Didactic and assessment materials for court interpreting training: action research

Recursos didácticos y de evaluación para la formación en interpretación judicial: una investigación acción

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Abstract: Observation of problems in a court interpreting course during the 2017-18 academic year led to action research. Focus groups and questionnaires were carried out to collect trainees' opinions and a literature review was conducted. Then, in 2018-19, didactic and assessment materials were designed, based partly on the observation of interpreters' performances in real trials. These materials were piloted and fine-tuned for two academic years: 2019-2021. Finally, focus groups and questionnaires were carried out again in 2022 and the results were compared with the ones obtained in 2017. The comparison suggests significant improvement in the trainees' perception of their learning and assessment experiences. This means that the concerns detected in 2017 have been overcome.
Keywords: Court interpreting; action research; didactic tools; court interpreting training, court interpreting assessment.
Resumen: La observación de problemas en una asignatura de interpretación judicial durante el curso 2017-18 dio lugar a una investigación-acción. Se llevaron a cabo grupos focales de discusión y cuestionarios para recoger las opiniones de los alumnos y un análisis bibliográfico. A continuación, en 2018-19 se elaboraron materiales didácticos y de evaluación basados en la observación de la actuación de intérpretes en juicios reales. Los materiales se pusieron a prueba y se mejoraron en los cursos 2019-2021. Por último, en 2022 se volvieron a realizar grupos focales y cuestionarios y se compararon los resultados con los obtenidos en 2017. La comparación sugiere una mejora significativa en la percepción de los alumnos respecto a su aprendizaje y a la evaluación recibida, lo cual implica la superación de los problemas detectados en 2017.

Palabras clave: Interpretación judicial; investigación acción; recursos didácticos; formación en interpretación judicial; evaluación en interpretación judicial.
Summary: Introduction; 1. Methodology, 1.1. Context; 2. Information gathering, reflection and action, 2.1. Information gathering, 2.2. Reflection and action; 3. Didactic materials created, 3.1. Introductory audio-visual material, 3.2. Monolingual thematic lexicons, 3.3. Role-play exercises based on real trials; 4. Assessment materials created, 4.1. Theoretical framework, 4.1.1. Rendering, 4.1.2. Interaction, 4.2. Assessment grid with rubrics and template exam created; Conclusions; References.
Sumario: Introducción; 1. Metodología, 1.1. Contexto; 2. Recogida de información, reflexión y acción, 2.1. Recogida de información, 2.2. Reflexión y acción; 3. Materiales didácticos creados, 3.1. Material audiovisual introductorio, 3.2. Tesauros monolingües, 3.3. Ejercicios de *role-play* basados en juicios reales; 4. Materiales de evaluación creados, 4.1. Marco teórico, 4.1.1. Interpretación, 4.1.2. Interacción, 4.2. Rúbricas de evaluación y modelo de examen diseñados; Conclusiones; Referencias bibliográficas.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of court interpreting is a complex professional activity, full of challenges. Fulfilling the interpreters' role in a court of law means "to attempt to remove the language barrier and to the best of their skill and ability place the non-English speaker in a position as similar as possible to that of a speaker of English" (Hale, 2004, p. 10). Failing to fulfil this role appropriately can cause very serious problems. For instance, inaccurate interpreting can be detrimental to the effectiveness of counsel's questioning strategies and to the credibility of witness' testimonies, thus potentially affecting the outcome of a case (Berk-Seligson, 1990; Hale, 2004).

However, the court interpreter's task is not easy. Firstly because of the numerous difficulties that are present in all types of interpreting, which have been widely discussed by authors such as Gile (1995) and Pöchhacker (2001). Secondly, due to specific reasons that are unique to court interpreting. For example, the misunderstanding of the court interpreters' role by lawyers and users alike (Hale 2004; Matoesian, 2005), poor working conditions (Hale 2004; Mikkelson, 2017; Vigier, 2020b), low remuneration (Hale, 2004; Ortega, 2011 and 2015), and the low level of proficiency of the user in the language of communication between user and interpreter (Angermeyer, 2021; Du, 2019; Rickford and King, 2016).

These difficulties were explored in a research study called TIPp ("Translating and Interpreting in Criminal Proceedings") in which the author participated as co-lead. It took place between 2015 and 2017 in

Spain. This study was based on the analysis of a representative oral corpus compiled, which consisted of a random sample of 55 criminal proceedings, held in Barcelona's criminal courts in 2015. All these proceedings had interpreting provided in one of three language combinations: English–Spanish, French–Spanish and Romanian–Spanish. The research combined a rigorous, qualitative design –ideally suited to describing real practice– with quantitative data analysis techniques and the creation of a measurement instrument. The findings of the TIPp study[1] suggested that there was an unacceptably low standard of court interpreting in the criminal proceedings observed. The analysis of the corpus showed an alarming number of errors in the interpreters' performances. Errors that could affect the result of criminal proceedings, as well as many unjustified non-renditions by the interpreters.

When trying to find the rationale for these errors, the lack of effective specialized training emerged as a possible answer, in line with what has been pointed out by several other researchers in this field, such as Liu and Hale (2018, p. 299):

> All these possible causes for inaccurate court interpreting point to the lack of specialized training among practitioners who usually only receive generic training, if any at all; and the pressing need for quality specialized legal interpreter training programs to improve the practice.

In this context, the author of this article, who was teaching court interpreting at the masters' degree of Legal Translation and Court Interpreting of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), decided to review the training offered with a view to improving it. This was done using the action research approach.

1. METHODOLOGY

Action research (AR) could be defined as "a participatory approach to inquiry that couples action and reflection in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern within a community" (Nicodemus and Swabey, 2016, p. 163). Hale and Napier (2013, pp. 186-187) account for the use of AR in the field of interpreter education and point out that one of the most important elements is the collaborative nature of the

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[1] To see details of the research findings, see Orozco-Jutorán 2017 and 2019.

approach, that should involve a partnership between interpreter educators and researchers. In this case, however, the author was one of the educators *and* the researcher, as has also been the case in recent action research studies in interpreter education, such as Kodura (2022), Pavez (2021) or Yong Zhong and Zhang (2021). In fact, one of the particularities about action research, according to McNiff and Whitehead (2011) is that practitioners research their own practices, which is different from traditional forms of social sciences research, where a professional researcher does research on practitioners. Nicodemus and Swabey (2016, p. 157) also account for practitioners-researchers in the field of interpreter education research and explain that they "raise questions or issues in their environment with the goal of creating contextually relevant solutions". In the words of Yong Zhong and Zhang (2021, p. 91), action research "is about taking tailored actions to tackle issues that have been previously identified".

As was mentioned in the introduction, the goal of the researcher was to review the training offered to court interpreting trainees with a view to improving it. Therefore, the AR approach seemed to be the most appropriate method to accomplish this goal.

Following the cycle of AR described by Stringer *et al.* (2010), the first step was to gather information, then to reflect upon the data collected and finally to act, as is described in section 2 of this article.

