

## INTRODUCING CONFERENCE INTERPRETING STUDENTS TO RESEARCH: A PILOT STUDY USING INTERPRETING EXERCISES

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a research-training module in a conference interpreter training environment where students strive to acquire high-level interpreting skills through intensive practice over two years. Both theory and research are remote from their concerns. The module described was designed specifically for this environment. The aim was to raise the students' awareness of the nature of research, of the gains it could offer to interpreters-in-training and to the interpreting profession, and of practical challenges it faces. Care was taken not to add a significant workload which they might view as irrelevant to their endeavours. This translated as an introductory two-lecture part followed by micro-experiments in which the students' own interpreting exercises were used as material. The students were asked to record and transcribe their interpretations of experimental source speeches, to analyse and reflect on the data. In one exercise, they were asked to perform an experiment as researchers with other students as participants. Throughout the process, the instructors provided detailed guidance and explained how the experiments were designed, taking on board challenges and uncertainties, and what inferences could or could not be drawn from the data and why. A questionnaire at the end of the module suggests that the students found the module interesting, not excessively taxing, that it taught them something about research and also about interpreting. Since this module entails virtually no overheads as regards the students' daily practice and gives them a good sense of the practical issues associated with research, it is suggested that it could be integrated into curricula with more traditional research training as well.

**Keywords:** conference interpreter training; interpreting theory; interpreting research; research training

### 1. Introduction

Well before Internet use became popular, when a strong norm in conference interpreter training was to use only native speakers speaking live in the interpreting classroom, Ivana Čeňková was using cassette recordings of original speeches to train her students in Prague (Čeňková 1990). This was the sensible choice under the circumstances, as native speakers of the relevant languages were not readily available locally. Adapting to the local

constraints and making the most of available resources was better than giving up on training students just because environmental conditions were not ideal. In a similar spirit of pragmatism, the two co-authors introduced research to students using hands-on interpreting exercises. This article reports on this endeavour in a training programme which traditionally had no research component in its syllabus. We explain the background, environmental conditions, our approach, which to the best of our knowledge is a first in the field, and the results and lessons learned.

## **2. Conference interpreter training programmes with and without research**

The skills and behavioural norms, which make up the core identity of conference interpreting as defined by AIIC, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, are acquired in two types of training programmes: those with a predominantly practical approach, with little or no theory component and no research component, and those with a more academic profile, with a syllabus that devotes some classroom time to theory and sometimes to research. This may include research thesis requirements (see the AIIC Interpreting Schools & Programmes Directory web page). The conference interpreter training programme of Charles University, Prague includes both theory and research (Čeňková 2017, 2020). At ISIT and ESIT, there is some theory, but there were no research requirements hitherto.

Theory or research modules may be required for compliance with formal academic norms. That aside, what is the cost/benefit balance of theoretical and research components in the relevant curricula? Some theory can be introduced into practical training without overheads in terms of classroom and reading time. This can be done for instance when commenting on students' interpreting performance and giving them practical advice with a view to explaining their difficulties and proposing options for improvement (Gile 2009). Interpretive Theory and Skopos theory are particularly suited for such integration into the interpreting trainers' guidance to students, because they provide unitary prescriptive rules without requiring the acquisition of many abstract concepts and constructs. Also, the underlying models of interpreting (and translation) are simple, as are Gile's Basic Concepts and Models (Kleibs 2018). Such is not the case of linguistic theories and cognitive theories which involve complex architectures and hypothetical interactions between the constitutive entities.

It is more difficult to compress the investment required for training in research methods and the preparation of research theses. Most conference interpreter training programmes last just two years, which is a short time to acquire all the knowledge and skills required for immediate employability as a conference interpreter. The option chosen by programmes such as ESIT and ISIT of not having students do research may therefore seem more effective given the professional purpose of the training.

