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INTERPRETER TRAINING PROGRAMS: HOW MUCH CAN TRAINING DO?

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Abstract:

This panel starts with a brief historic overview of simultaneous interpreting as a profession and the main interpreter training programs in the world. It then discusses the design of conference interpreter training courses, the role of academia and that of formal training in the education of future interpreters.

Key-words: simultaneous interpreting - historic overview - course design - role of academia]

I- A brief historical overview of interpreting and interpreter training

Prof. Reynaldo Pagura

Interpreting is said to be one of the oldest occupations in the world. The earliest reference to an interpreter seems to be the one found in an Egyptian hieroglyphic dating from the third millennium before the Christian era. There are records of interpreters having existed in Ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire. In the Bible, the Apostle Paul says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: *"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, ... and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; ..."* (1 Corinthians 14:27–28). There are also records of interpreters in the Middle Ages, be it in The Crusades or in diplomacy. In the New World, it is known that Columbus brought interpreters as part of his crew, albeit of the wrong languages: Hebrew, Arabic, and Chaldean. Better known and much better documented is the case of Doña Maria, interpreter and eventually lover of Cortez in his Mexican conquest (see Hogg:1997).

But conference interpreting as we know it today can be said to have started with the end of the First World War. Before that time, international negotiations were usually conducted in French, the common diplomatic language. With the United States gradually becoming a key player in international events and with the American participation in the peace talks after World War I, interpretation became necessary since some American delegates, as well as some British ones, did not speak French fluently enough to play their roles in the negotiation process. Paul Mantoux is considered the first of the modern interpreters. Born and raised in France, he was a professor at University College in London and became the main interpreter at the Paris Peace Conference, which took place in France immediately after the First World War and negotiated the Treaty of Versailles.

In the period of approximately two decades between the two World Wars, consecutive interpretation between English and French saw its heyday at the League of Nations, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. Things became more complicated with the appearence of the International Labor Organization, where sometimes delegates who were, for instance, labor unionists could speak neither English nor French. The system

used was a combination of consecutive and whispered interpretation. There are also reports of a simultaneous/successive system being used. The embryo of the equipment that would allow for simultaneous interpreting as we know it today was called the “IBM Hushaphone Filene-Findlay System” and was patented in the 1926. There are reports of it being used in some international events in the 20’s and the 30’s and at the League of Nations in Geneva, but with the start of the Second World War and the demise of the League of Nations, the idea was put aside for some time (see Herbert:1978; Gaiba:1998).

With the end of World War II and the trial of German war criminals in Nuremberg, the organizers were faced with the problem of carrying out court procedures in four main languages—English, French, German, and Russian. Consecutive interpretation, which was eventually used there for languages such as Polish and Yiddish spoken by witnesses, would not be feasible at all for the “main languages”, not only because it would make the procedures extremely long, but also because the mechanics of the procedures themselves, with depositions, cross-examinations, sentencing, and the like would be made very cumbersome if spoken out in one language and then interpreted consecutively and successively into the other three. It was Colonel Leon Dostert, who had been Eisenhower’s interpreter, who was given the assignment to find a solution for the problem. He was aware of the existence of the Filene-Findlay system in Geneva, and IBM offered to loan it for free, obviously aware of the value of the immense visibility it would get.

“Only three weeks were left before the beginning of what was going to be the most important trial in history. Yet one thing was missing, a crucial element for the trial to take place: simultaneous interpreters.” (Gaiba, 1998:40) Future interpreters were recruited in the United States and Europe from among young consecutive interpreters and from a pool of people who mastered at least two of the languages involved but had no experience in either interpreting or translating. Rushing against time, the equipment was set up at the *Justizpalast* in Nuremberg, intensive practice began, and on November 20, 1945 as Judge Lawrence opened the trial in English, his words were heard simultaneously in French, German, and Russian coming through the earphones. Simultaneous interpreting worked! (see AIIC, 1996; Gaiba, 1998).