1. 1. Context

The masters' degree of Legal Translation and Court Interpreting of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) is a one-year program with 60 ECTs credits. The only language combination offered is English-Spanish. The number of students varies from year to year, with a range of 20 to 30 trainees. The profile and background of trainees is very heterogenic in terms of gender, age, academic background, and nationality. Throughout the study, the ages of the trainees ranged from 22 to 50 years old. 80% of trainees were from Spanish speaking countries, such as Spain, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, but the program also included trainees from English-speaking countries such as the UK and US. There was also a small percentage (5%) of trainees from other countries such as China, Russia, Armenia, Albania, France, and Italy, but they all had proficient Spanish and English (C2 level certificates are required to enrol). Regarding the academic profile, most trainees had

finished a Translation and Interpreting four-year degree (60%), but 15% of trainees had a degree in Law and another 15% of trainees had a BA in languages or similar studies. Finally, the personal profile was also varied. Most of the trainees (70%) started the master shortly after finishing their BA, whilst 30% of trainees already had some years of working experience, mostly as translators or interpreters, but also as lawyers.

Within the syllabus of the master, the court interpreting course is the last interpreting course to take place. When the trainees start the course, they are supposed to be competent in language use and fluency in both English and Spanish, because a language level of C2 is required to enter the master. They have already taken courses that guarantee they are familiar with the interpreting modes usual in court settings (simultaneous and consecutive interpreting and sight translation) and know the professional codes of conduct. Finally, they have received some training in police settings interpreting, so this course is completely devoted to practice in court interpreting in the English-Spanish combination.

Lastly, the course is taught by five trainers. Out of these five, three offer one-week workshops and two are responsible for the main part of the course and the assessment. The researcher is one of the two trainers in charge of the course.

2. INFORMATION GATHERING, REFLECTION AND ACTION

2. 1. Information gathering

The gathering of information for the project took place during the academic year 2017-18, when 25 trainees were enrolled in the master. The data collected was of two types.

On the one hand, a literature review was carried out. The goal was to find out what researchers and trainers had to say regarding court interpreting didactic and assessment materials. The review went form more general works –i.e., in conference interpreting training and assessment– to more specific works, related only to court interpreting training. This literature review made it obvious that there was a need for specialized materials and training using real scenarios. Authors such as Niemants and Cirillo, 2017; Mikkelson, 2013, 2017; and Vigier, 2020a stress this need, and their views can be summarized in the words of Hunt-Gómez and Gómez Moreno (2015, p. 188): "there is a lack of resources and materials specifically devoted to court interpreter training, especially

materials based on real scenarios that take into account the specific characteristics of a trial".

On the other hand, a survey and a focus group were carried out with the trainees of the master to gather information. These two methods were combined to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the trainees' perception of the course on court interpreting. The survey was completed anonymously online once the course was finished, and in it the trainees were asked to read ten statements and indicate their agreement or disagreement using a scale from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 10 ('strongly agree'):

1. The aims of this course were clear to me.
2. I was given helpful feedback on how I was doing in the course.
3. The course was challenging and interesting.
4. The didactic materials used in the course were adequate to develop competence in court interpreting.
5. After the course, I feel confident to accept a job as a court interpreter.
6. I was provided with clear information about the assessment requirements for this course.
7. The assessment methods and tasks in this course were appropriate, given the course aims.
8. The assessment method was clear and objective.
9. The aims of the course were met.
10. Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this course.

The survey was answered by all 25 trainees, and Table 1 shows the results of the survey.

	Mean of answers obtained (June 2017)
1) Course aims clear	8.3
2) Feedback helpful	9
3) Course challenging	9.2
4) Didactic materials	7
5) Professional confidence	4.6
6) Assessment info clear	6.3
7) Assessment methods	4.2

8) Assessment clear and objective	2
9) Course aims met	7.1
10) Overall satisfaction	7,5
Mean of means	**6.52**

Table 1. Answers obtained on the survey carried out in June 2017

After the survey was completed, trainees were asked to take part in a focus group session to gather qualitative data regarding the students' perceptions of the course. The session lasted 90 minutes and 22 out of the 25 students attended. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and the rules for the focus group discussion: there were no expectations, anything they said was fine and they could express their opinions with complete freedom. They were made aware of the 90 minute time-limit and asked to discuss the question: "What improvements would you like to see in the course?". The researcher clarified that the question included any aspect of the course they might think of, from teaching and feedback received, to didactic materials, assessment, contents, or any other elements. The session was recorded with participants' consent and was later transcribed, following which content analysis was carried out. Table 2 summarizes the opinions of the trainees, grouped by topics.

Topic	**Trainees' opinions**
Trainers' performance and feedback	There was general agreement that trainers were good professionals who were able to transfer their knowledge and that the feedback received during the course was sufficient and individualised.
Contents of the course	Trainees were mostly happy with the contents of the course, but the vast majority mentioned that they would have liked to practice more and with more types of materials or scenarios (*i.e.*, more types of crimes). They also mentioned that they would like

	to have more practice regarding the handling of legal terminology.
Types of practice carried out	Most trainees felt that there was not enough individual practice.
Assessment	Many trainees expressed their dissatisfaction with the assessment. Trainees felt that they did not know how their exam had been marked and that they sensed that another trainer might have easily given them a different grade. Some also expressed that they did not feel prepared for the exam, because they did not know what to expect beforehand. The words "subjective" and "not clear" were used by many of the trainees.
Feeling of confidence to perform as a court interpreter	Most of the trainees expressed their anxiety towards performing as court interpreters and said that they did not feel ready to take a job as a court interpreter.

Table 2. Results of the focus groups carried out in 2017

Regarding ethical issues, students were provided with explicit information about the project and were allowed not to participate in the survey or the focus group. Trainees' privacy was protected by (a) not mentioning any names or identifiable elements in the findings of the focus group (b) letting them see the summary of their opinions of the focus group and omitting any content at the request of its authors. Any use of trainees' opinions was authorised by them.

2. 2. Reflection and action

During the summer of 2018, the researcher processed, analysed, and reflected on the results obtained in the survey and the focus group. The data gathered in the survey showed that the overall level of satisfaction was 7.5 out of 10, and some aspects of the course were highly regarded by the trainees: the helpfulness of the feedback received, the level of interest and challenge provided by the course, and the clarity of the course aims.

This was in line with the information gathered in the focus group, and although there was room for improvement, the results suggested that these were not major areas of concern.

However, the answers to the survey and the focus group shed light on several areas in clear need of improvement. Firstly, the didactic materials needed to be more varied and include legal terminology handling. Secondly, more interpreting practice in real scenarios was needed, so that trainees could feel prepared and confident to perform as court interpreters. Thirdly, the assessment methods needed to change substantially to become clear and objective.

All of this data was in line with the literature review carried out and, furthermore, it was consistent with the conclusions of the TIPp project in which the researcher had participated.

In light of this data, reflection led the researcher to establish an action plan. The plan had two basic objectives: (a) the creation of high-quality didactic material to be used on the course, and (b) the design of a clear and objective assessment grid –one with a rubric– and a template exam for the course.