### **3. Introducing research into the ISIT curriculum: genesis of a project**

At ESIT, the syllabus was largely shaped by Danica Seleskovitch, one of the most influential personalities in the emergence of the Interpreting Studies discipline. She was a vocal advocate of research into interpreting being carried out by practicing interpreters, as she considered they could understand its true nature, whereas linguists and cognitive scientists tend to look at its decontextualized linguistic aspects, and to ignore its communication-oriented, socially contextualized components. It takes at least a few years of practical interpreting in the field to acquire sufficiently mature knowledge of the profession, so Seleskovitch preferred to enrol candidates with such experience rather than trainee interpreters into the doctoral programme she set up at ESIT in the early 1970s.

The module described here is a first attempt to introduce some research within the initial interpreter training curriculum at ISIT. It was initiated at the request of Sarah Bordes, Academic Director and head of its interpreting section. Its aims were to raise the students' awareness of the nature of research, of the gains it could offer to interpreters-in-training and to the interpreting profession, and of practical challenges it faces, and if possible, to generate among them some interest in conducting research later.

In April 2022, the two co-authors set about planning an Introduction to Research module for ISIT students enrolled in the first year of its graduate conference interpreter training programme. As graduates of and former instructors at ESIT, we were familiar with the stakes and potential difficulties, notably the attitude of students who were set on becoming conference interpreters, not academics. Therefore, we considered the traditional conceptual presentation of research principles followed by exercises and a thesis to be sub-optimal, and tried to think of ways to teach them something meaningful about research that would be directly relevant to interpreting through an activity they would find engaging and not too time-consuming.

A few ideas gradually emerged:

- A conceptual presentation of research was felt to be indispensable, but it should be kept very short, just long enough to generate some curiosity and to prime the students' understanding of the stakes involved in the practical exercises to follow. We were careful not to introduce additional reading requirements.
- Use the students' interpreting exercises both as the source of research material and as a methodological awareness-raising tool. The tasks in the research module should therefore be similar to usual practical training exercises.
- Raise the students' awareness about fundamental methodological issues by getting them to participate in selected parts of the research rather than asking them to design research projects themselves. Also provide them with abundant explanations on how and why the research operations were designed, what practical problems were anticipated, encountered and addressed, and why findings could or could not be generalized on the basis of the data.
- Focus on research questions that students could relate to directly, namely their interpreting performance and associated challenges.
- Ensure the research methods are simple and accessible to common-sense reasoning, as opposed to the complex constructs and techniques used in more advanced research.

- Since the students’ attitude and motivation were unknown and no previous experience with similar unconventional awareness-raising modules was available, we needed to be flexible in our progression and prepared to adapt to their reactions.
- Formally grade the students’ performance solely on the basis of their participation. Furthermore, we had to take on board the following constraints:
- The programme had to be implemented within less than 6 months, without the possibility of referring to a precedent of the same kind and without piloting.
- The academic year at ISIT starts in September and ends in May. In September, first year students are just being introduced to the basics of interpreting, e.g., active/analytical listening. They cannot be assumed to have a clear idea of what is expected of them and of the challenges involved – which we wished to address through research – before November or December. In April, they already start worrying about the outcome of their first year and devote their efforts to improving their interpreting performance. So, the research programme had to be completed in the space of just 4 to 5 months, minus several weeks of vacation time.
- The cohorts at ISIT are small. For the year 2022–2023, only 6 students were enrolled in the programme’s first year, and a similar number in the programme’s second year, with different language combinations. Clearly, this was not enough for generalizations, though if regularities were found, some tentative assumptions (not claims) could be made.
- Due to personal circumstances, we had to find a way to work online most of the time, including practical guidance and experiments.

On the plus side, a streamlined theory module had been developed within the ISIT programme by the first author at Sarah Bordes’ initiative many years ago. It consisted of a series of four lectures, three delivered to first year students and one to second year students. They were essentially designed to explain key cognitive challenges of interpreting resulting from its non-automatic nature. This content could be used to relate the new research module in the programme to some theory.

