting their employability), following a student-centred approach to teaching based on the tenets outlined in Section 3.2.

⁵ As students are trained in note-taking and sight-translation in a previous course offered at UPO, as explained above, they are not included as training goals in BI training.

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3.3.1. Contact hours

As explained above in Section 3.1., contact hours at UPO include both large-group lectures and small-group practical seminars. As far as BI training is concerned, the former sessions are conceived as a forum for discussion and debate. Students read materials or watch videos before the sessions on a wide variety of topics (interpreting techniques and modes; settings and subject domains of BI; interpreter's conduct and professional ethics in BI; how to prepare a BI assignment; etc.) and then these topics are discussed in class.

As far as practical seminars are concerned, these sessions take place at the Interpreting Lab, in order to enhance students' opportunities for practice. The seminars are based on semi-scripted role-play, a teaching method specifically indicated for the early stages of training (see Section 3.2.). From the beginning of the course, a timeline with briefings and keywords is made available on UPO's learning virtual environment, so that students can prepare their interpretation for every session. The interpreter-mediated situations that these briefs refer to are varied (from a trade fair to a visit of the

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head of the import department of a –foreign–supermarket chain to a regulatory council of a Spanish protected designation of origin), in an attempt to mirror the thematic variety present in BI (see Section 2). One example of the briefings our students receive is as follows:

12th February 2020

Mr López, a representative of Distribsa, a (fictitious) Spanish company engaged in the distribution of Spanish wines and vinegars, is meeting Ms Podolska, head of the import department of Gourmetska, a (fictitious) Polish supermarket chain specialised in the gourmet sector, as Distribsa is interested in introducing Spanish top-quality wines and vinegars to the Polish market through Gourmetska. In this meeting, Mr López and Ms Podolska will be assisted by an interpreter (English-Spanish).

Keywords: wines; vinegars; gourmet products; conditions for distribution; cancellations and returns.

The interaction that takes place during the 90-minute session is very similar to those described by other interpreter trainers, like Gorm Hansen and Schlesinger (2007, pp. 104-105). After initial contextualisation (5-10 minutes), the semi-scripted dialogue is performed by two teachers, playing the role of the main interlocutors. One student sits between the teachers by the teacher's desk and

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delivers an interpretation of the utterances given by the main interlocutors. Other students (up to 12, because that is the number of booths we have at UPO) work in their booths, listening to the teachers' dialogue and interpreting each turn, which they record⁶. Whenever the student who is interpreting for the teachers renders an interpretation, the microphone is switched off so that there is no overlapping with the renditions delivered by the other students in the booths.

Meanwhile, some other 10 students remain seated in the main hall of the Interpreting Lab and do not merely witness the interpretation made by their peer, but are advised to take note of any phenomenon (textual or interactional) related to the interaction that draws their attention. Once the first excerpt of the dialogue played by the teachers and the student is finished (20-25 minutes), there is a debriefing and feedback phase (another 15-20 minutes), to which all participants (teachers, student interpreter, student evaluators, and *booth* student interpreters) contribute with their experiences, perceptions, observations and queries.

⁶ After the session, the scripted dialogue is made available for the students on the virtual learning environment and those students that recorded their interpretations in the booths can assess their own performance.

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Another excerpt of the scripted dialogue is then played by the teachers, but with a different student interpreter (20-25 minutes). The students who were evaluating the previous interaction go into the booths and record their interpretations this time and those who were previously in the booths play the role of evaluators of the second interpreter-mediated interaction. Evidently, another debriefing and feedback session follows this second situation (20 minutes). The session then finishes with a short 5-10 minute wrap-up, summarising the main elements related to the interpreter performance discussed in the session.

This role-play methodology has a number of advantages: firstly, up to 26 students can practice interpreting at every session (2 in the hall and 24 in the booths); secondly, students play different roles which enable them to reflect on the interpreter performance (both their own and their peers'); thirdly, peer assessment is encouraged and monitored by the teachers. Nevertheless, it also has a number of drawbacks: firstly, only two students, those who interpret for the teachers, are assessed (those practising in the booths must assess themselves through their recordings after the session, which can be difficult at early training

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stages); secondly, the student interpreting for the teachers sets the pace for the interaction, which means that sometimes the student interpreters in the booths have not finished their renditions when the main interlocutors start a new intervention and therefore cannot complete their interpretations or lose track of some of the interventions uttered by the main interlocutors); thirdly, there is the risk that students practising in the booths may develop *bad habits* (e.g. they take longer to deliver their interpretation or they neglect their non-verbal communication, such as posture and eye contact).