During the academic year 2018-19, the didactic and assessment materials were created. This was done in collaboration with the other main trainer of the court interpreting course, Dr. Carmen Bestué, who had also been the co-leader of the TIPp research project. Next, the materials were used in class and fine-tuned over two academic years, 2019-20 and 2020-21. Finally, the initial survey and focus group were repeated, following the same procedure and methodology already explained, in June of 2022. In that academic year (2021-22) there were 23 trainees enrolled in the master. All of them took part in the survey and 20 of them participated in the focus group. Tables 3 and 4 show the comparison of the results obtained in the surveys and focus groups of 2017 and 2022.

	Mean of answers obtained (2017)	Mean of answers obtained (2022)
1) Course aims clear	8.3	10
2) Feedback helpful	9	9.5
3) Course challenging	9.2	9.5
4) Didactic materials	7	9.5
5) Professional confidence	4.6	8

6) Assessment info clear	6.3	10
7) Assessment methods	4.2	10
8) Assessment clear and objective	2	9.5
9) Course aims met	7.1	9.5
10) Overall satisfaction	7.5	9
Mean of means	**6.52**	**9.45**

Table 3. Comparison of results of the surveys carried out in 2017 and 2022

Topic	Trainees' opinions (June 2017)	Trainees' opinions (June 2022)
Trainers' performance and feedback	There was general agreement that trainers were good professionals who were able to transfer their knowledge and that the feedback received during the course was sufficient and individualised.	There was a broad consensus that trainers were able to transfer their knowledge and that the feedback received during the course was sufficient and individualised.
Contents of the course	Trainees were mostly happy with the contents of the course, but the vast majority mentioned that they would have liked to practice more and with more types of materials or scenarios (*i.e*., more types of crimes). They also mentioned that they would like to have more practice regarding the handling of legal terminology.	Trainees were mainly happy with the contents of the course. Some mentioned that they would have liked a longer course.
Types of practice carried out	Most trainees felt that there was not enough individual practice.	Most trainees felt that there was enough practice to be able to know what it is to be a court interpreter, although they still needed to practise more to reach the level of performance

		they would like to acquire.
Assessment	Many trainees expressed their dissatisfaction with the assessment. Trainees felt that they did not know how their exam had been marked and that they sensed that another trainer might have easily given them a different grade. Some also expressed that they did not feel prepared for the exam, because they did not know what to expect beforehand. The words "subjective" and "not clear" were used by many of the trainees.	Only two trainees mentioned the assessment and it was to say that it helped them see the areas in which they needed to improve before actually performing in a court of law as interpreters.
Feeling of confidence to perform as a court interpreter	Most of the trainees expressed their anxiety towards performing as court interpreters and said that they did not feel ready to take a job as a court interpreter.	Most trainees expressed that they knew what to expect and what was expected of them as court interpreters, and they felt capable of performing those duties. However, they were not sure they wanted to act as court interpreters because the fees were usually very low and the working conditions were not good either.

Table 4. Comparison of results of the focus groups
carried out in 2017 and 2022

The results obtained in the survey and the focus group in 2022 suggest that the main problems observed in 2017 had been overcome. The assessment, which was one of the main concerns, was perceived significantly better by trainees in 2022, both in the survey and in the focus

group. The confidence to take on a job as a court interpreter also increased significantly. Furthermore, the reasons given by trainees for not wanting to perform as court interpreters changed from anxiety or not feeling ready, to concerns regarding the low fees and the working conditions -issues which were completely unrelated to the course.

The trainees' perception of the didactic materials and the contents of the course also showed improvement, both in the survey and the focus groups' comments. Finally, the overall satisfaction with the course increased by 3 points in the survey, which suggested that the changes implemented in the years of fine-tuning had been successful.

3. DIDACTIC MATERIALS CREATED

The didactic materials developed for the court interpreting course include: (a) introductory audio-visual materials, (b) monolingual lists of terms (in Spanish) grouped in lexical fields or thematic lexicons, and (c) role-play exercises based on real trials. The basis for all of these materials was the oral corpus that had been compiled during the TIPp project, which consisted of 55 criminal proceedings held in Barcelona's criminal courts in 2015. Some of the findings of the project –such as the main areas where mistakes were observed in the interpreters' performances, as well as the main challenging areas for interpreters– were also used in the development of the materials, as is explained in the following sub-sections.

All of these didactic materials were created by the researcher and the other main trainer of the court interpreting course, Dr. Carmen Bestué.

3. 1. Introductory audio-visual material

Using the funding provided by the Directorate General for Interpretation of the European Commission,[2] two videos were created. The aim was to introduce the main challenges of court interpreting to the trainees. They were designed to be used at the beginning of the court interpreting course, to raise awareness of the problems the trainees are going to be facing when interpreting in a court of law.

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[2] An Action Grant was received for the project "Expanding Professional Borders: Public Service Interpreting and the Challenges of the New Millennium", that can be seen here: https://webs.uab.cat/expandingpsi/. This project was conducted by the MIRAS research group and was led by Dr. Anna Gil-Bardají between July 2018 and July 2019. The two videos included here were part of the six videos created in the project.

The videos can be a strong motivation for trainees to put all their effort into doing the course. After watching them, trainees are more likely to relate to the practicing exercises suggested by the trainers as real, professional practice. The determination of the trainees to become competent in all aspects of the course is key to their success. Because this training is very demanding, they can only succeed if they are ready to work hard.

The videos were based on the real problems faced by interpreters observed in the abbreviated criminal proceedings of the TIPp study and were filmed with professional actors and actresses that reproduce some of the real situations observed[3]. This can be seen in Figure 1, where the actors and actresses are occupying the real positions that are usually held in abbreviated criminal proceedings in a courtroom in Spain. The defendant and interpreter stand next to the microphone, in front of the judge, and on the two sides are the counsels: the public prosecutor and the private accusation counsels to the left of the judge and the defense counsels to the right. These images are helpful for the trainer in the classroom to introduce all the features and context of a courtroom.
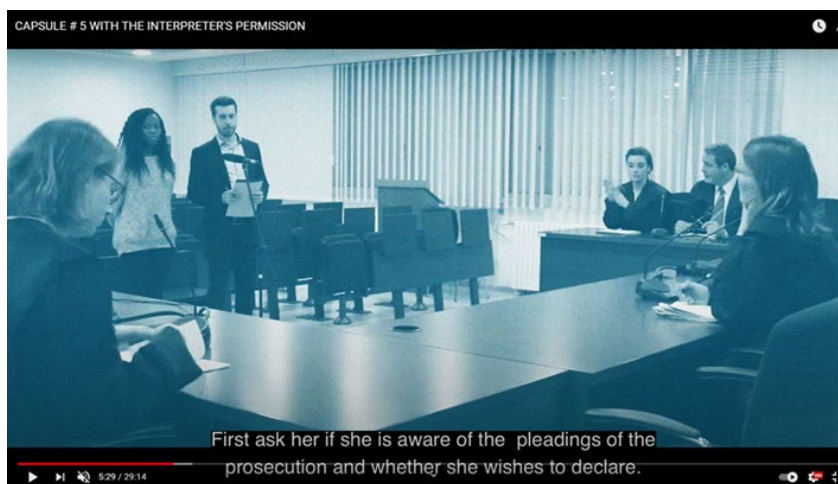

Figure 1. Screenshot of one of the videos depicting a moment in a trial

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[3] The videos were directed and filmed by Zoe Catsaras, of Tripwire Video. The versions with English subtitles can be accessed in these two links: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ahncM7puz8&feature=emb_title and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lMl5Wk5tSZA&feature=emb_logo.

