



An Interactive Approach for Multilingual Interpretation Teaching and Training

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an ongoing experiment to develop digital input for university students majoring in English to learn basic interpretation skills. My innovation teaching method applying to the interpretation course, mainly is to focus on multimedia application and interpretation practice. Students are asked to work out with their interpretation performance with a set of interpretation training which would have been learned during the course. Students will create the whole assimilated interpretation situation and perform their interpretation skills in teamwork during the final stage. The new complexities of digital application inevitably expand the field for interpretation training and teaching. A framework for multimedia application will be presented and discussed.

Keywords: *Interpretation training, interpretation teaching, multimedia language teaching, interpretation performance.*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper describes an ongoing experiment to develop multimedia learning environment for university students to have basic interpretation training. Interpreting is the oral form of the translation process or a kind of “translational activity” [1] to transfer a spoken message from one language to another in real time. Interpretation is distinguished from both language proficiency and written translation. Therefore, the design for interpretation course should be different from the one for language learning purpose. In my designed course, students can be given the opportunity to integrate their previous knowledge of language training and some new language skills, number conversion, note-taking skills taught during the training process. They would then choose an inspiring topic and intergrate it with the teaching content discussed in their group. A task to make a assimilated interpretation performance is then be assigned and students will present their performance with the digital design made for special effects to create a assimilated interpretation situation, during their group presentation. All classes are delivered in English and students' presentations are required all in English. With this design, students are able to increase their professional knowledge in interdisciplinary fields, including TKT, CALL, multimedia application, performing skills interpretation skills and presentation skills. Furthermore, this teaching method helps students to learn through project-based method, purpose-based approach, teamwork, so as to achieve the goal of innovative creative interpretation learning. According to Gonzáles [2], “Interpreters must instantaneously arrive at a target language equivalent, while at the same time searching for further input.” Message input and speech output take place consecutively or simultaneously when members of different linguistic and cultural groups enter into contact for some particular purpose, and during the interpreting process, multi-tasks are interacted with each other and are completed in time.

Interpretation performance will be the final product of the semester-based learning. As the students who select the course would be juniors, therefore directly, we will focus more on different topics and types of professional interpreting practice. The main elements, skills involved, teaching methods, digital application principles can be decided via group

discussion, and the target performing languages can be chosen from Chinese, English, French, Spanish or Taiwanese. In I-Shou University, Spanish language course and French language course are offered, while Taiwanese is a common dialect, used in daily life for some people. During the training process, students will form a group and choose two languages they would like to interpret into and from for their final demonstration, and based on that linguistic characteristics, a proper training approach will be taught by the instructor. According to that approach, a well-designed multimedia interpretation performance will be made as a group work. Finally, students will present their work via an assimilative interpreting with the related multimedia product or application. By doing so, students shall acquire a deeper knowledge of the nature of language application and multimedia design, and will learn more skills of how to deliver main ideas, and facilitate imagined audience' overall comprehension, so that they are able to achieve a better performance regarding to interpreting the source language into the target language with the help of digital application, and consecutively a kind of interpretation training will be established. Hopefully the interpretation confidence will be cultivated during the training process.

METHODS

The whole interpreting process automatically involves several competencies. And the competencies should be obtained before beginning interpretation training [2]. Ilg and Lambert also [3] suggest that it is logical to introduce consecutive interpreting only after more basic tasks such as written translation, paraphrasing, sight translation, and other intralingual skills have been taught. It is useful to conceive of interpreter training as a fusion of several board categories: linguistic, cognitive, discourse, methodological, cultural and content, and interpersonal competencies. Carol J. Patrie [4] insists that

The interpreter must be linguistically adept, cognitively able to manage several tasks at once, and knowledgeable about both cultures and the content of the material and have interpersonal skills that facilitate natural interaction among the participants in the communicative setting.

In this perspective, it is assumed that only after all competencies are in place can one then start to learn interpretation. Accordingly, interpreters must have a high level of language proficiency that allows rapid understanding of the source message and its nuances as well as the ability to express oneself correctly, fluently, and appropriately in the target language. The language proficiency could only be an ideal. We, as the instructors, cannot wait until students achieve that proficiency, and then, deliver the course.

When starting to design the interpretation course, I was eager to adopt the content-oriented structure [5], [6], which refers to the knowledge that the interpreter has about the subject. Sometimes this knowledge is based on the topic alone and does not specifically link to the culture. In other cases, the information is culture specific. In either case, the more familiar the interpreter is with the subject the better. The content-oriented design is also related to extra-linguistic knowledge, according to Gile [7]. However, his 'Working Pattern of Effort Models and Comprehension Equation' did not provide the actual help in the real working environment. Students were still lack of confidence of speaking and capacity of working under time constraints. In fact, I found it would be beneficial to students to have a few weeks

practicing preparation exercises in their mother tongue *only* so that they can “concentrate on their main tasks, which are listening, analyzing, and effectively storing information in their memory [8].” A model which combines the training of interpreting skills, single-language practice and discourse analysis was called for in this course.