## **4. Operationalizing the principles**

### **4.1 Introductory lectures**

Two introductory lectures were offered on site. The first aimed to make the students aware of the nature, strengths and limitations of research as applied to the investigation of interpreting, with ideas/topics such as:

- Physiological, cognitive and affective limitations interfere with human knowledge acquisition.
- Research cannot remove these limitations, but helps push them back and acquire more knowledge, identify uncertainties in existing knowledge, correct some existing knowledge, and reduce some uncertainties.
- Science uses techniques and technology, but is essentially an approach, based on norms, systematic scepticism and caution.
- In research into interpreting, two major constraints are high variability and small sample sizes, partly due to the reluctance of interpreters to take part in experiments.

- Practical research methods used in Interpreting Studies include questionnaires, interviews, field observation and experiments.

The second lecture illustrated these ideas through examples of published research. In particular, empirical studies on quality expectations and perceptions were used to show how investigators tried to learn more about users' views on quality than what could be gained from individual, anecdotal experience, and associated challenges were highlighted, including the validity of indicators, the potential effects of desirability bias (Krumpal 2013), sensitivity issues and variability issues. The discussion remained general, without going into technical details.

Another example of interpreting research presented was the various studies on the health and performance repercussions of remote as compared to onsite interpreting. This provided an opportunity to present different research methodologies and notions (questionnaires, physical measurements, quality surveys, control groups, bias), as well as to illustrate the complexity of the issues and conflicting findings.

#### 4.2 Practical research exercises

As explained earlier, the theoretical module delivered to students addressed the negative effects of cognitive pressure on performance in an attempt to explain these and alleviate the anxiety they produce. It therefore seemed natural to direct the research exercises towards cognitive issues and to heighten the students' awareness of their effects on interpreting performance. This could be done by designing consecutive interpreting exercises with in-built cognitive difficulties and focusing on phenomena which research could help understand more clearly.

Numbers are a well-known problem trigger (e.g. Mackintosh 1983; Mazza 2001; Desmet et al. 2018) which is easy to manipulate and for which performance is easy to measure. They were therefore selected as a core indicator. As to research questions, based on existing published research, two options were considered:

1. Examining the effect of imported load in consecutive interpreting (Gile 2018): if a pause is introduced into the source speech after a high-density segment, thus giving interpreters some relief from cognitive pressure, will this result in better performance before and after the pause? In a very small sample, as here (6 students), which had to be divided further into a control group and an experimental group, no generalizable findings should be expected. It was decided to include it nevertheless given the future possibility of using the same source speeches for multi-centre cooperative experiments. However, we assumed that the likely high variability would serve to illustrate that no conclusions can be drawn when samples are so small.
2. Examining the effect of cognitive saturation or near-saturation (the Tigtrope Hypothesis) on repeat performance: in previous research on simultaneous interpreting (Gile 1999), it was found that in a 2nd pass, while some Errors and Omissions (EOs) were corrected, new EOs also appeared. This tends to corroborate the idea that attentional resource limitations and sub-optimal resource management in the face of high cognitive pressure are responsible for many of EOs. This required no control condition, and the experience could be replicated by the 1st year students themselves on 2nd year students to extend the dataset.

### 4.3 Methodological considerations and decisions

#### – **The source speeches**

Having failed to find suitable authentic source speeches, we recorded our own speeches with numbers in both French and English and interpreted and evaluated the difficulty of each other's speeches. We settled on one French speech on COVID (roughly 2 minutes long with 14 numbers, mostly with 1, 2 and 3 digits) and one slightly longer and more difficult English speech (roughly 2 minutes and a half with 34 numbers, all but two with 1, 2 or 3 digits) on Chinese conference interpreting research. The hope was that our perception of the difficulty level would be a good enough approximation. We kept the speeches short: we wanted the students to experience transcription, which is frequent in empirical research into interpreting, but is time-consuming. In addition, we felt that transcribing their interpretations might help them become aware of features of their renditions they would not see while interpreting, thus directly contributing to their interpreting learning experience.

#### – **Source and target languages**

The 6 students in the cohort had different language combinations, but all had French as either an A or a B language. Having all of them work from or into their A language was logistically complicated. It was therefore decided to conduct the first exercise in French-into-French consecutive format. Interpreting from a spoken language into the same language is generally not practiced in the field, but is part of training and, as illustrated here, usefully demonstrates that cognitive challenges also arise during the comprehension phase of consecutive before language switching comes in.