Apart from the scenes filmed with actors depicting parts of the trial, the videos also feature the trainers, filmed in a normal setting (*i.e.* not in the courtroom), who comment on the situations seen in the acting parts and explain the pitfalls and how they can be tackled. Both videos contain several parts of one hearing each, and in both cases all the filmed courtroom situations are repeated, once with the interpreters not knowing how to perform well, as was observed in real trials in the TIPp study, and a second time when the interpreter performs well and overcomes the difficulty. This second, adequate performance, also allows the videos to be used by court interpreters on their own, in case they do not have access to a specialized training program, or in a program, if the trainer wants the trainees to watch the videos outside of class time and then comment on them in class.

The first video is called "With the interpreters' consent"; it lasts 30 minutes, and deals with some of the specific challenges of court interpreting. It explains, for instance, that there is a high density of information, referring not only to what is happening in that moment, but also to all the documents that have been compiled in the pre-trial phase. It also explains how counsels use their interventions to confirm or elicit information that will then be used in a trial strategy to oppose their counterpart, including questioning techniques such as asking the same question several times with little, subtle differences in the formulation, in order to detect possible contradictions in the answers given.

Secondly, the video explains the impartial role of the interpreter and gives an example of an unjustified non-rendition. The defendant asks the interpreter: "Can I say that I have a son?" to which the interpreter replies: "Yes, of course." And then the interpreter addresses the judge and says: "Tiene un hijo" ("She has a son"). The trainer in the video then explains that this usually happens because defendants tend to feel close to the interpreter, who is the only one who speaks their language in the cold, unfamiliar environment of the courtroom, and thus defendants might think that the interpreter can understand and advise them. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the interpreter to explain to them, before the trial or the hearing starts, that they are going to interpret everything they say and that they are there only to translate, but not to give advice in any way. After this explanation by the trainer, the video shows the same situation but this time the interpreter proceeds in a professional manner, and when the defendant asks the interpreter: "Can I say that I have a son?" he just

translates it into Spanish and says: "¿Puedo decir que tengo un hijo?" ("Can I say that I have a son?").

Thirdly, the video explains the importance of using the same register as the speaker and gives examples of lowering the register used by the prosecutor, and also use of vulgar, rude language that were observed in the TIPp study. Finally, it gives examples of accuracy and the challenges posed by legal terminology.

Although the trainers do not mention this in the videos, the examples that show good practices in the different possible interpreting modes advised for court interpreters. For instance, whispered simultaneous interpreting during the long interventions of the judge or the counsels allow the interpreter to not interrupt the flow of the discourse. Long consecutive could also be used if there is the possibility of notetaking, or even short consecutive if the interpreter asks for a pause to interpret, as is shown in the second video. During the questioning phase of the trial, however, short consecutive or liaison interpreting is advised since the interventions are usually short. These recommendations are in line with several national codes, such as the one which governs federal court proceedings in the United States (Mikkelson, 2010, p. 4). These aspects could be commented on by the trainer in the classroom while watching the video with the trainees.

The second video is called "Conversation management". It is 20 minutes long and deals with the role of the interpreter as a conversation manager, coordinating the interaction of the different agents. This is usually necessary in the courtroom because judicial operators are often not familiar with the role of the interpreter and thus unknowingly cause problems for him/her. Examples of these difficulties are fast speech – for instance, the TIPp study found that at least one of the judicial operators (judge, prosecutor and counsels) exceeded 180 words per minute speech speed in 72 % of the trials; overlaps among speakers –15 per hour were observed in the TIPp study; and interruptions –24.6 per hour were observed.

Managing the conversation means dealing with speaking turns, long turns, overlaps, interruptions, silences, pauses, repetitions, speech style and interventions with the interpreter's own voice, such as when introducing the interpreter and his/her role before the trial begins if the judge does not do it (the introduction of the interpreter was found to take place only in 25% of the trials observed in the TIPp study).

The video then focuses on explaining and giving examples of justified non-renditions and speech style recommendations. In the same vein as the first video, the ideas are first explained by the trainer and then acted on screen reproducing moments of real trials observed in the TIPp study, with examples showing how the interpreter could handle difficult situations. Figure 4 shows a moment when the interpreter, standing next to the defendant, is intervening with his own voice in a justified non-rendition, using the third person to ask for a pause to interpret.
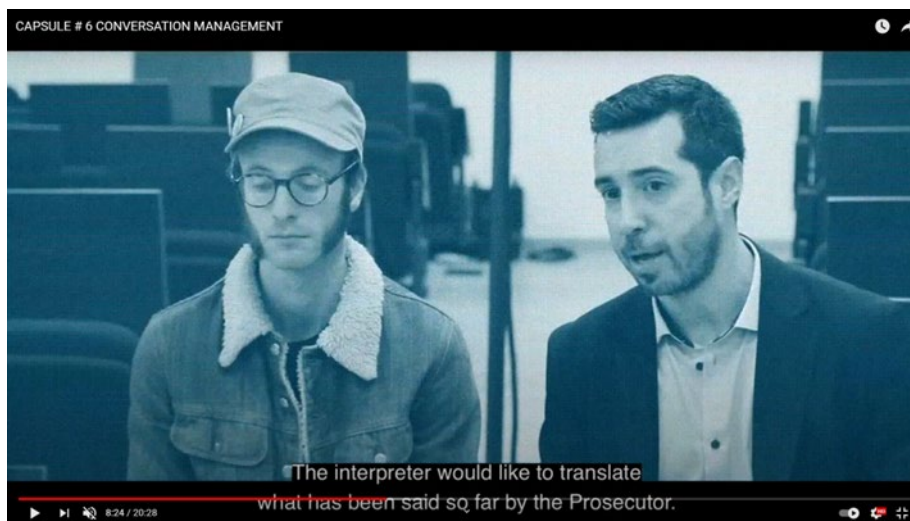

Figure 2. Screenshot of one of the videos depicting the moment
of a justified non-rendition by the interpreter

3. 2. Monolingual thematic lexicons

The phraseological continuum is specific to every language, system, and country, but in the English-Spanish case, also to every specific jurisdiction. Sometimes, in one country there is more than one jurisdiction and there might be important differences in the legal language used in courts in those different jurisdictions (for instance, between England and Scotland, or amongst different states in the USA). Sometimes legal terms can also vary according to the type of court inside one jurisdiction, depending on the rank of the court. "Prosecutor" is a good example of the level of variability there can be in one single common legal term. In English, the legal party responsible for presenting the case in a criminal

trial against an individual accused of breaking the law has at least 15 denominations depending on the jurisdiction: Crown prosecutor, prosecutor or prosecutor counsel in Australia; Crown attorney or Crown counsel in Canada; procurators' fiscal or advocates deputee in Scotland; district attorney, county attorney, city attorney, county prosecutor, prosecuting attorney, state's attorney, commonwealth's attorney or even solicitor (in South Carolina) in the US, depending on the rank of the court and the state; Crown prosecutor, prosecutor or public prosecutor in England and Wales. The case with this term in Spanish is very similar: the public prosecutor in a criminal trial can be called Ministerio Fiscal, fiscal, Ministerio Público in Spain and Argentina, but s/he is called procurador in Mexico or Colombia. This can be especially challenging if wrongly translated because a "procurador" in Spain has a very different role in the same court context. Therefore, it is very important that trainees learn to recognize, understand and eventually be able to use all these terms, bundles and phrasemes monolingually, in the language of the court of law where they will be acting as interpreters.