According to witnesses in the AIIC 1996 videotape made in honor of the 50 years of the profession, Dostert believed that it was possible to listen to a message and to reexpress it at the same time, something with which the expert consecutive interpreters of the League of Nations did not agree then. It was also Dostert who insisted on the crucial importance of interpreters being located in a such a place during the trials from which they could see the speakers and everything else that was happening in the room, so that they could clearly understand what was going on. This is a principle on which simultaneous interpreters have always insisted ever since. In Nuremberg, the interpreters are placed in the back of the room in open glass booths, close to where the defendants were sitting. These booths were similar to bank-teller windows used until recently and were soon dubbed “the aquarium” by those in the trials. Three interpreters worked in each of these booths, all having the same target language and each of them working from a different source language. For instance: in the English booth, there were always three English-speaking interpreters, one translating from French, the other from German, and the other from Russian. The same went for the French booth, the German booth, and the Russian booth. Thus, twelve interpreters were at work at any given time, grouped in four different booths, lined up side by side, according to their target working language. There were three such teams of twelve interpreters, working in alternation (see Gaiba:1998). The system was somewhat different from what we use today, with two interpreters per booth, working from the same source language into the same target language.

Before the Nuremberg trial was over, the United Nations was organized, and some of the Nuremberg interpreters were “drafted into” this organization. It’s interesting to notice that the San Francisco Conference, where the United Nations would come to life, did not foresee the work of interpreters. According to Herbert (1978:7), Stettinius, the American Secretary of State and host of the event, delivered his speech in English and was going to proceed with the business when, to his surprise, George Bidault, the French Foreign Minister indicated that he had brought a team of interpreters for the French delegation and, to everyone’s astonishment, motioned for them to start their consecutive interpretation into French of the speech Stettinius had just delivered.

It became clear immediately that the U.N. would not be able to function without interpreters and that English would not be the sole working language of the organization. To English and French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese were added as working languages. In the 1970’s Arabic was also added as one of the working languages, and these six are, until today, the official U.N. languages. In the beginning of the U.N., consecutive interpretation was the predominant form, but with six languages it soon proved to be impractical and little by little simultaneous interpretation won over the initial prejudice and began to be trusted enough to replace consecutive practically altogether in the U.N. family of organizations.

The 1950’s saw the foundation of the CECA [Communauté Européene du Charbon et de l’Acier], which eventually became what is today know as the European Union. According to Jean Monnet, one of its founders and its first president, they soon realized that delegates could not be chosen for their ability to speak one given language but rather because of “their technical competence and human qualities” (Monet: 1975:iv) and an interpretation service is set up to cater for the interpreting of the four initial languages of the organization, namely Dutch, French, German, and Italian. Differently from the U.N., each member state of the Union has the right to have its language used as working language and, as a consequence, the European Union has become the largest employer of interpreters in the world.

Soon after this service is set up, Danica Seleskovitch becomes part of the staff. Although still relatively young, she is already known to be a remarkable interpreter. Born of a French mother and a Yugoslavian father, she lived part of her childhood in France and the remainder of it and her adolescence in Germany. She spent the war years as a young adult in Yugoslavia and then returned to France for her university studies. Following her graduation, she worked some years as a conference interpreter at the French Embassy in the United States, before returning to Europe in 1953, when she started working for the CECA (see Monnet, 1975:iv; LaPlace:1994). She would eventually come to play a key role in the education of future generations of interpreters through her work at the ESIT [École Supérieure d’Interprètes et de Traducteurs], part of the Université de Paris III (Sorbonne Nouvelle), as mentioned below.