3.3.2. Autonomous practice

As already stated, self-study has become an essential element in interpreter training in general (Li, 2018) and in BI training in particular (Sandrelli, 2001). At UPO, we encourage –and virtually compel– our students to engage in autonomous practice as much as possible, both in groups and individually. Students are advised to work weekly in groups of 3 or 4 performing role-plays playing different roles (either that of the interlocutor or that of the interpreter), so that they can practice *real* dialogue interpreting, especially as regards interactional skills (for example, turn

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management or information retrieval). To facilitate this, scripted-role-plays and dialogues on BI situations are made available on the virtual learning environment for this extra practice, and special receiving hours are organised so that the students can discuss their practice and any query with the teachers. They are advised to video-record their interactions, so that they can assess themselves in terms of non-verbal communication as well.

Individual self-study is also strongly encouraged, in order to meet the need to cater to different learning styles and paces, reduce the stress levels that are often associated with interpreter training and encourage self-reflection and critical skills in order to improve individual performance, as also vindicated by Sandrelli (2011, p. 226). In the specific field of BI in the language pair English-Spanish, there are some resources that can help students to practice autonomously, which include role-play scripts and video-recordings of a few business-related interpreter-mediated situations (Bourne et al., 2013), or like Linkterpreting, an online resource site for liaison interpreting, with interesting theoretical and practical training materials (including dialogues and audio-taped simulations), which was created in 2011 initially

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for public service interpreting but included in 2019 resources for BI practice⁷.

Despite the existence of these resources, there is a scarcity of self-study materials in BI especially in comparison to those available for public service interpreting. Hence, with the aim of filling this gap, we have created specific BI-related technology-based materials for autonomous practice and reflection inspired in previous experiences in interpreter training (Cervato & De Ferra, 1995; Gorm Hansen & Schlesinger, 2007; Sandrelli, 2011; to name a few), fundamentally scripted role-plays and their corresponding video-recorded interpreter-mediated simulations. These videos had two versions: one with the interpreter's interventions muted –in order for students to use those silenced blanks to provide their own interpretations– and another one with the interpreter's utterances –so that students could compare them with their own. Bearing in mind the importance of the briefing phase (as noted above in Section 3.2.), every situation was also accompanied by a relevant brief, so that students could prepare

⁷ Information provided through personal correspondence by Dr. Maribel del Pozo, coordinator of this resource site.

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for the situation⁸.

Self-assessment is of paramount importance for self-study to lead to the desired outcome (i.e. interpreting trainees reflectively being able to enhance their interpreter competence on their own). As we detected that very often student interpreters show difficulties in discerning self-assessment mechanisms, we have also developed multimedia materials (videos available on the virtual learning platform) showing students how to perform self-assessment in dialogue interpreting, so that it is not necessary to devote precious contact hours to this purpose⁹.

4. CONCLUSION

In our experience, according to the opinion expressed by our students in the survey conducted at the end of the course, combining face-to-face sessions with autonomous practice in BI training seems to have been very beneficial for the learning process, especially in terms of student motivation and engagement. Thanks to individual and group self-study, students become more aware of their

⁸ See Vigier-Moreno (2020) for a detailed account of the self-study materials creation process.

⁹ See Vigier-Moreno et. al. (2020) for a detailed description of these self-assessment tutorials.

Vigier-Moreno, F. (2020). Let's strike a deal! Meeting the challenge of undergraduate business interpreter training. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 7, 239-275. [10.51287/ctl_e_2020_8_francisco_j_vigier_moreno.pdf](https://doi.org/10.51287/ctl_e_2020_8_francisco_j_vigier_moreno.pdf)

strengths and weaknesses and can progress at their own pace in the acquisition of the skills that will enable them to perform successfully as interpreters in a business-related context, thus making up for the shortage of individual practice and feedback from the teachers in contact hours. Students also report that they have increased their self-confidence, their self-concept as language professionals and their critical thinking due to engaging in self-assessment and peer assessment activities.

Assessment results seem to confirm this trend, as the fail rate has gradually reduced in comparison to previous years. In a student-centred approach in BI training, facilitating self-paced and self-monitored progress through autonomous practice, which adapts to each student's level and needs, is a lifeline, too, for those students who suffer from performance anxiety and would otherwise only practice before the trainers or their peers. Self-study allows them to progress on their own, tackling their shortcomings and steadily gaining confidence, without the pressure exerted by teachers and peers.

We argue, therefore, that equipping Translation and

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Interpreting graduates with the skills required of business interpreters increases their employability. The BI training provided at UPO seems to be sufficiently succeeding in this endeavour. Due to the abovementioned constraints, our graduates only acquire the basic skill set in BI (if they intend to pursue BI as a fully-fledged profession, they are strongly advised to continue postgraduate training). The training provided to our graduates, however, makes them eligible for many other language-related jobs that are in demand in today's globalised business world and require professionals with language skills, critical thinking skills, intercultural competence and an ability to adapt to multicultural environments, which is not a bad deal after all.

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