For this purpose, monolingual lists of terms in context were created, always with examples of the ways they are used in complete sentences. Figure 3 shows an example of a fragment of one such list that can be used to familiarize the trainees with the usual vocabulary in courts of justice in Spain. The fragment shown in Figure 3 is adapted from a series of monolingual lists of terms (in Spanish) grouped in lexical fields or thematic lexicons, which were created from the oral corpus of the TIPp study. All the thematic lexicons are accessible (Bestué, 2021). The example provided in Figure 3 compiles different ways to refer to the people appearing in court in any capacity (judge, counsels, defendant, witnesses, etc.). The first column displays the terms, and the second column displays different contexts where the terms are used, taken from the corpus. In this way, the term can be understood and studied together with the phrasemes and usual collocations in class.

Términos	Fraseología
Acusación particular Acusación pública Fundamentar la acusación	Comparece por la acusación particular la letrada señora Manuela Fernández. De conformidad con el escrito presentado por la acusación pública.
Acusado	Comparece en calidad de acusado
Acusado en rebeldía	El resto de acusados o bien ya han sido juzgados o bien están en rebeldía

Declarante	El declarante se fue al baño.
Defendido/a	Por tanto, tampoco la presencia de mi defendido era como para considerar que pudiera estar cogiendo ningún objeto del interior.
Defensa	¿La defensa tiene alguna cuestión previa? ¿Desea añadir algo más en su defensa?
Denunciante	El denunciante manifiesta.
Designa particular/ oficial	¿Es una designa particular o es la designa oficial del turno de oficio?

Figure 3. Fragment of a monolingual list of terms and phraseology including different ways of referring to people appearing in court in Spain (adapted from Bestué, 2021)

3. 3. Role-play exercises based on real trials

Authors such as Burn and Creeze (2020), Hale and Gonzalez (2017), Hunt-Gómez (2019), Mikkelson (2013), Ortega (2015), Stern and Liu (2019), Vigier (2020a) and Wadensjö (2014) affirm that the ideal situation for training in court interpreting is to use role-plays based on real trials, so that they reflect real scenarios, including all hesitations, grammar mistakes, repetitions, illocutionary force and other features that the students will encounter. The role plays, of course, need to reflect the reality of the linguistic, social and cultural context of the judicial system and jurisdiction where the interpreter will be performing, which, in this case, is Spain.

Therefore, the oral corpus compiled and transcribed during the TIPp project was used to create several scenarios for role-playing. All the scenarios are realistic in the sense that the matters of the trials and the interventions were copied from the transcriptions. The only thing that was manipulated was the length and, in some cases, some interventions from a speaker in one trial were introduced in another scenario to make sure that all the usual problems faced by the interpreters appeared in some of the role-plays. Some of these scenarios had only the basic necessary agents in any trial (judge, public prosecutor, defence counsel and defendant) and some had also other possible agents, such as private prosecutor, victim/s, other defendants, witnesses, etc. Each scenario role-plays a hearing related to a different type of crime, so that altogether there is a wide variety of

vocabulary and registers. Figure 4 shows a fragment of one of the role-plays.

Encargo: Te llaman para que actúes como intérprete del inglés en una vista en el Juzgado de lo Penal N.º 27 de Barcelona
Jueza: Se constituye este órgano jurisdiccional en juicio oral y audiencia pública para la celebración del procedimiento abreviado 138/2018, por la presunta comisión de un delito contra la seguridad vial del que aparece acusado Jackson Harris Jedar. Tiene la palabra el Ministerio Fiscal por si quiere plantear alguna pregunta previa. **Fiscal:** Sí, con la venia, el Ministerio Fiscal, como cuestión previa, a los solos efectos de una estricta conformidad alcanzada con la defensa del acusado, modifica el escrito de conclusiones provisionales en la conclusión quinta, en el sentido de que se sustituye- - se sustituya la pena de 6 meses de prisión, por 12 meses de multa, a razón de 6 euros de cuota diarios y responsabilidad personal subsidiaria para el caso de impago, de conformidad con el artículo 88 del Código Penal. Y que se le imponga la obligación del Artículo 83.5 de participar en un programa formativo de educación vial. **Jueza:** Eh, pide la sustitución de la pena, ¿no? **Fiscal:** Sí, la sustitución. **Jueza:** Vale, tiene la palabra la defensa. **Letrado de la defensa:** Sí, con la venia, su Señoría, para adherirse a lo manifestado por el Ministerio Fiscal. **Jueza:** Muy bien. Eh, que si pueden acercarse al micrófono, por favor. (dirigiéndose a intérprete y acusado).

Figure 4. Example of a fragment of a role-play exercise

Two types of exercise were designed to use in the role-plays. Firstly, one where the trainees play all the roles. That is, each trainee is assigned a role and reads their part and the trainee who has been assigned the role of the interpreter interprets, while the rest just read. This exercise was used as an introductory activity until trainees became familiar with the language used in court and the roles of the different agents. If there were more trainees than roles, then trainees worked in groups so that they all played

a role. Secondly, once the trainees were more familiar with the language and situations, they went to interpreting booths and all of them played the role of the interpreter. The rest of the roles could either be played by the trainer, or a previous recording could be used. The advantage of the trainer playing all the roles is that she could control the speed of the discourses and slowdown in case trainees were struggling too much, which usually happened with simultaneous interpreting at the beginning of the course. Then, as trainees started to be able to interpret with greater speed, the previously recorded role-plays were used. These exercises proved to be most useful when students' performances were recorded in the booths, their renderings commented on and assessed by the trainer and then they were asked to interpret the same role-play a second time. Finally, the recorded role-plays were also used by trainees between sessions of the course, to get more practise.

4. ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

The idea behind the creation of the assessment materials was that they were very clear and objective, or as objective as possible. To accomplish that, a solid theoretical framework needed to be established, to decide how to measure quality in the trainees' court interpreting performance. The literature review carried out, together with the theoretical framework developed, are presented in sub-section 4.1. Then, based on the theoretical framework, an exam model and a grid with rubrics to assess particular competences or skills in trainees were developed, and they are presented in sub-section 4.2.