The first interpreters who worked at the League of Nations, the Nuremberg Trial, the U.N. and the CECA trained under the so-called “sink or swim” method.” In other words, they became interpreters using a lot of common sense and a great deal of language knowledge and culture and were basically self-taught. The first interpreter-training school of modern times was founded as part of the University of Geneva in 1941, which only began teaching simultaneous interpreting in the early 1950’s, and would eventually add translator training in 1972. Toward the end of the 1940’s, Dostert starts the Division of Interpretation and Translation at the Georgetown University in the United States, which

has been recently discontinued, unfortunately.

But it's Danica Seleskovitch's arrival at the Interpreting School of the University of Paris in 1956 which would come to be a turning point in the training of interpreters, drastically changing the view of what interpreter training was all about and radically altering the methods used in this training all over the world. She believed that interpreter training was not to be mixed with language teaching. Trainees should come to interpreter training with full mastery of their working languages. Also, the view of language and the role it plays in interpreting have changed enormously since and because the work she did. Pöchhacker (1992:212), states: "Indeed Mme Seleskovitch deserves whole-hearted acknowledgment for having put her foot down against the narrow linguistic conceptions of language still prevailing in the early 1970's." Seleskovitch began to reflect upon the interpreting process using her experience as an interpreter as a basis. Her thoughts and reflections eventually became known as the *Interpretive Theory of Translation* or *"Théorie du Sens"* [Theory of Sense]. The basic idea is that the interpreter, upon listening for a message and analyzing it, understands the *sense* of this message, strips it of its original wording (deverbalization) and reexpresses the *sense* of the original message, using wording and sentence structure typical of the target language and culture of the intended audience.

Most large interpreter training schools are in Europe. Besides the above mentioned ETI (University of Geneva) and ESIT (University of Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle), the best known are the ISIT (of the Paris Catholic Institute), the University of Westminster—formerly known as the Polytechnic of Central London—, the schools at the University of Heidelberg, in Germany, and the University of Vienna, in Austria. There are also other programs in Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy and in some Eastern European countries. In the United States, with the discontinuance of the traditional program at Georgetown, the only program offering several possible language combinations is the one at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, in California, although there are several small programs at other universities. In Canada, the University of Ottawa has a program offering some possible language combinations.

In Brazil, the pioneers in interpreter training were the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ) and the Alumni Association, a Brazil-United States binational center in São Paulo. Some other schools offer the training of interpreters and translators in a single combined program, as that offered by the former Ibero-American College, nowadays called Unibero, also in São Paulo. In 1999, a program for the training of conference interpreters was founded at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP)

II - Academia and the Future Interpreter

Prof. Glória Regina Loreto Sampaio

On talking about courses specifically designed to educate future interpreters, the question that comes promptly to mind is to what extent we can realistically expect such courses to be functional, comprehensive, far-reaching, that is to say, efficient and effective. It is a well-known fact that positive results greatly depend on the student´s individual effort, talent and characteristics. Therefore, would a tailor-made course curriculum with innovative and modern syllabus and disciplines programmes be enough either to cope with difficulties imposed by specific personal limitations or to help students realise their full potential? Do such courses really prepare professionals-to-be to face the exigencies of a highly specific job market?

Aarup (1993:167), poses the question from an apparently opposite though complementary angle. She says: “All teachers of conference interpreting must occasionally ask themselves whether interpreting can be taught at all or whether those who are naturally gifted would become interpreters even though they had not received any training.” So, once again the issue is the limits of formal training programmes.

Without losing our sense of proportion, it is our belief that in the education and training of prospective interpreters - as in the case of any other professional - we deal with three levels, namely: (i) individual, (ii) academic-institutional, and (iii) interactive.

The individual level comprises all that the student -- that is, the interpreter-to-be -- is or brings along with him/her: talent, natural aptitude, intelligence(s), psychological profile, and other personality traits; it also includes the student´s cultural baggage, schooling and previous experience, specific and general knowledge, skills and previously acquired competence(s).