In exercises 2 and 3 (see below), students interpreted from either an English or a French version of the speech into their A language (French, English, Arabic and Spanish). Errors, omissions and approximations were recorded and analysed.

#### – **Remote teaching and experimenting**

The practical sessions were conducted online, using the Teams platform. There were a maximum of 6 students and 2 instructors, so all the participants could see everyone's face and reactions on screen, making interaction comfortable, provided the screen was not used for documents as well. Therefore, all relevant documents, including PowerPoint presentations and instructions, were emailed to participants in advance.

A way also had to be found to make sure that source speeches were interpreted immediately as they would have been on site and that the students' renditions were sent back in their initial form, without corrections. Students were asked to have at least two devices available next to them, one for playing back the source speeches, and one for recording their renditions. Source speeches were emailed during online sessions and students were instructed to play them immediately, to record their interpretations and email them back to the instructors at once. Transcription work could be done afterwards, and we would check its accuracy against the recordings.

Finally, since the source speeches were short, with no possibility of 'warming up' before encountering the first difficulties, instructions were recorded and the audio files

were emailed to the students just before the source speech. They were recorded in the same language as the source speech and by the same speaker so that the students could get used to the speaker's voice, accent and speaking style.

#### – **Motivation**

One of the potential risks considered was students' loss of motivation. This could result from frustration when facing difficulties during the interpreting task, or from comparison between one's results and those of other students, and/or from an excessive workload and the perception that the tasks were not sufficiently relevant to the rest of the training. A number of steps were taken to prevent this:

- Students were warned that their task would involve difficulties, but were reassured that their individual performance would not be assessed, the focus being on regularities found in the group.
- They were asked to keep interpreting and do their best even if they felt they were not doing well.
- When presenting findings, we highlighted positive aspects of their performance (“in spite of errors and omissions in the numbers, you managed to get the message across”), while errors and omissions were treated impersonally at group level. They were also encouraged in a non-judgmental way to report about their experience, including their thoughts and feelings.
- The instructors' attitude was systematically supportive and respectful of the students and their concerns and workload.

## **5. The research exercises**

### **Exercise n°1: French-into-French, consecutive**

Students were asked to do a French-into-French consecutive of a source speech on COVID epidemiological figures, and then, without warning, to interpret a second time the same speech. They were then asked to transcribe their interpretations and mark numbers which were omitted (O), rendered erroneously (E), or rendered approximately (A). This classification was not used for the analysis of the data but was requested in view of possible follow-up investigations. We checked the transcriptions and OEA reports against the recordings. Students were also asked to think about their experience and about OEAs and try to explain them, and send their reports to us.

In the session which followed the experiment, we thanked them for their reports and discussed the comments they had made about their subjective experience. We also presented an anonymized presentation of OEAs for the whole group and explained how using a table was a convenient tool for the presentation and analysis of data. Table 1 summarizes the data for the group. The following points were highlighted:

**Table 1** Omissions, Errors and Approximations in exercise n°1

Student	Number of OEAs 1st pass – 2nd pass	Number of OEAs corrected in 2nd pass	Number of new OEAs in 2nd pass
A	1 – 2	0	1
B	4 – 4	4	4
C	9 – 5	4	0
D	2 – 2	1	1
E	4 – 1	3	0
F	10 – 8	5	3

- The data illustrate high interindividual variability (from 1 to 10 OEAs). Even when excluding the two extremes, individual values vary from 2 to 9. High interindividual variability had been singled out in the lectures as one obstacle to making generalizations from research data.
- All interpretations had at least 1 OEA, and two thirds of them had 4 OEAs or more in the first pass. We pointed out that this corroborates findings from previous research: numbers are difficult to render correctly, even if they are small. We considered the possibility that some numbers might be particularly difficult to hear or understand. To rule this out, we checked how many and which OEAs were present in the interpretations of each student. Only two numbers had been omitted or rendered erroneously by nearly all the students. All others were not, and therefore would not seem to have features which make them intrinsically difficult to hear or understand.
- In the performance of 4 students out of the 6 in the sample, there was at least one new OEA in the second pass, which, as also pointed out in class, corroborates Gile's 1999 findings for simultaneous and provides more data in favour of the Tightrope Hypothesis, here for consecutive.