Before building the model, I decided to select appropriate material for a beginning interpretation class. In order to give real practical value, the collections of CNN news *-Interviews with Celebrities* and *Global Business Focus*- were chosen for its suitability to use on either single-language exercise or two-language practice, and were later redesigned to be part of content-based training materiel. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the user-friendly interfaces, which are essential to create an interactive learning environment.



Figure 1: Screen from *Interviews with Celebrities*, showing an active map of different topics and practices.



Figure 2: Screen from *Global Business Focus*, showing various types of exercises.

The attached interactive digital material makes possible a powerful multimedia training to facilitate the language learning in an incredibly easy way. With the help of recent development of technology for education, the instructors can dynamically and easily customize or re-design the teaching contents to suit different groups of students, via e-learning cyberspace, equipped with interactive multimedia devices and dimensional teaching materials. Some traditional training methods can still be integrated and a semi-digitalized classroom can be created to achieve the skills the learners need more effectively and to make learning process more fun. The following figure includes the news program equipped with the buttons of specific functions.

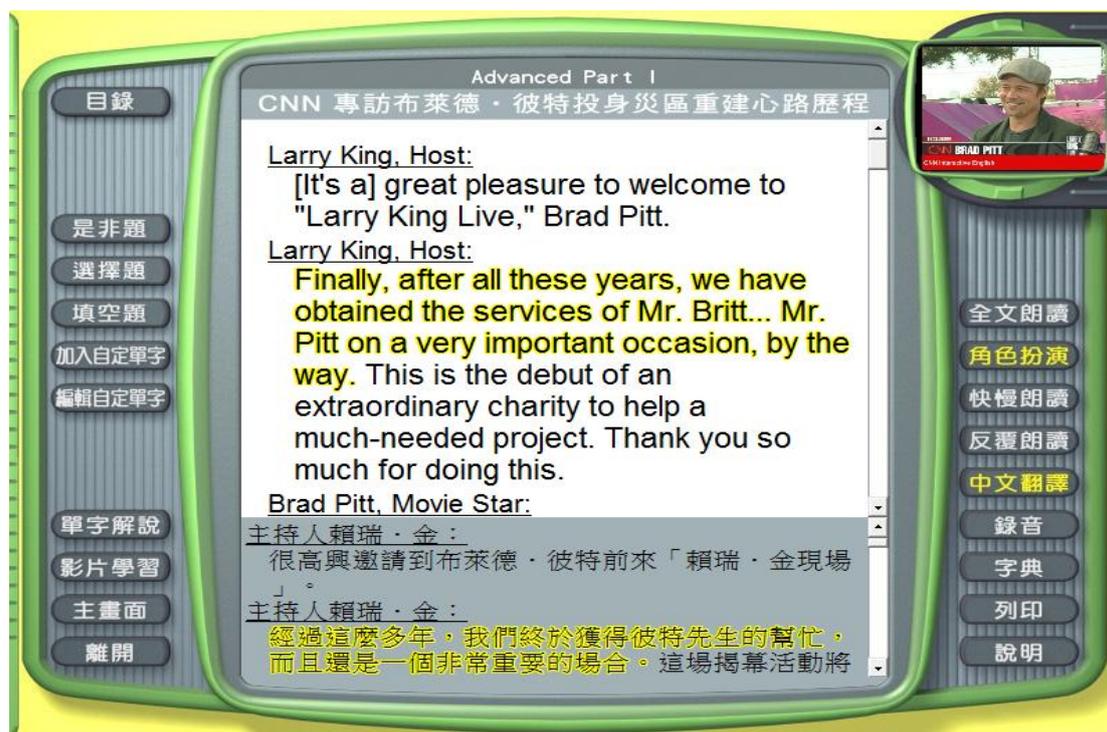


Figure 3: Screen from *Interviews with Celebrities*, indicating different learning activities.

After a few researches, I found that various types of multimedia functions can actually enable students to practice multi-tasks. In order to encourage students to use the multimedia package as interpretation training material, not simply the reading text, I designed “Eight Steps of Heavenly Dragon”¹ for students to do the self-training assignment (See Appendix A) and during the second semester, after students are familiar with this kind of practice, they are allowed to redesign their of “Steps” (See Appendix B) and adjust their learning pace. In particular, they are allowed to decide how many times they would like to do for each step and so they are able to carry out an effective result.

