

Mock conferences in simultaneous interpreting training

When students take the role of interpreters and speakers

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Abstract

This paper is about two mock conferences which were carried out with students undertaking the second elective Simultaneous Interpreting module in their 4th year in the Degree in Translation and Interpreting at the University of Malaga. The design of these mock conferences was prepared in such a way that students took the role of interpreters and speakers. The intention of the use of mock conferences is to get students closer to what they will come across when they start working as interpreters. After the students had taken part in these mock conferences, they then expressed their opinions about these exercises.

Key Words

Mock conference, simultaneous interpreting, interpreter, speaker, documentation.



1. Introduction

There are different types of exercises which are used during simultaneous interpreting training. The module will start with easy exercises at the beginning of the course and will gradually include other exercises with a higher degree of difficulty. A mock conference would be a type of exercise which can be carried out at a later stage of the module. It is a fictitious conference involving role play where everything taking place during the exercise is as close as possible to how a conference in real life would be; i.e., a lifelike situation in the classroom (Kurz,

1989)¹. It would be on a certain topic, it would have a programme, and different speakers would take part as in a real conference. While the mock conference is taking place, the interpreting students will be carrying out the interpretation of what the speakers are saying. These role play exercises allow students to get closer to what they will find once they complete their studies and start working as interpreters. As Wadensjö (2014) says: “Role play is a well-established method to practise interpreting techniques, to train for interpreting in specifically challenging situations, to rehearse certain vocabulary, and so forth”. The aim of this paper is to extract information about the students’ perception of the use of mock conferences in class as a learning tool. For this purpose, two mock conferences were carried out with thirteen 4th year students in the degree of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Malaga undertaking a second semester elective simultaneous interpreting module (English into Spanish and Spanish into English). This was the last interpreting module for the students after liaison and consecutive interpreting modules in their 3rd year and a first semester elective simultaneous interpreting module in the 4th year. After the mock conferences, the students were given a questionnaire where they expressed their opinion about them in order to analyse whether they considered mock conferences to be an interesting and useful tool for use in the interpreting classroom.

2. Methodology of the two mock conferences

The two mock conferences that were carried out with the students had the following characteristics:

- a) The students would choose the topics of the mock conferences themselves. By letting them choose the topics, the conferences would be on something that they would prefer to work on, rather than having the topics imposed or chosen by the teacher. Preparing the task with the participation of the students approaches the teaching-learning process as a cooperative work between teachers and students which is characteristic

¹ Li (2015) carried out a case study where mock conferences were used for consecutive interpreting with positive results. Furthermore, a study by Conde and Chouc (2019) also showed the usefulness of mock conferences for interpreting students.

of an educational model which is more efficient to face challenges (Fernández March, 2006).

- b) They were told that they would be taking different roles; they would be interpreters but also speakers. The intention of this was to get students closer not only to what interpreters feel during a real conference but also to get them to try and understand the role of speakers in a better way. As two mock conferences were going to take place, those students who would take the role of interpreters during the first mock conference would then take the role of speakers during the second conference and vice versa. Students were also allowed to choose the role order they would take during the mock conferences; i.e. whether they would be speakers during the first mock conference and interpreters during the second conference or the other way around. In a situation of cooperative learning, the outcomes are beneficial to all group members (Johnson et al., 2014).
- c) As the simultaneous interpreting module that the students were undertaking involved interpreting from English to Spanish and from Spanish to English, students taking the role of speakers were asked to choose whether they wanted to give their presentations in English or in Spanish, so as to have both languages used during the mock conferences which would mean that those who would be interpreting would have to interpret into any of the two working languages.

3. Design of the mock conferences

3.1. First mock conference

For the first of the two mock conferences, the topic that the students chose was “inspiring stories” and the fictitious name of the mock conference was “International Conference on Inspiring Stories”. The conference was carried out over two days (two sessions of 90 minutes). A programme was prepared in advance where each of the students who would take the role of speakers during this first mock conference had to choose a day and a slot where they would give their presentations and the language they were going to use, either English or

Spanish. Each speaker was provided a 30 minute slot in the programme and was instructed to prepare a 15 to 20 minute presentation which would leave some time for questions and debate after each presentation. Speakers had to provide a title for their presentation to be included in the programme which was sent to all students taking part in the mock conferences. After this, the students with the role of speakers were asked to prepare and send their colleague interpreting students their computer presentations and a short CV which would be used to introduce each of the speakers during the mock conference. With the presentations and the CVs, the interpreters would then be able to prepare in advance the vocabulary, information, etc., for this first mock conference.