We explained to the students why we had chosen numbers as indicators, and why they should not be used as the sole indicator for interpreting quality. Even when numbers are rendered correctly, they may cause errors and/or omissions upstream and downstream (Mackintosh 1983; Mazza 2001); also, their relative importance in speeches varies from essential to anecdotal, and sacrificing them for more important information is often a more acceptable option than keeping them intact at all costs. One possibility which was not checked here but might be later (see the note about the didactic focus of the analyses in the Discussion and conclusion section) was that the students might have noticed during the first pass that they had problems with numbers, and might then have tended to focus on them during the second pass, perhaps to the detriment of other content.

We also explained some of our other methodological considerations when planning the exercise, including the concern about the appropriate difficulty level of the speech. If too easy, there was the risk of the students rendering perfectly all the numbers and having no useful information to analyse; but if too difficult, students might give up or fail to render correctly any number, resulting in the same absence of useful data. We explained that we had had to do the piloting ourselves, with ensuing uncertainty about our ability to assess the difficulty for them. We also explained why we included recorded



instructions, and why we insisted on their continuing to interpret even if they felt they were not doing well.

Finally, we informed students that half of them had received a version of the source speech with a pause designed to lower cognitive pressure and offer them some relief to see whether this would have an effect on their performance – this had been the case in a doctoral study by Barranco-Droege (2015) – and half without. We compared the performance on numbers in both cases, and found fewer OEAs in the version with the pause than in the version without it (the means were 4.67 vs. 5.33), but stressed that in such a small sample, this could not be a basis for any claim.

### **Exercise n°2: French/English into A, simultaneous**

In the second exercise, we asked our students to take on the role of researchers themselves and replicate the experiment with 2nd year students to give them the opportunity to be ‘in the shoes’ of investigators who depend on the good will of interpreters and who have to execute a design and analyse the data. We stressed that, as researchers, they should keep in mind that participants were valuable and rare assets, and should be treated with respect and gratitude for their participation.

For this exercise, an English version of the French COVID speech was provided to our students. They were told to ask 2nd year student participants to interpret either the French or the English version into their A language in the simultaneous mode once, and then a second time, record the interpretations and analyse them.

The two exercises obviously differed in fundamental parameters and there was no intention to compare data directly, but they made it possible to demonstrate that numbers are problem triggers in simultaneous as well.

Our students only managed to enlist the cooperation of four 2nd year students (with 3 different A languages). The findings are summarized in table 2:

**Table 2** Omissions, Errors and Approximations in exercise n°2

<b>Student</b>	<b>OEAs in 1st pass</b>	<b>OEAs in 2nd pass</b>	<b>New OEAs in 2nd pass</b>
G	9	0	0
H	16	11	0
I	5	1	0
J	7	9	3

There were more 1st pass OEAs in simultaneous among 2nd year students than 1st pass OEAs in the consecutive rendition of the 1st year group (means: 9.25 vs. 5), perhaps because in simultaneous as opposed to consecutive, they needed to consider reformulation choices while listening to and analysing the speech. A counterintuitive finding was that new OEAs in the 2nd pass were only found in the output of one of the four 2nd year students. The same student also did less well during the 2nd pass than during the 1st. One possible explanation for the few new OEAs was that setting aside the numbers, the source speech was very easy for the more advanced, second year students, and after listening to it once during the first pass, they had enough leeway in their use of attentional

resources to focus on the numbers they had missed the first time, without jeopardizing their rendition of previously correctly rendered numbers. If that were indeed the case, a more difficult speech might lead to different findings with the occurrence of new OEAs in a repeat performance. This was checked in the next exercise.