The academic-institutional level encompasses everything that the educational institution, that is the school, the course itself along with its curriculum design and disciplines programmes have to contribute in order to introduce, stimulate, motivate, elicit, present, teach, train, promote, foster, add, exercise, develop, improve, refine, make aware of and expand, as far as the general and specific needs of a professional interpreter´s job are concerned.

The interactive level stands for the dialectic and dialogal relationship between the first two elements, in other words, the involvement, positive action and progress achieved by the interpretation student, in terms of the building up of his/her professional future, as a response to the encouragement, motivation and opportunities for reflection and experimentation offered by the academic environment. It is also part of this interaction a constantly renewed, flexible and creative academic-institutional action so as to provide students with fresh materials, technical, intellectual and psychological support, always taking into consideration their characteristics as individuals and/or as a group, and keeping in mind the challenges represented by an ever-changing reality.

In fact, as in any other educational field, the teaching institution, by means of the course, the curriculum and syllabus design as a whole, aims at introducing the student to fundamentals in terms of general and specific knowledge, together with maximum opportunity for reflection, experimenting, exercising and training. Yet, no matter how much effort is put into this sort of institutional action, ultimately it is the student him/herself that has to learn since the school, the course and the teacher cannot do it for him/her.

In addition, the time available even in a long-term course composed by carefully chosen disciplines is never sufficient to cater for all the needs and demands of professional reality. The institution will provide an overview of professional needs, will facilitate and mediate learning as much as possible, but it is for the student to meet the challenge and struggle towards the construction of his professional future. In the aforementioned conference interpreting school in Monterey, which we visited some time ago, it is standard practice to inform students that as far as training needs are concerned the school will do 25% of the job; students will have to work hard to cope with the other 75%, which depend entirely on personal effort.

Referring back to the individual level, it is important to realize that even a most

gifted student who has a flair for the task will soon be confronted with the complexity factor, which is the hallmark of an intepreter´s job. The multifaceted nature of this exacting professional activity will demand a mastery of multiple skills: besides the traditional simultaneous, consecutive and intermittent interpretation modes, there will be other particular contexts such as court interpreting, community interpreting, escorting interpretation services, just to name a few. Some other hybrid textual production forms, which are at times rather difficult to classify, should also be taken into account. Such contexts, which are many times determined by the communication mode and/or by the environment in which the interpretation activity occurs, may include, among other things, sight-translation, video-conferencing, interpreting on-line and by telephone. Each one of these interpretation varieties will demand the exercise of specific cognitive processes necessary for the decodification of the source text/message and subsequent adequate and proficient recodification in the target language. Moreover some other factors of paramount importance such as professional posture, ethics, confidentiality and neutrality, come into play.

In view of this diversity, would that student of ours who is so good at translation or that knowledgeable professional translator perform as excellently when confronted with a sight-translation task in, say, a consecutive interpretation situation? Likewise, would someone good at consecutive interpreting necessarily be as competent in the simultaneous interpretation booth? The answer might be negative because knowledge of and satisfactory performance in one area does not guarantee equal success in another. The skills required are not necessarily symetrical, as some studies have demonstrated.

Schjoldager (1993:176) argues that consecutive interpretation, for example, shares many characteristics with simultaneous interpreting as well as with conventional written translation. Despite this, there are important differences since consecutive interpretation demands message memorization and subsidiary note-taking skills. As for consecutive interpretation and written translation, there would be asymmetry in terms of the required psychological profile and skills, and such a difference might have to do with an individual inclination towards either perfeccionism or dynamism. In this way, we could argue that a talented translation student or translator who is normally concerned about discourse refinement and elegance might lose track of the source-text while interpreting simultaneously; in other words, something that is a quality in translation could be a hindrance in interpretation.

Transmission conditions such as time, medium and language mode, that is the factors that influence the language-transmission process, should also be considered, as suggested by Schjoldager (1993:178). Such variables and their possible combinations will require different levels of professional competence. In truth, competent interpreting results from a combination of factors: natural aptitude and talent; general and specific knowledge; good schooling and education; adequate training and experience; acquisition and refinement of specific skills, strategies and techniques, proficiency in the languages concerned; life experience, world knowledge, maturity and ethics. A marked defficiency in any of these areas could impair target-text production.