3.2. Second mock conference

The topic chosen by the students for the second mock conference was “health”, and the fictitious title of the conference was “International Conference on Health”. Again, the conference was carried out during two days (two 90 minute sessions). During the second mock conference, the students who had had the role of speakers during the first mock conference were now interpreters, and the students who had been interpreters during the first conference, took over the role of speakers. A programme was also prepared for this second mock conference, with the day, slot, language spoken and title of the presentations chosen by the speakers. As in the previous mock conference, speakers were asked to prepare presentations of 15 to 20 minutes and were allocated 30 minute slots to allow for questions and debate. Regarding the information sent, there was a slight difference between the second mock conference and the first one. As the documents related to a conference are not always provided to interpreters in real life working environments (Gile, 2009; León, 2000; Torres Díaz, 2014; Torres Díaz and Fernández Prieto, 2019), for the second mock conference only some of the students were asked to provide their presentations and CVs in advance to their colleague interpreting students, while others were instructed not to do so and were given the aforementioned explanation of the reason for this difference between the second and the first mock conference.

4. Questionnaire on mock conferences

In order to get information about the use of mock conferences in class, a questionnaire was created and then, once both mock conferences had taken

place, the students were asked to complete the questionnaire which included the following questions:

1. *Did you find the mock conference exercises useful? Yes/No – Justify your answer.*

With this first question, the intention was to find out if students had found the mock conference exercises useful or not.

2. *Is there anything you have learned about the development of a simultaneous interpreting assignment in a conference by having taken part in these mock conference exercises? If the answer is yes, what have you learned?*

With this question, the students could make comments on if they had learned anything or not in relation to how a simultaneous interpreting assignment takes place in a conference environment.

3. *Have you been able to see the difference between having to interpret speakers who spoke more freely in comparison to those who read a written text? Yes / No – Justify your answer.*

Some of the students who acted like speakers gave their presentations speaking freely with the support of a computer presentation; others chose to bring a printed version of what they were going to say, reading the presentation text. Interpreters will also come across different ways in which speakers address audiences in a conference, and there are differences regarding the ease of the interpreting task in relation to how speakers choose to carry out their presentations. As Ardito (1999: 179) points out: “Generally speaking, the greater spontaneity with which an impromptu speech is delivered facilitates the listener's comprehension of the speaker's message. For the interpreter, who is both a listener and a speaker, good comprehension of the message in the source language (SL) is, of course, a prerequisite for a correct reformulation of any speech in the target language (TL).” With this question, the intention was to find out if the students had noticed anything different when interpreting speakers with different ways of addressing audiences.

4. *Have you found the task of interpreting the CVs of the speakers difficult? Yes / No – Justify your answer.*

In a real conference, the moderator will normally introduce speakers before giving them the floor. The introduction tends to include details about the CVs of the speakers such as places where speakers have carried out their studies and different positions held over the years. This information can be quite tricky to interpret because of the amount of names of institutions and positions included

during the introduction which is normally carried out in a short period of time. With this question, the students could comment about their thoughts on this task of interpreting the CVs of the speakers.

5. *Regarding the interpretation of the presentations, have you understood how important it is to have the computer presentations and/or presentation documents from the speakers in advance?*

Documentation is a key element for interpreters and preparing thoroughly for an interpreting assignment is important. If documents about the interpreting assignment are sent in advance to interpreters, they will then have the possibility to go through the documents provided and prepare the vocabulary. With the preparation of the information in advance, interpreters will then face the interpreting task with the advantage of knowing what speakers are going to be talking about as a whole and, as speakers progress through their presentations during the conference, interpreters will feel more at ease knowing that they are familiar with the contents of presentations because they have had them sent in advance. With this question, the intention was to find out if students had noticed the importance of having the presentations in advance.

6. *When you have had the role of a speaker, have you learned anything about the development of a conference which could be of use to you for a future interpreting assignment? Yes / No – Justify your answer.*

Students taking part in these mock conference exercises have taken the role not only of interpreters but also of speakers. The intention of this question was to find out their opinions about their role of speakers and whether they thought that this would be of any use to them in order to understand the task of speakers in a conference.