4. 1. Theoretical framework

To establish a solid theoretical framework, we started by considering the operationalisation of "good quality performance in court interpreting" that was used for the TIPp study. In this study, court interpreting quality was operationalized into two indicators, inspired by Wadensjö's (1998) dialogic discourse-based interaction paradigm. Wadensjö's approach goes beyond the monologic view (what she calls "talk as text") and complements it with the dialogic view ("talk as activity"), understanding interpreting not only as a translation task, but also as mediation and coordination. In this way, she accounts for the double role of dialogue

interpreters: relaying original utterances (renditions) and coordinating conversation (non-renditions).

In the TIPp study, two direct variables were chosen to describe the quality of court interpreting: interaction problems and textual problems, based on Wadensjö's distinction between 'talk-as-activity' and 'talk-as-text' (Wadensjö 1998, p. 21). Then the variables were operationalised into indicators to create a measuring instrument: (a) two scales were created to measure the textual problems variable (an interval scale to measure accuracy of the information transfer and a categorical scale to quantify types of solutions applied by the interpreter) and (b) three categorical scales were created to measure the interaction problems variable: one to quantify types of conversation management problems, another to quantify types of non-renditions and a third to quantify the speech style.

This approach is actually very close to most official practice standards to ensure quality in court interpreting in different countries, although they might use other names. For instance, Mason (2018, p. 663) mentions "accuracy and protocol/demeanor" as the features of good quality court interpreting set in the USA by professional associations such as the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) and the entity that certifies those who may serve as an interpreter in the federal court system, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. They consider that the standards of accuracy and protocol/demeanor are aimed at maintaining both the quality of the interpreter's renditions and the discursive relationship of the main actors in a courtroom proceeding (Mason, 2018, p. 664).

Therefore, we decided to take this model and these two aspects of court interpreting (accuracy/renditions and discursive interaction/non-renditions) as the basis for developing a pedagogical grid and rubrics which would assess two main competences. These competences are explained in detail below: (a) Rendering, developed from the "talk as text" paradigm, that encompasses three sub-competences (Accuracy, Register, and Use of legal terminology) and (b) Interaction, developed from the "talk as activity" paradigm, that encompasses three sub-competences: Conversation management skills (Non-renditions and Speech style), Use of language and Fluency.

4. 1. 1. Rendering

Fidelity (*e.g.* Mikkelson, 2017), loyalty (*e.g.* Chen and Chen, 2013) and accuracy (*e.g.* Hale, 2004), are different names to refer to the same concept with slight variations, and are mentioned in all models of court interpreting quality. The definitions and indicators chosen by scholars to explain what is meant by accuracy, fidelity or loyalty include several aspects that are important to bear in mind when interpreting in court settings.

For instance, Pöchhacker (2001, p. 413), after a thorough review of the literature on models of quality in any kind of simultaneous interpreting, suggests four common criteria to observe accuracy. These criteria range from the lexico-semantic core –"accurate rendition" and "adequate target language expression"– to the socio-pragmatic sphere of interaction - "equivalent intended effect" and "successful communication". Lee (2008, p. 169), referring specifically to court interpreting, adds that the level of accuracy may be reflected in the extent to which deviations, such as omissions, additions and unjustifiable changes or misinterpretations of the meaning and intention of the speaker, are observed in interpreting performance. ISO 20228 (2019, p. 7) states that interpreters shall "accurately, faithfully, and impartially interpret the substance of all statements without any additions, omissions, or other misleading factors that could alter the intended meaning of the speaker's message".

Regarding accuracy for court settings, Mikkelson (2017) talks about a fidelity continuum where a full rendition involves conveying every element of meaning of the source message, without adding, omitting, editing, simplifying, or embellishing; that is, maintaining the tone and register of the original message, even if it is inappropriate, offensive, or unintelligible and maintaining also comments, pauses, and hesitations.

As Liu and Hale (2018) affirm, it is generally agreed by scholars that purely verbatim (word for word) interpretation does not enable real communication in court interpreting settings, something most necessary in a trial. They affirm that accuracy should include the complete transfer of content, style and illocutionary force used by the speaker: "quality interpreting in court should accurately relay both the content of original utterances and the style of the speaker" (Liu and Hale, 2018, p. 300). To back this idea, these authors quote the most recent Code of Ethics of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT, 2012, p. 10), which establishes that interpreters are required to preserve "the content and

intent of the source message or text without omission or distortion". This means that, to be considered accurate, a rendition requires "the complete transfer of the propositional content, as well as the illocutionary force of the source language. In this way, the pragmatics of courtroom interaction may be maintained" (Liu and Hale, 2018, p. 300). To observe accuracy in court interpreting, they suggest four main dimensions to be considered: propositional content, linguistic accuracy, illocutionary point and degree of strength.

In this sense, the findings of the TIPp study, as can be seen in Figure 5, were quite alarming. A mean of 21.1 serious errors per hour of trial was found. This implies that there was one serious error, which could affect the result of criminal proceedings, every three minutes. The issue is not merely a lack of precision, but serious errors in the translation of the messages, which were found to violate the defendant's right of information established in the Spanish laws. These findings indicate that accuracy should be taken into account and assessed in a court interpreting course.

Serious omissions per hour	Serious additions of information per hour	Serious major shifts of meaning per hour	Incomprehensible sentences per hour	Total of serious errors per hour
8.5	3.2	7.1	2.3	21.1

Figure 5. Number of serious errors per hour of trial
found in the TIPp study

Dhami *et al*. (2017) provide yet another model for accuracy in court interpreting and highlight the manner of delivery, the force of the utterance, the register chosen by the speakers and the discourse strategies used by law enforcement agents, including rapport-building features, as accuracy elements. O'Barr (1982) emphasizes special linguistic structures and legal terminology due to the effect they have on the interaction and on evaluations of credibility. Figure 6 shows an example observed in the TIPp research study of an inaccurate rendition that includes all the features mentioned in the models of Dhami *et al*. (2017) and O'Barr (1982). The prosecutor says "arrest" and "crime of theft", and the interpreter lowers the register and uses colloquial language to translate these legal terms as

"caught by the police" and "taking something", thus losing the legal force of the utterance.

Prosecutor: "*¿Y, y usted fue detenida por este, por estos hechos?, ¿por un delito de hurto?"*
[Back translation: "And, and you were arrested because of these facts? Because of a crime of theft?"]
Interpreter: "Were you caught by the police because of this? Did police catch you because of taking anything?"

Figure 6. Example of inaccurate rendition observed in the TIPp study

With this inaccurate rendition, the interpreter changes the way in which the user, who is the defendant, perceives the prosecutor. The prosecutor is not seen as a legal expert who uses legal terms, as the original utterance suggests, but as someone who speaks in a standard or even colloquial register. This could have consequences in the language used by the defendant to answer the prosecutor's questions, and in turn influence the perception the judge and the other counsels have of the defendant. As stated by Angermeyer (2009, p. 3): "sociolinguistic studies of variation in the courtroom have shown that individuals whose language variety or speech style differs from that of legal professionals are likely to be evaluated negatively by judges or jurors".