As far as strategies, skills and abilities are concerned, the role of academia is a most important one. To the student´s intuitive strategies learned through conscious or unconscious observation, that is to say, to an efficient modus operandi based on previous well-succeeded experiences - sometimes by means of a long trial-and-error process, academic-institutional interpreter training programmes will add formally taught strategies, following a series of operational rules, specific exercises and simulations of real life

interpretation contexts, practised repetitively and consistently till they are internalized, and then transformed into skills and abilities.

Skills and abilities are believed to arise out of the refinement of strategies which became adequate and competent responses or behaviour regarding the performing of a certain task; in other words, they represent a sort of “automatic”, self-confident, relatively comfortable and autonomous way of doing something. In the long run, skills and abilities result in the achievement of authentic competence - that is, proficient professional practice in which good results are achieved consistently in different fields of specific action.

All things considered, the role of academia in formal interpreter training and education is absolutely essential for it will provide the interpreter-to-be with invaluable knowledge and expertise. Without it interpretation students would not be adequately prepared to deal with the complexity of the task and with the challenges they will certainly have to take on in their future professional lives. Undoubtedly, it will be at the interactive level that limits and obstacles will be overcome, opening new horizons for that interpreter-in-the-making who will then be fully aware of the need to make every endeavour to cooperate positively towards the achievement of professional excellence.

III – Design of Conference Interpreting Courses

Prof. Lúcia Helena de Sena França

Unlike other areas, conference interpreting courses are to a certain extent recent, since they became integrated into a systematic and formal curriculum only after the interpreting profession began to exist as such.

In general they are based on a three-pronged structure, where students are on one end, with their individual characteristics, linguistic knowledge and aptitudes, the interpretation course itself is in the center, seeking to develop in students the basic skills necessary for practicing the profession, and on the other end are the students’ involvement and participation in this interactive process.

Because this is a type of course that is not designed to teach students the languages involved, but rather to expand and deepen knowledge, and because the profession of interpreter requires a rich intercultural experience and broad general knowledge, in many cases it is correctly included at the post-graduate level, although it may also be found at the undergraduate level or even outside academia, in language institutes.

According to Renfer (1992:175) there are four basic models of courses for translators and/or interpreters:

a) Translation and Interpretation Courses offered in consecutive stages (*two-tier system),* where students first complete the translation course and then after taking an admission test enter the interpretation course, as is the case of the course offered by the University of Geneva. Those students who already have a university degree bypass the translation course and go directly to the interpretation course, provided they have passed the aptitude test.

b) Concurrent Translation and Interpretation Courses followed by two separate

final examinations.

c) The "Y"-type Interpretation Course, where there is a common basic course of study for all students and then a branching out into separate translation and interpretation curricula.

d) Interpretation Course at the graduate level (generally offered by the Translation and Interpretation Schools or as intensive practical training by international organizations).

In practice these models sometimes are found with slight variations, as is the case of the majority of the hybrid translator/interpreter courses found in Brazil or the specific interpretation course offered by the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), which is a combination, to a certain degree, of models **a** and **c** above proposed by Renfer.

SPECIFICITY

Although as we saw above that translation and interpretation courses may be linked, the skills required of the translator and of the interpreter are distinct, which according to Renfer does not prevent an interdependence; that is to say that the interpreter benefits from the skills acquired as a translator and that the interpreter uses his/her experience in translation work.

Ideally, however, an interpreting course should concentrate on providing students with specific training and include in its curriculum those disciplines capable of providing them with sound practical experience and a theoretical foundation and should be taught by recognized professionals in the area.

