

Bringing Professional Reality into Conference Interpreter Training through New Technologies and Action Research

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the means offered by new technologies in order to bring interpreter training closer to real-life communicative situations. Two lines are developed in a parallel way: observational studies based on corpora of digitized video recordings belonging to the seven types of communicative situations described by Pöchhacker (1995), and action research in the classroom aiming at evaluating the impact of this training material on the motivation of students. The video corpora have been compiled at the University of Granada since 2001 from three main sources: European institutions (namely from the European Television EbS), local conferences recorded in three languages in the area of Granada and social forums at a continental (European) and world level. The main features of each speech and communicative situation (such as language, length, number of words, topic, accent, speech rate, degree of specialization or type of text and hypertext) were entered into a data base containing 34 fields and more than 2000 records corresponding to more than 100 hours of recordings. These data allow teachers to select appropriate material for each stage of the learning process using both objective and more subjective or approximate parameters.

This selection by the teacher is then checked against the students' perceptions collected both throughout and at the end of the learning process. The data obtained in this way, relating mostly to students' perception of the difficulty, interest and usefulness of different materials and on the method as a whole, allow the teachers to fine-tune their initial grading.

The two main conclusions of the thesis are that this more realistic approach to training material increases student motivation during the learning process and that professional reality is so rich and varied in itself (including the degree of difficulty as perceived by students) that no manipulation is needed in the way we present interpretation exercises. Real life speeches and communicative situations can thus be used from the very early stages of specialized interpreter training, thus presenting the advantage of increasing the students' exposure to the enormous variety of speakers, speeches and situations that they will deal with in their daily life.

KEYWORDS: action research, authentic speeches, databases, interpreting education, new technologies.

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