Register is usually a challenge for court interpreters because judges and counsels tend to use a very high register while talking about complex legal matters, every-day life or even sordid events. This makes it a difficult task to reformulate their messages in the same register in the target language. Furthermore, the opposite situation is also true: slang as well as offensive and vulgar language can be used by defendants and witnesses, and sometimes also by counsels, and such language needs to be translated in the same register too. Feeling comfortable using that kind of language, or even being familiar with it, should not be taken for granted. Therefore, register was another dimension that needed to be included in the assessment of the course.

Other scholars place more emphasis on the pragmatic aspect of accuracy (*e.g.* Angermeyer, 2009, 2021; Fraser and Freedgood, 1999; Hale, 1996; Jacobsen, 2004, 2008). An example of a pragmatic aspect in court interpreting accuracy is whether interpreters translate another

person's speech in the first person (direct speech), or in the third person (indirect or reported speech): this will be commented in the following sub-section, as we decided to include these aspects in the interaction competence for assessment purposes.

Taking all the elements mentioned into consideration, we decided to include three sub-competences (accuracy, register and legal terminology) in our assessment. These three sub-competences account for a wider competence: rendering. However, in the grid and the rubrics for the assessment, the accuracy sub-competence (which is presented in sub-section 4.2.) has more weight than the other two. This is because the consequences of errors in accuracy in court settings are far worse than the consequences of errors in register, or in the use of legal terminology.

Overall, being competent in rendering means achieving a performance in the target language that corresponds exactly to the source message, including the content and the intent, from the linguistic, pragmatic, and legal perspective, as well as the perceived register or tone of the source message. These abilities are divided into "accuracy", which is the adequate rendering of the propositional content and the pragmatic and illocutionary force of the source message; "register", which accounts for maintaining the register or tone of the source message; and "legal terminology", which includes court and legal terminology.

4. 1. 2. Interaction

We define the interaction competence assessed as being able to deal in an adequate manner with the discursive relationship of the main actors in a courtroom proceeding. It is explained in the code of ethics and professional responsibilities of NAJIT (2016, p. 1) as follows:

> Court interpreters shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the standards and protocol of the Court and shall perform their duties as unobtrusively as possible. Court interpreters are to use the same grammatical person as the speaker. When it becomes necessary to assume a primary role in the communication, they must make it clear that they are speaking for themselves.

As we have mentioned, some authors consider the contents of interaction competence to be part of accuracy, fidelity, or loyalty, or maybe just part of the code of ethics. However, for the purposes of assessment,

we consider it essential to separate interaction competence, and break it down into several sub-competences. The main sub-competence is conversation management, which includes non-renditions and speech style -the skills mentioned in the previous quote by NAJIT (2016, p. 1).

Firstly, the quote mentions that the interpreters should "perform their duties unobtrusively". This obtrusive behavior would consist of what in our assessment, based on Wadensjö's terms (1998, p. 25), are called unjustified non-renditions. These include three categories that were observed in the TIPp study: (a) warning the defendant, that is, giving advice or instructions on how to behave; (b) answering on behalf of the defendant or any other speaker in the court; and (c) adding information to any of the participants' utterances or asking questions not posed in the original utterances. Unjustified non-renditions are also prohibited in all codes of professional conduct for court interpreters. For instance, the NPRSI (2016: 5) states that:

> Practitioners carrying out work as Public Service Interpreters, or in other contexts where the requirement for neutrality between parties is absolute, shall not enter into discussion, give advice or express opinions or reactions to any of the parties that exceed their duties as interpreters.

The findings of the TIPp study in this respect were quite alarming: it was found that there was an average of 45.4 unjustified non-renditions per hour of trial, hence the clear need to include this category in the training of court interpreters. Therefore, it seemed also necessary to include unjustified non-renditions in the assessment.

The unjustified non-renditions are opposed to justified non-renditions, which are mentioned at the end of the previous quote by NAJIT (2016, p. 1): "when it becomes necessary to assume a primary role in the communication". These justified non-renditions include: (a) seeking clarification for something that was expressed ambiguously, (b) asking for confirmation that the interpreter understood or heard the information clearly, (c) asking for a pause to be able to interpret what has been said – in cases of very long turns, or overlaps among speakers, for instance –, and (d) retrieval of information, when the interpreter is aware that s/he is missing some information and asks to retrieve it. This agrees with all codes of conduct by court interpreters, such as the NRPSI's (2016, p. 6), where it is stated that:

Practitioners shall not interrupt, pause or intervene except: (i) to ask for clarification; (ii) to point out that one party may not have understood something which the interpreter has good reason to believe has been assumed by the other party; (iii) to alert the parties to a possible missed cultural reference or inference; (iv) or to signal a condition or factor which might impair the interpreting process (such as inadequate seating, poor sight-lines or audibility, inadequate breaks etc.).

Cases (ii) and (iii) of justified non-renditions are also included in NAJIT's code of ethics, as explained by Mason (2018, p. 665): "Although the code of ethics and training of interpreters discourages direct negotiation and accommodation with witnesses, interpreters may engage therein to resolve perceived gaps in communication".

Therefore, training is essential for trainees to be able to easily understand and recognize each of the various situations in which non-renditions are justified.

Regarding the second sub-competence for the interaction competence, namely, speech style, the code of ethics of NAJIT (2016, p. 1) mentions that court interpreters are to use the same grammatical person as the speaker, *i.e.*, direct speech, as is agreed by many of the authors already mentioned (for instance, Hale, 2004; González *et al*., 2012). This means that, out of the three possible speech styles –direct speech, indirect speech and reported speech– only direct speech should be encouraged in court interpreting.

This was another indicator observed in the TIPp study, which showed that only in 33% of the cases were the interpreters consistent in using the same grammatical person as the speaker in the trial. In 67% of the cases, they combined direct, indirect or reported speech in the same trial and thus changed from first to third person. Clearly, these inconsistencies adversely affect the clarity of interaction between the participants of judicial proceedings.

An important remark regarding speech style is that when using justified non-renditions, interpreters need to speak in the third person to make it clear that they are talking in their own voice. For instance, trainees may be put in situations where they are standing next to the microphone and cannot take notes, and the judge is taking a long turn. In such a case, the interpreter should interrupt and say: "If it pleases the court, the interpreter requests a pause to be able to interpret what has been said so far".

Finally, for assessment purposes we are adding two more sub-competences under the interaction competence: use of language and fluency. By "use of language" we mean the capacity to use syntax and grammar correctly and in an idiomatic way in both languages. By "fluency" we mean clear and understandable pronunciation in both languages and keeping pauses, filler noises, repetitions and hesitations faithful to the source message.

These are two skills that are not usually mentioned in the codes or standards of professional practice because they are taken for granted in professional interpreters. In fact, trainees are supposed to be proficient in language use and fluency before enrolling in a postgraduate interpreting course as well. However, our experience shows that trainees often need to improve these skills, especially in simultaneous interpreting, and that is why they were included in the assessment grid developed.