### **Exercise n°3: Simultaneous of a more difficult speech into French**

For this exercise, we used the slightly longer and more difficult speech on Chinese conference interpreting research. The speech was delivered in English and was first to be interpreted in consecutive into French by our (1st year) students, and then in simultaneous by 2nd year students. The first year students interpreted it once, which gave them an idea of its content and potential difficulties, and then had two 2nd year students interpret it twice (they did not manage to enlist more than 2 upper classmen) into French (their A language). In the analysis of the data, the sole focus was on the 2nd year students' OEAs.

This time, as expected given the difficulty of the speech, there were numerous new OEAs in the 2nd year students' second pass:

**Table 3** OEAs in Exercise 3, consecutive for 1st year students and simultaneous for 2nd year students.

<b>Student</b>	<b>OEAs 1st pass</b>	<b>OEAs 2nd pass</b>	<b>New OEAs during 2nd pass</b>
K 1st year consecutive	17		
L 1st year consecutive	18		
M 1st year consecutive	12		
N 1st year consecutive	20		
O 1st year consecutive	17		
P 2nd year simultaneous	24	27	6
Q 2nd year simultaneous	14	11	5

These figures seemed to corroborate the Tightrope Hypothesis as well as our hypothesis that the lack of new OEAs in the second pass in the previous exercise was due to a floor effect (the speech was too easy). However, we were careful to point out to the students that this could only be a tentative hypothesis, which needed to be tested with larger samples and further replications.

Also note the high variability in the number of OEAs recorded in the 2nd year students' performance. There are more OEAs in student P's 1st pass performance in simultaneous than in the performance of all 1st year students in consecutive, while student Q's 1st pass OEAs are less numerous than all but one of the 1st year students'. Both the small size of the sample and the difference in mode make generalizations meaningless.

For this final exercise, students were also asked to reflect more extensively on the data they had collected, regularities they had observed and potential explanatory hypotheses. Here are a few of their comments:

- Phonological aspects may be associated with risk of errors (e.g., nineteen vs ninety).
- The performance of some 2nd year students they recruited for the second and third exercises may have suffered from fatigue, when the exercise took place at the end of

a long day, especially as the 2nd year students were by this stage preparing intensively for the diploma exams.

- In some cases, higher informational fidelity may have been achieved at the expense of quality of language, perhaps through a deliberate prioritizing choice.
- Trying to salvage numbers may have generated some lag and caused listening losses downstream (imported load hypothesis).

An interesting observation by students was that they noticed frequent errors of plus or minus one unit in one of the digits when rendering numbers (e.g., rendering 545 as 645, 535 or 544). Permutations in the digits were also observed (e.g., 69.1 rendered as 61.9). These observations were relevant and often intriguing, but in their comments, the students remained close to the data, with no endeavour to engage in theoretical speculation.

## 6. Questionnaire

At the end of the academic year, we sent a questionnaire to the 6 students, asking them for feedback on this module with 5-point Likert scale questions (5 for maximum agreement and 1 for disagreement) and open questions. This was a particularly busy time of the year for the students, and only four of them responded. The following summarizes their answers and comments.

All responding students said that they found the research module interesting, that it taught them something about interpreting, that the workload it involved was not excessive, that it made them appreciate the value of interpreting theory. Three students said the module should be reconducted next year, and one said she had no opinion on the matter. One student said she would consider enrolling in a pre-doctoral course in a few years' time if it was offered; the other three were undecided.

The students appreciated the fact that the module was essentially practical, that they were encouraged to express themselves freely at all times, that the instructors took on board their stressful and heavy workload, that the materials were sent in advance for reference, and that the module gave them the possibility of stepping back from immersion in daily interpreting practice and gaining a clearer insight into what they do when interpreting, into their brain's processing and why they sometimes fail at the task. They enjoyed having the opportunity of being in the shoes of a researcher when replicating the exercise with 2nd year students, and they appreciated the patient guidance in the practical exercises.