7. *What did you think about the questions and answers part of the conference when you had to do the interpretation?*

Real life conferences may include a section with questions and answers which might involve an interaction speaker/audience where the interpreter will have to convey all the information (Vázquez y del Árbol, 2005). In a conference, the questions and answers part tends to be quite open. Students were asked this question to find out their impressions about the interpretation of this part of the conference.

4.1. Analysis of the answers of the questionnaires

13 students were enrolled in the simultaneous interpreting module. All of them took part in the mock conferences and all 13 completed the questionnaires once both mock conferences had been carried out. This section of the paper includes the answers of the students to each of the questions. An analysis is then provided at the end of each set of answers.

Question 1: Did you find the mock conference exercises useful? Yes/No – Justify your answer.

Answers to question 1:

Student 1 / “Yes. With the conferences we have dealt with different topics and different presentations (more or less structured, read or freely spoken, in Spanish or in English...), so we have had to adapt ourselves. And the CVs and the lack of documents in some occasions have contributed also to the “reality” of the situation.”

Student 2 / “Yes, I have found the exercise useful because it is the first contact that I have had with interpreting in conferences, besides having imitated the real time of each presentation and having interpreted as a real interpreter during the whole time.”

Student 3 / “Yes, because we have also learned how to be a speaker and we will be able to have a little more empathy with them when we will be inside a booth.”

Student 4 / “Yes. Imitating a real conference can get you closer to a real work situation, you can listen to your colleagues interpret as well as having the experience of interpreting in a conference.”

Student 5 / “Yes, it is a useful exercise for various reasons. Besides having to carry out the preparation of a serious and prepared presentation, which is useful to better understand the situation of a speaker facing an audience, amongst other things, it also helps to understand how an interpreter will carry out the interpretation with a better or worse quality depending on the previous preparation by him/her. In the case of presentations carried out in English by a non-native speaker, there are also interesting issues which can be useful in the training of conference interpreters.”

Student 6 / “Yes, because it is a way of experimenting a real work situation.”

Student 7 / “Yes, because I think that oratory, not only interpreting, should be a compulsory subject. Modulating the voice is crucial.”

Student 8 / “Yes, I find them a very interesting exercise because we can learn about very diverse subjects which go far from the most used topics.”

Student 9 / “Yes, I consider that it is useful because in a way it helps us to live a situation which is quite close to the real world. There are no breaks, there are things that we don’t know and even with that, we have to continue and try to make it as best as we can.”

Student 10 / “Yes. Mock conferences bring us closer to the work carried out by interpreters: researching about the topic, looking for the most technical terms which are included in the computer presentations, etc.”

Student 11 / “It has been a very interesting and enjoyable activity. We have been able to play the role of speakers, with the processes of research and presentation of topics. I have found mock conferences very useful.”

Student 12 / “Yes. Listening to different accents, speeds when speaking and the fact that the topics were different has been very interesting. As some speakers sent the information in advance and others didn’t, these exercises have also been useful to make the experience more realistic.”

Student 13 / “Yes, because, to be honest, it is the first time that we put ourselves in class in the situation of a conference as such. All the exercises carried out up until now had just been speeches, so I consider this mode change to be something positive. On top of this, it makes the module more dynamic.”

The answers of all students to question 1 were affirmative, which shows that all students who took part in these mock conferences for simultaneous interpreting found the task useful. The justifications given by the students included elements such as how close the mock conferences were to a real life conference, how they felt like real interpreters, how some speakers would speak freely whereas others read their presentations, the importance of the preparation of the conference in advance, how they experienced the fact that not all the documents from all the speakers were available before the conference, how they understood speakers better after having taken their role during the mock conferences too, how you are going to come across different accents when you interpret, etc. The comments provided by the students to this first question are an example of their positive perception towards mock conferences in simultaneous interpreting training.

Question 2: Is there anything you have learned about the development of a simultaneous interpreting assignment in a conference by having taken part in these mock conference exercises? If the answer is yes, what have you learned?

Answers to question 2:

Student 1 / “No. The basics had already been explained in class, so it was more or less what I was expecting.”

Student 2 / “Yes, I have learned that documentation is essential before interpreting, because without it we can have situations of nervousness and exasperation if we don’t know the vocabulary.”