OBJECTIVE

The main purpose of the course should be to provide students with the necessary tools and techniques for professional practice, exposing them to a variety of themes and situations in interpretation, including a practical training experience marked by constant follow-up of their performance through regular evaluations by instructors and peers. Only a very flexible and dynamic design is capable of encompassing such a broad objective, since it demands from students careful preparation and research, in addition to a strong effort to improve their constantly monitored performance. It demands from the institution, in the person of its instructors, a great effort in preparing the teaching materials, formulating and utilizing exercises geared to developing logical thinking, analytical and synthetic abilities, concentration and memory, and simulating real-life situations as well as providing constant *feedback* to students. All of this permeated by a friendly and nurturing relationship among student, instructor and peers that is capable of eliciting a rich exchange of experiences and knowledge and exploiting the students' prior education, since most of them come from liberal professionals, such as physicians, lawyers, architects, veterinarians, etc.

Whatever the approach adopted, all courses should in principle share a single objective: to provide the interpreter with the broadest training possible, taking into

account, above all, the demands of the market where the interpreter will be performing.

In short, the design of an interpretation course must include disciplines and/or activities capable of:

- Providing a theoretical background so that students can perceive the process involved in interpretation
- Developing students' capacity for critical thinking
- Exposing them to the greatest number of interpreting situations (simultaneous in the booth, consecutive, sequential, sight translation)
- Covering aspects apparently outside the academic curriculum (intonation, relaxation techniques, concentration, voice coaching)
- Developing a team spirit
- Disseminating the ethical aspects of the profession
- Encouraging participation in academic and professional events, whether in related areas or not
- Preparing the student for professional life (shadowing, dual tasking, mentalization)
- Developing research techniques (preparation of glossaries, research from electronic sources)
- Developing public speaking techniques through presentations in class, simulating real-life interpreting situations
- Allowing closer contact with professionals from various areas who are invited to make presentations on specific topics where the students themselves act as interpreters.

METHODOLOGY

The communicative approach, with an intense exchange of experiences and thoughts concerning the proposed topics preceded by a brainstorming session has proved to be highly efficient. Group dynamics (working in pairs or small groups) under the teacher's guidance is a highly fruitful manner of developing team spirit and leads to desirable results.

A COURSE MODEL

We would like to stress that the design of an interpretation course must, by its very nature, be highly flexible, so it can be constantly updated and stay in tune with the market. For illustration purposes, we mention the model of interpretation course adopted by PUC-SP, which is double faceted (items **a** and **c** of Renfer's Classification); that is, for those students coming from the Language Course it is a major, whereas for those students coming from other areas it works as a sequential course as provided for in the 1996 Brazilian Educational Guidelines and Basis (LDB). With a two-year duration, the specific structure of this course design consists of two macro-axes: **Foundation I and II** (1st year), where emphasis is placed on vocabulary building and oral comprehension, and the student learns notation techniques as well as being exposed to sight translation and consecutive interpretation, and **Specific Education I and II** (2nd year) which consists of the intensive practice of simultaneous

interpretation in both directions, theory of interpretation and court interpreting. In addition to self-study activities, this type of design also provides for the inclusion of elective courses that broaden students' horizons through the exchange of information with other courses and departments of the university, such as English pronunciation, physical and psychological integration, voice training, etc.

IV - PUC-SP Case Report

Prof. Lourdes Veras Norton

Interpreting teachers have to take into consideration the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds that the students bring to the course, coupled with their ability to learn and to be at ease while performing the tasks required for their training. In our specific case, being it a sequential course [as explained above] that receives students who have graduated from High School or those who are working on or have completed their Bachelors degree, it is very important to be prepared to meet their diverse needs and expectations. Some candidates have already worked or currently work as interpreters, others lived outside of Brazil and are totally bilingual and some are bilingual without ever having lived abroad. They all have one common characteristic- they want to learn how to be interpreters. One of our main objectives is not to discourage those with less experience while maintaining the interest of the ones who already have some.