On the minus side, they were bothered by the irregular rhythm of the classroom sessions, by not having an advance schedule indicating a planned progression through the year, and by not knowing ahead of time the purpose of the research exercises. Two students would have liked to participate more actively in the analysis of the data. These concerns can be addressed in future editions of the module. Given the increased workload for both 1st and 2nd year students as the academic year proceeds, we think the programme of this introduction to research module should be compressed so as to complete the practical exercises by the end of March.

When asked what the module had taught them about research, the students mentioned the importance of being rigorous and aware of pitfalls, including those that resulted from

subconscious bias. They had realized that research is complex and requires careful thinking, that it can help gain better understanding of how interpreting functions, including when exposed to challenges. Finally, research can reduce uncertainties even when it does not provide clear-cut answers.

## **7. Discussion and conclusion**

Judging by the students' reactions, the module captured and held their interest throughout the year. Indeed, they enjoyed it. They saw its relevance to their overall learning experience as conference interpreting students, as it gave them an opportunity to step back from subjective feelings, scrutinize some aspects of their performance more objectively and think of possible explanations for phenomena observed. This was also covered by explanations presented as theoretical constructs introduced in a separate, independent theory module. The students also gained meaningful insights into the nature of empirical research and its challenges. Moreover, the hands-on approach adopted meant they could relate their own practical experience to principles that students in more standard 'introduction to research' courses only read about as abstract ideas. In that respect, the approach adopted here seems to have attained its objectives. We should like to stress that the design of the experiments and the analysis of the data were deliberately tuned to specific didactic purposes. The guidance and discussions offered to the students were accordingly focused, not all-encompassing. Before engaging in autonomous research projects, students would need to receive systematic and far more extensive guidance.

And yet, the overheads associated with the research module described here are negligible; moreover, it may well lead to a significant gain in acquisition of interpreting skills due to heightened awareness of various issues thanks to the practical exercises. It might therefore make sense to combine this approach and the more traditional approach even in training programmes which do provide formal research training.

In the future, besides adjustments made as a response to the students' comments, we are thinking of diversifying the practical research exercises. For instance, students could work on quality perception or on the effect of preparation, using material from their interpreting exercises.

Finally, though this was not part of the objectives of the module, the practical exercises described are suitable for small-scale empirical studies with replications and/or multi-centre coordination allowing for far larger sets of data with several language combinations and different teaching methodologies. A coordinated project with Charles University Prague might be a start ...

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## RESUMÉ

Modul věnovaný úvodu do výzkumu byl vytvořen v rámci vzdělávacího programu pro konferenční tlumočníky. Během dvouletého intenzivního studia studenti pracují především na získávání tlumočnických dovedností na vysoké úrovni, a o teorii a výzkum se příliš nezajímají. Modul byl navržen ad hoc s cílem zvýšit povědomí studentů o povaze výzkumu, o tom, co může přinést jim i tlumočnické profesi, a o výzvách, před kterými stojí badatelé. To vše bez toho, aniž by byli zahlceni prací, jejíž význam pro studium tlumočnictví by jim mohl unikát. Konkrétně se jednalo o dvě úvodní magisterské přednášky a mikroexperimenty prováděné na tlumočnických cvičeních. Studenti měli za úkol nahrát a přepsat svá

tlumočení experimentálních projevů, analyzovat získaná data a reflektovat je. V jednom z cvičení dostali za úkol provést experiment na jiných studentech. Po celou dobu se jim dostávalo podpory ze strany učitelů, kteří jim vše vysvětlili, zejména pokud jde o koncepci experimentů, problémy a nejasnosti, a závěry, které lze ze shromážděných dat vyvodit. Z odpovědí uvedených v dotazníku na konci modulu vyplývá, že pro studenty byl modul zajímavý, pracovní zátěž byla přiměřená, dozvěděli se něco o výzkumu, ale také o tlumočení samotném. Vzhledem k minimálním dodatečným nákladům na tento modul ve srovnání s výukou vlastního tlumočení a vzhledem k tomu, že studentům poskytuje dobrou představu o praktických aspektech výzkumu, navrhujeme, aby byl zařazen i do vzdělávacích programů pro tlumočnický na školách, kde se výzkum vyučuje tradičnějším způsobem.

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