Student 3 / “Yes, I have learned that you have to be ready for anything that might happen during a conference or a presentation. I have also learned that it is very important to have knowledge about what we are interpreting.”

Student 4 / “Yes, I have a better knowledge about the process previous to a conference. I have learned about the CVs of the speakers, their computer presentations, etc.”

Student 5 / “Yes, preparation is fundamental, above all regarding the CVs of speakers. Besides, in the questions and answers section, spontaneity is a factor which has to be taken well into account.”

Student 6 / “Yes, I have learned that it looks more traumatic than what it really is and that if you are given the documents in advance it is much less difficult.”

Student 7 / “Yes, for example having to interpret in both language combinations. Also, that speakers can have different accents, they can read their presentations, and they can improvise. We have also learned how to interpret during longer periods of time and that speakers will not always provide their presentations in advance. On the other hand, it can be observed that the interpretation of CVs is the most difficult part.”

Student 8 / “With these exercises, we were able to practice interpreting into our second language, because some of the presentations were in Spanish. Also, as the presentations have a common subject, it helps us to have a better idea of what the mock conferences are going to be about.”

Student 9 / “The importance of a thorough documentation process on the topic and the fact that having the computer presentations and the CVs in advance makes it easier and makes you feel more confident.”

Student 10 / “Yes, I have learned that only with looking for the terms that are included in the computer presentations, the interpretation is much easier. I have also learned that, depending on the speaker, the interpretation can be very different.”

Student 11 / “Yes, I have learned how stressing it is having to interpret three consecutive presentations with no breaks while maintaining concentration and control at all times.”

Student 12 / “Yes, because we won’t always have all the information in advance. I have also been able to put myself in the position of the speakers: if, as a speaker, you normally speak fast, it is very difficult not to speak fast so that the interpreters can interpret you.”

Student 13 / “Preparing in advance and having a background knowledge of the concepts that are going to be talked about is really important. I know that, in theory, we know this since we started the module, but, in my case, I have always been too confident. Having carried out this type of exercises has made me realise how important preparation really is.”

The students answered in question 2 that they had learned how important it is to prepare with documentation before the conference, about the process that takes place before the conference, how spontaneous the questions and answers section in a conference can be, how difficult it is to interpret the CVs of speakers, and how having the documents of the speakers in advance makes the interpreting task much easier.

Question 3: Have you been able to see the difference between having to interpret speakers who spoke more freely in comparison to those who read a written text? Yes / No – Justify your answer.

Answers to question 3:

Student 1 / “Yes. Speakers who spoke freely were easier to understand (because of the intonation, etc.); but, on the other hand, they digress more and are less predictable. Those who read a text, sometimes were not very clear about what they wanted to say, so they started to hesitate, they got confused... but at least they focused on the topic and did not improvise with the use of anecdotes or similar.”

Student 2 / “Yes, it is true that those who read a text did it faster and it was not as natural.”

Student 3 / “Yes, I personally find easier to interpret speakers who speak more freely because they have a slower pace and they tend to use vocabulary which is not so specific.”

Student 4 / “Yes, it is quite different. It is easier to interpret a speaker who reads, but the presentation loses quality and it is not so natural.”

Student 5 / “Yes, intonation in read presentations is monotonous, which makes the understanding and analysis of such presentations complicated. We also have to take into account that read presentations are not very natural, which makes the interpretation even more complicated.”

Student 6 / “Yes, even though it depends on how the speaker reads. There are speakers which are disorganized even when they read what they have to say.”

Student 7 / “Yes, it is clear that speakers who read, speak faster and because of this the interpreting task is more complicated.”

Student 8 / “Yes, when a presentation is read, it is not carried out with the spontaneity or the intonation as if it was done without reading. For this reason, they are more tedious and difficult to follow.”

Student 9 / “It was easier to follow the discourse when it was a more spontaneous presentation, because a more everyday vocabulary was used and there were more pauses. Also, when they didn’t read, they had an intonation and a way of speaking which were in tune with what they were saying, which made the task easier.”

Student 10 / “Yes, interpreting those speakers who read was much more difficult.”

Student 11 / “Yes, because those who read tend to speed up and make less pauses when speaking. And speakers who speak freely make more pauses and normally produce a more coherent discourse.”

Student 12 / “Yes, those who read were prone to accelerate and the intonation was not always the most appropriate one.”