4.2. ASSESSMENT GRID WITH RUBRICS AND TEMPLATE EXAM CREATED

Before presenting the grid, it is important to point out that the purpose of the grid is to assess the trainees' performances both from a summative point of view –*i.e.*, marking or scoring– and from a formative point of view. Formative assessment gives the trainee feedback that supports the learning process and is of paramount importance in this case, since it helps trainees to become aware of their areas of strength and weakness, and to learn from their mistakes. Finally, it is also important to remark that there are many existing tests and assessment grids specific for court interpreting, but most of the ones we are aware of have been designed either for national or institutional exams/qualifications, or for research/professional assessment, that is, not with pedagogical goals in mind. Some of the features of the assessment grid suggested here are shared with other existing grids or scales, since many of the basic competences assessed –such as accuracy and fluency– are present in almost all grids and models. However, there are also important differences from all the grids we have seen, the basic one being that this grid is based on the errors which were observed in the interpreters' performances in real trials during the TIPp study. The main aim of this grid is to improve the performance of trainees so that they can overcome the difficulties observed in professional practice.

The grid presented in Figure 7 is, therefore, a pedagogical tool for an analytic assessment of court interpreting performance. It evaluates with

rubrics six assessment criteria, which account for the six sub-competences that have just been described: there are three competences assessed under the "talk as text" or rendering paradigm (accuracy, register and legal terminology) and three under "talk as action" or interaction paradigm (conversation management, fluency and use of language). One of these sub-competences –conversation management– includes two indicators: speech style and unjustified non-renditions.

Accuracy is given more value than the rest of the sub-competences because it is the main requirement of any rendition, so the results obtained regarding accuracy have double weight. Three categories of errors are considered when marking for accuracy: major shifts of meaning, omissions, and additions to the source message. There is also a separation between inadequate renditions considered "serious" errors, and inadequate renditions which are considered not so serious. By serious we mean that they can affect the development or the outcome of the trial; for instance, not rendering "right not to plead guilty" when interpreting the reading of rights to the defendant by the judge would be considered a serious omission.

The grid presented in Figure 7 includes rubrics and marking scales, so that it can be used for formative as well as summative assessment. In the case of summative assessment, the specific number of possible inadequate elements in the performance for each competence –or adequate elements, in the case of legal terminology–, has been designed and piloted for a template or model exam that was also developed as part of the action research project. Regarding the rubrics, if the results of a trainee are in the column marked as 0-4 points in Figure 5, this means an unacceptable performance for the sub-competence assessed; a result of 5-6 means that there is need of improvement; a result of 7-8 means that the performance is acceptable, although there is room for improvement; and a result of 9-10 means that the performance of the trainee is very good, reaching good quality professional standards in that sub-competence.

Assessed sub-competences:	Mark: 0-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Accuracy: Serious errors	1 or more Serious errors (SE)	No SE	No SE	No SE

(double weight)				
Accuracy: errors **(double weight)**	**3 or more** Errors (E)	**Up to 2** E	**No** E	**No** E
Register	**3 or more** Changes of register (CR)	**2** CR	**1** CR	**No** CR
Legal terminology	**3 or less** Adequate equivalents (AE)	**More than 3** AE	**More than 4** AE	**More than 5** AE
Conversation management skills	**3 or more** Inadequate speech style (ISS)	**Up to 2** ISS	**Up to 1** ISS	Adequate Speech Style
	1 or more Unjustified non-renditions (UNR)	**No** UNR	**No** UNR	**No** UNR
Use of language	**5 or more** Inadequate uses of language (IUL)	**Up to 4** IUL	**Up to 3** IUL	**Up to 2** IUL
Fluency	**8 or more** Interruptions of the speech flow (ISF)	**Up to 7** ISF	**Up to 5** ISF	**Up to 3** ISF

Figure 7. Assessment grid with rubrics for court interpreting trainees

When the grid is used for formative assessment, the separate analysis of each sub-competence, and sometimes of two skills inside that sub-competence –for instance, speech style and non-renditions in conversation management– can be very informative for trainees. This separate analysis of sub-competences allows them to see very easily what they need to work on to improve their competence. It can also be very useful for the trainers, who get a clear picture of the group performance on each sub-competence

and thus can know which skills need more practice and attention in the course.

Finally, the template exams created were based on real trials of the TIPp corpus and were designed for interpreting six-minute-long court dialogues. In these exams, the trainees are asked to interpret as if they were in a courtroom, using the interpreting modes they consider most adequate in each moment. The six-minute-long discourses include the intervention of at least four people (judge, prosecutor, defense counsel and defendant), and sometimes also of a witness. They are audio-recorded and reproduce real trials, based on the TIPp study corpus. They include several features to make sure the trainees put into practice the different competences and skills tested –potential problems of register, legal terminology, speech style and so on– and also the ones not tested but that are interesting to mention on a formative assessment basis. The latter include, for instance, the interpreting modes, *e.g.* there are long interventions by the judge and the prosecutor, in which the trainees are expected to use simultaneous interpreting, and an interview led by the judge or the prosecutor, in which the trainees are expected to use short consecutive or liaison interpreting.

This means that if longer dialogues were to be used as an exam and the trainer wanted to apply the grid, the rubrics should be conveniently adapted, with more or fewer adequate or inadequate elements of each sub-competence to obtain an objective outcome.

CONCLUSIONS

Action research started in 2017 to overcome the problems observed in a court interpreting course in the masters' degree of Legal Translation and Court Interpreting of the UAB, in Spain. As explained in section 2, the first step of the action research consisted in a literature review and gathering of information from the trainees of the course. This was done through a survey and a focus group. The findings showed that there were several areas in clear need of improvement. After reflection by the researcher, a plan was set to create new didactic materials that were more varied. These included legal terminology handling and more interpreting practice in real scenarios. New assessment materials that were clear and objective were also needed. The didactic materials created (introductory videos, thematic lexicons and role-plays) have been presented in section 3, and the assessment materials created (a grid with rubrics and a template exam) have been presented in section 4. The use of this grid can be very

informative both for trainees and trainers regarding the level of performance in each of the 6 sub-competences assessed.

All these materials were created by the two main trainers of the court interpreting course in 2018-19 and implemented and fine-tuned in the two following academic years. Finally, the survey and the focus group were repeated in 2022 to compare the trainees' perception with that of 2017. The comparison of the results, described in section 2.2., suggested that the problems observed in 2017 had been overcome. All the ratings on the survey increased, and the assessment, which was one of the main concerns, was perceived significantly better by trainees in 2022, both in the survey and in the focus group. The indicators showed an increase in the trainees' perception of learning and a decrease in their perception of subjectivity in their assessment. The confidence to take on a job as a court interpreter was also significantly higher. Finally, the overall satisfaction with the course increased by 3 points in the survey, which suggested that the implementation of the changes in the course had been successful.

After the successful action research, the materials created have been presented in this article and are offered freely online with the hope of contributing to the training and assessment of court interpreters, in a way that is consistent with the reality of the professional practice. This could be achieved with further use and testing of the materials in other programs and language pairs, to help gather comparable data in different contexts.

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