Since we do not receive students via "vestibular" [the official Brazilian university entrance exams], we have developed an aptitude test that aims at identifying the candidate's capabilities to determine if he or she is ready to attend our course. The testing stage is composed of a listening segment with scoring units, a sight translation and two oral presentations (in English and Portuguese) about current events chosen by the student among the topics given. When the candidate passes the tests, he or she undergoes an oral interview through which the teachers learn about their life experiences, academic profile, personality traits, motivation, level of comfort and other aspects deemed significant.

Once accepted, the students are exposed to diverse note taking, lexical expansion, and oral comprehension techniques, linguistic variables, to the different modes of interpretation, ranging from simple to complex themes, with different degrees of preparation allowed, to the relationship with the colleagues inside the booth, handling of the equipment and other hurdles they have to learn to deal with. Our goal, exposing the students to all the conditions mentioned, similar to those they will face as professional interpreters, is to give students the tools to become competent professionals, while reducing the level of stress they would experience without the appropriate guidance and instruction.

We are constantly encouraging the appropriate behavior inside and outside the booths to prepare the students for the real world. As professional interpreters we teach and give advice and suggestions that are based on our own experiences. We teach students how to best use booth space, to handle last minute information before an assignment, trying to emulate the some of the situations we experienced many times during our careers. As future interpreters they must always expect the unexpected.

Networking is another very important aspect of our course. There are some students who already have a few clients and, as they get to know their colleagues better, they can form small working groups. To make this Networking possible, we have successfully organized every other month, since December of 2000, meetings between students, former students, teachers and we always invite professional interpreters working in the domestic and international market, to allow for a proper exchange of ideas and to foster associations. Such meetings are not only fun, but they have been the beginning of many partnerships and have resulted in numerous work opportunities for the students.

But as teachers we are always looking for real training opportunities. Our students have interpreted for the United Nations Human Rights Committee which came to São Paulo to interview Brazilian prisoners, we have taken part in conferences and international meetings within our university and in those promoted by other schools such as Philosophy, Theology, Economics and others. The letters received and other expressions of praise, not to mention those made at the end of the events, were shared with the students who, whenever possible, received copies for their portfolios.

We encourage the students to participate, whenever possible in Conferences and Meetings for Professional Interpreters. Our students and some alumni have performed simultaneous interpretation at these conferences in past years.

In the situations mentioned, we had the opportunity to also see the Mentorship in action. Mentorship is a very efficient resource used to keep the former students in close contact with us, helping the current students by sharing their experiences and even some mishaps. It is the partnership between a more experienced interpreter or senior student, with the neophytes. It is a valuable teaching tool and we believe that this sharing of experiences can only benefit all the parties involved. When a student works with a more experienced colleague, he or she can observe what works and what to avoid. It also reinforces what we teach, especially for those who never had the opportunity to interpret and whose only reference is what they have learned from us in the classroom.

The real chances to practice, as I have pointed out, are used to the maximum. Since they are not as often as we would like, we invite professionals from other areas such as medicine, marketing, sports, law and business, to speak to the students so that they can have the opportunity, during class, to interpret for guests, teachers and other students, without excessive stress and always under constant supervision and guidance. Moreover, each student of the course has to make presentations to the colleagues about subjects they research and are comfortable with.

The supervision mentioned is an on going concern. We have developed a written form and we are constantly giving students feedback of their interpreting performances so that they can modify what is not appropriate and reinforce the things that work. We evaluate the students when they first come to us and throughout the course to determine how much progress they have achieved. We evaluate each student individually, measuring his or her own progress according to

what that student achieved, not just comparing him or her with their peers. We provide the theory, the tools, the practical suggestions, but in the end, it is up to the students to do the work that will make professional interpreters out of them. What takes place in the classroom is but a small part of the whole process. What each one will become will be the direct result of their own talents, individual efforts, and the best use of the opportunities that take place during their training period.

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