Student 13 / “Of course, it is not the same. You can tell very clearly when a text is being read because of the intonation of the speaker, the speed and the ease in the presentation of the ideas. In my opinion, the positive element of interpreting a text which is being read is the fact that the speaker tends to go slower, but in reality, a well prepared and natural presentation is always better.”

The answers to question 3 show that overall the students were able to notice that when speakers speak freely, instead of reading a written text, they are easier to understand, and because of this, interpreters find them easier to interpret. Only one of the 13 students found it easier to interpret speakers when they read a written text.

Question 4: Have you found the task of interpreting the CVs of the speakers difficult? Yes / No – Justify your answer.

Answers to question 4:

Student 1 / “Yes, I think it is very difficult to interpret them correctly if you do not have them in advance, because the names of institutions have to be translated sometimes, but not always.”

Student 2 / “Yes, I have found this very difficult, because there are MAs or professions which are very specific, as well as the names of institutions, associations... which I didn’t know about and it is very complicated to interpret such specific information.”

Student 3 / “Yes, I have found the task of interpreting the CVs difficult in those cases when we did not have the information in advance, because the positions are very specific and they were mentioned one after the other.”

Student 4 / “Yes, this is what I found most difficult to interpret in my opinion. When I had the CV before the presentation, it was not a problem.”

Student 5 / “No. Preparation in advance makes this part much easier.”

Student 6 / “No, because I had them in advance.”

Student 7 / “When we had the CVs in advance, it was OK. In those cases where we didn’t have them it was not so difficult, with the exception of the name of some associations.”

Student 8 / “Yes, because they tend to be a list of positions which are read fast and, because of this, they are more difficult to interpret.”

Student 9 / “I have found it difficult when we didn’t have the CVs in advance, because there are certain positions or names of Universities from which I didn’t know the official name. Also, CVs tend to be read quite fast, and not having them makes interpretation almost impossible.”

Student 10 / “I have found it difficult when I had not prepared a translation in advance. If I had it prepared, it wasn’t difficult.”

Student 11 / “Interpreting the CVs may have been the most complicated task, because moderators tend to read CVs in quite a faster manner, and they include more specific data from which you cannot lose anything.”

Student 12 / “No, but I must admit that I interpreted during the first mock conference, where we had all the information in advance.”

Student 13 / “It is not difficult when you know the information clearly in advance, because you have a preliminary idea of what’s going to be said (hence why it is also important to prepare well not only the presentations, but also the information about the speakers).”

An analysis of the answers to question 4 shows that students were able to find out that the task of interpreting the CVs of the speakers during a conference can be difficult. Also, as during the second mock conference not all the CVs from the speakers were sent in advance, they also realised how not having the CVs in advance makes the task of interpreting them even more difficult. In fact, two of the students did not find this task difficult because, as they say, they had the CVs in advance, and one of them admitted also that he/she did not find this task difficult because he/she had taken part during the first mock conference, where all the documents related to the mock conference were available in advance.

Question 5: Regarding the interpretation of the presentations, have you understood how important it is to have the computer presentations and/or presentation documents from the speakers in advance?

Answers to question 5:

Student 1 / “Totally. When using them as a guideline for the presentation, they write a lot of terminology which can orientate the interpreter a lot regarding the topic.”

Student 2 / “Yes, it is extremely important to have them in advance, because they have personally been of great help in order to prepare for the interpretation and I have been able to notice the difference between those speakers who provided a computer presentation and those who didn’t.”

Student 3 / “Yes, thanks to having the computer presentations and documents we can have a good idea about the topics which the speakers will be talking about and they can be of great help when we do our research.”

Student 4 / “Yes, they can give a lot of indications about what the speakers are going to be saying, the topics, etc.”

Student 5 / “Yes, they put what is going to be said in context and are a support for technical terms.”

Student 6 / “Yes, because thanks to them, the interpreting service is much more detailed.”

Student 7 / “Yes. Most of all because we have been able to look for keywords and get to know the different parts of presentations, because the title doesn’t always indicate exactly the subject of a presentation.”

Student 8 / “They help in order to have a clearer idea about the content of presentations. Besides, they can provide us with a clue about the structure of presentations.”

Student 9 / “As I have mentioned in another question, without any doubt, having the computer presentations makes me feel more confident. Even those presentations that only include images made it easier to imagine what the speaker was going to be saying.”

Student 10 / “Yes. As I have answered in question 2, looking for the terms and having an idea about what speakers are going to be speaking about, makes the interpretation easier.”

Student 11 / “Yes, when speakers provide their computer presentations in advance, the interpretation flows better and it is easier, because you know what the speaker is going to be speaking about regarding the topic.”

Student 12 / “Yes, because they are used in many occasions for terms and numbers. These are the data which are most difficult to interpret and also what is most difficult to follow for the listeners.”

Student 13 / “Of course I have, because you will then know how a presentation is going to be structured and some of the keywords included, which tend to be the most used ones. On top of this, it helps with the specialised terminology, because you get to know it in advance.”

Again, the students show in their answers to question 5 that they have noticed how important it is to have the documentation related to a conference in advance

to know what the presentation is going to be about and to prepare the terminology. Those who had to interpret in some cases where a speaker had not provided the documentation in advance have noticed the difference in difficulty between having and not having the documents beforehand. One of the students also commented that when a presentation included numbers, it was easier to follow if the presentation had been sent in advance.

Question 6: When you have had the role of a speaker, have you learned anything about the development of a conference which could be of use to you for a future interpreting assignment? Yes / No – Justify your answer.

Answers to question 6:

Student 1 / “Yes. I have found the topic that I have spoken about very interesting and I have learned both vocabulary and basic knowledge.”

Student 2 / “I have learned that speaking freely and in a more natural way is on the whole better than reading a written text. Although, it can also mean an added difficulty for interpreters because it may mean that they might not be able to anticipate what is going to be said.”

Student 3 / “Yes, I have learned that no matter how elaborated and prepared we might have a presentation as speakers, we always change something.”

Student 4 / “I have realized that those speakers who know about interpreting try to speak at a slower pace, but speakers speak much faster in reality.”

Student 5 / “The preparation of the presentation and a logic sequence of the ideas avoids confusion for interpreters in the order of such ideas.”

Student 6 / “In my opinion, with this experience I have learned a lot regarding the development of a conference.”

Student 7 / “We have learned most of all thanks to the subsequent feedback from colleagues which were giving advice on whether attention had to be paid to speed moderation, or to a clearer way of speaking.”

Student 8 / “Yes, it helps you prepare a coherent and elaborate presentation, and to further highlight topics which we might not be very familiar with.”

Student 9 / “In my case, I didn’t think that the CV part was going to be so important, and when interpreting if I had thought that it wasn’t important, I would have had to face quite a negative surprise.”

Student 10 / “No. I think that each speaker has carried out very different presentations.”

Student 11 / “I have learned that timing is restricted and that preparing the topic well is fundamental.”

Student 12 / “Yes, I have learned about the importance of sending the information in advance and the need to remind speakers that they are going to be interpreted.”

Student 13 / “I have learned mostly about the way a speaker has to act and the characteristics that speakers must have so that their message is effective. I have also learned that not everything goes according to plan and that unforeseen events can always take place, above all related to sound and image.”

The answers to question 6 show that, when taking the role of speakers, the students have learned that speaking freely is better than reading a written text, that speakers might change something during a presentation that has been prepared beforehand, how a presentation that has a logic sequence of the ideas avoids confusion, that timing is restricted and how important it is to provide the documents and information in advance. Finally, one of the students also mentioned the fact that not everything goes according to plan during the development of a conference and that unforeseen events can take place, most of them related to sound and image problems.

Question 7: What did you think about the questions and answers part of the conference when you had to do the interpretation?

Answers to question 7:

Student 1 / “It has been quite brief and I have not had the chance to listen to my fellow interpreting colleagues, but I think it is a very interesting part.”

Student 2 / “Difficult, because it is quite unexpected and spontaneous but, in general, it has been OK.”

Student 3 / “It has been quite interesting, because here is where we can really see the resources and the abilities of interpreters to improvise because they don’t know what the questions and answers are going to be.”

Student 4 / “It is a more difficult part, because you don’t know the questions that are going to be asked or what speakers are going to be answering. On top of

that, we have to change the language combination, which makes interpreting more difficult.”

Student 5 / “It is a good interpreting exercise in both language combinations and it is very interesting to interpret spontaneous and improvised contributions.”

Student 6 / “It is not normally very difficult, although we have to take into account the fact that we all know what interpreting is, so we have been quite sympathetic.”

Student 7 / “I think the questions and answers section, in this instance, has always been easy, because neither the audience nor the speakers were experts on the topics and also during this part they couldn’t read anything.”

Student 8 / “As it is not a planned section, questions and answers can be difficult to interpret, because we can find practically any expression or word.”

Student 9 / “It was complicated in many cases because speakers start answering the questions when we, as interpreters, haven’t finished interpreting the questions. But overall, I don’t think it is especially complex.”

Student 10 / “I think it is easier than interpreting the speakers’ presentations, because when asking and answering questions, everyone tends to speak for a shorter period of time.”

Student 11 / “It is very important and it has to be carried out in a fast manner and with no possibility of mistakes, otherwise responses from speakers and the information given to the audience can be completely affected.”

Student 12 / “Easy in general.”

Student 13 / “Personally, it is one of my favourite parts, because the audience is also taken into account and there is always something interesting to say after a presentation.”

The answers given by the students to question 7 were mixed. There were some students who found the questions and answers section of a conference difficult to interpret because it is unexpected, spontaneous and improvised. On the other hand, there were other students who did not find it so difficult.

5. Results on the use of mock conferences in class

After having read all the questionnaires from the students, this section of the paper includes the main comments and ideas from the students in their answers.

- *Mock conferences are very close to a real life work situation.* This was one of the objectives of the mock conferences carried out with the students. By preparing the conferences with them in advance, then sending the documents related to them beforehand, and finally with the mock conferences, the students were able to go through each of the stages of the development of a conference in real life.
- *It is important to prepare for a conference thoroughly in advance.* The students realised that if you prepare for a conference in advance, you will already know some of the terminology that will be used during the days of a conference.
- *The documents related to a conference are not always available for preparation for the interpreters.* As mentioned above, this situation tends to happen when a conference comes up for an interpreter. By carrying out two mock conferences where in the first one all documents related to the conference were available, and then a second one where not all documents were, students were able to experience this situation which imitates what happens in a real life work situation.
- *CVs of speakers are not easy to interpret.* In a real conference, before a speaker starts speaking, there tends to be a person who introduces the speaker and reads some elements of his/her CV. The students realised how difficult it can be to interpret, mainly because of the amount of information given in a short period of time which includes names of positions and institutions which do not always have an equivalent in other languages.
- *Taking the role of speakers gives students a better understanding of the interpreting process and development of a conference.* All interpreting students participating in the mock conferences were able to take the role of speakers, either during the first mock conference or during the second one. Taking the role of speakers made them understand what a speaker has to go through

before the conference (having to prepare a presentation) and during the conference (delivering the presentation). Having to take both roles (interpreters and speakers) gave the students a thorough understanding of the components of a conference.

- *Interpreting a speaker who speaks freely is easier than having to interpret a speaker who reads a written text.* By having speakers who delivered their presentations in different ways, students were able to experience that it is easier to interpret a speaker who speaks freely, and that interpreting a speaker who reads a text can be more difficult.
- *Unexpected events can happen during a conference.* Even though a conference will have a schedule beforehand, there can be unexpected changes, such as, a speaker who will give his/her presentation in a different slot than what is said in the conference programme, a change in the presentation that the speaker had already sent in advance, or even problems with sound and/or image.
- *The questions and answers section in a conference can be very spontaneous.* Students had mixed reactions towards this section, some of them found it easy because it can be very spontaneous, whereas others found it not so easy mainly because of the same reason, that they were not able to know what the audience was going to ask and what the speakers were going to answer.

5. Conclusions

This article is about two simultaneous interpreting mock conferences carried out with students of the fourth and final year of the degree in Translation and Interpreting from the University of Malaga who were undertaking a second elective simultaneous interpreting module. As two mock conferences were carried out, the students had the chance of taking not only the role of interpreters, but also the role of speakers, to provide them with a better understanding of the components of a real conference. Imitating a real life situation, the students were not always provided with the documents related to the conference in advance. Once both mock conferences had taken place, a questionnaire was provided to the students in order to get comments and ideas

about the task undertaken within the simultaneous interpreting module. The positive comments from the students show how they welcome and find mock conferences useful in simultaneous interpreting training, as mock conferences are aimed at bringing students as close as possible to what they will come across once they start working as professional conference interpreters.

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