My course starts with consecutive interpretation including various types of preparation exercises, and then moves on to do simultaneous interpretation, with the strategy of translating into Chinese (mother tongue) first, and then into English. One might choose other digital products in different languages for the consecutive interpreting training purpose

¹The term comes from a book title of Chinese martial novel (*tianlong babu*) to imply the promising result after the practice.

.What are the advantages of using consecutive interpreting as the beginning of the course? Consecutive interpreting allows the interpreter to grasp information that is crucial to the message but that might be omitted during the pressure of simultaneous interpreting. All these leave a great space for the instructor to play with, design with and have fun with the course content. Mikkelson [9] points out that

Consecutive interpreting is a procedure by which the interpreter listens to a message and concurrently reorganizes the information by means of a highly personalized note-taking system that enables him/her to cast off the external linguistic structure of the message and then transfer its essence to another linguistic structure of the message that is intelligible to his/her audience.

Message receiving, information processing, note-taking skills, linguistic competencies should all be taken into account. In particular, an effective interpreting experiment should consider mental energy and time constraints. I have found it useful to have students begin with practicing my “Eight Steps of Heavenly Dragon” as part of their homework, while during the class we can move on to do follow-up activities and other types of training.

The focus of the course is on teaching specific interpreting skills with enhancement of language proficiency. World knowledge plays a supporting role. The training of different skills is designed to be progressive, moving from listening, comprehension, reformulation, vocabulary learning, and memorizing exercises to consecutive interpreting, and then simultaneous interpreting. Speech materials from interactive CNN news are natural oral discourse in real-life situations and are varied in topic, linguistic register, terminology, and style. They are progressively longer, more complicated and more difficult. Furthermore, the material for practice must be interesting to trigger students’ learning interest and motivation. Figure 4 provides an example to emphasize on the charms of the interview with the movie star that Taiwanese students are familiar with.

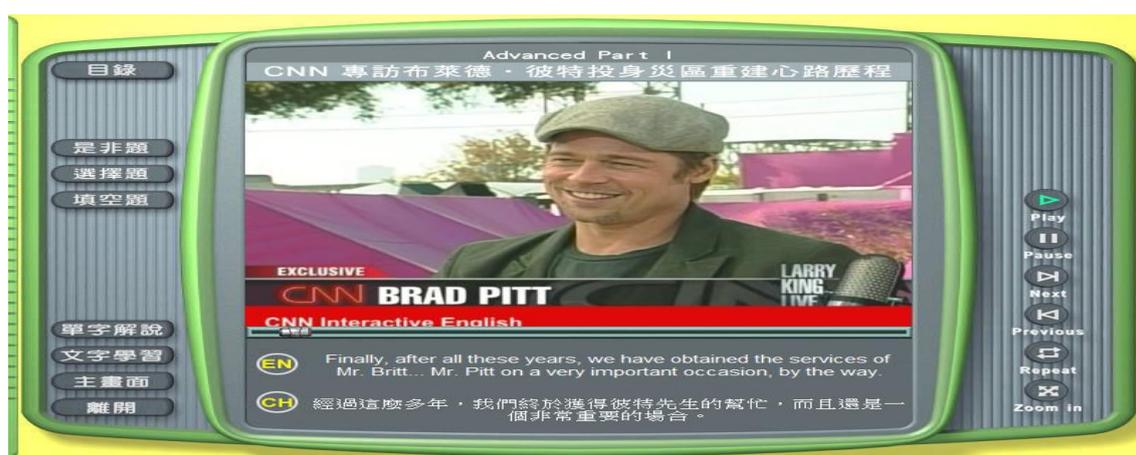


Figure 4: Screen from *Interviews with Celebrities*, showing the importance of interesting content in real oral discourse.

After the software is installed for the interactive learning, students would be given this guideline, designed for interpreting training purpose, under a framework of multimedia application. The guideline is provided as follows:

- 1) Listening Phase: Watch twice the CNN news, without any subtitles.
- 2) Comprehension Phase: Watch twice again, with English subtitles.
- 3) Reformulation Phase: Give a brief Chinese summary.
- 4) Vocabulary Learning Phase: Watch once, with both Chinese and English subtitles.
- 5) Paraphrasing Phase: Give a brief English summary.
- 6) Short-term Memory Phase: Do sentence-by-sentence consecutive interpreting practice.
- 7) Shadowing Phase: Go to ‘Vocabulary Learning’ section, and follow ‘Slow Reading’ and read the text out loud.
- 8) Note-taking Phase: Do note-taking practice to draw main ideas.

DISCUSSION

The “Eight Steps of Heavenly Dragon”– listening, comprehension, reformulation, vocabulary learning, paraphrasing, short-term memory, shadowing, and note-taking – reflect the two dimensions of interpreting – skill-oriented and practice-based – both of which are necessary to a complete picture of this activity, whether for research or training purposes. In the following figure, we can see the model of mapping various practices:

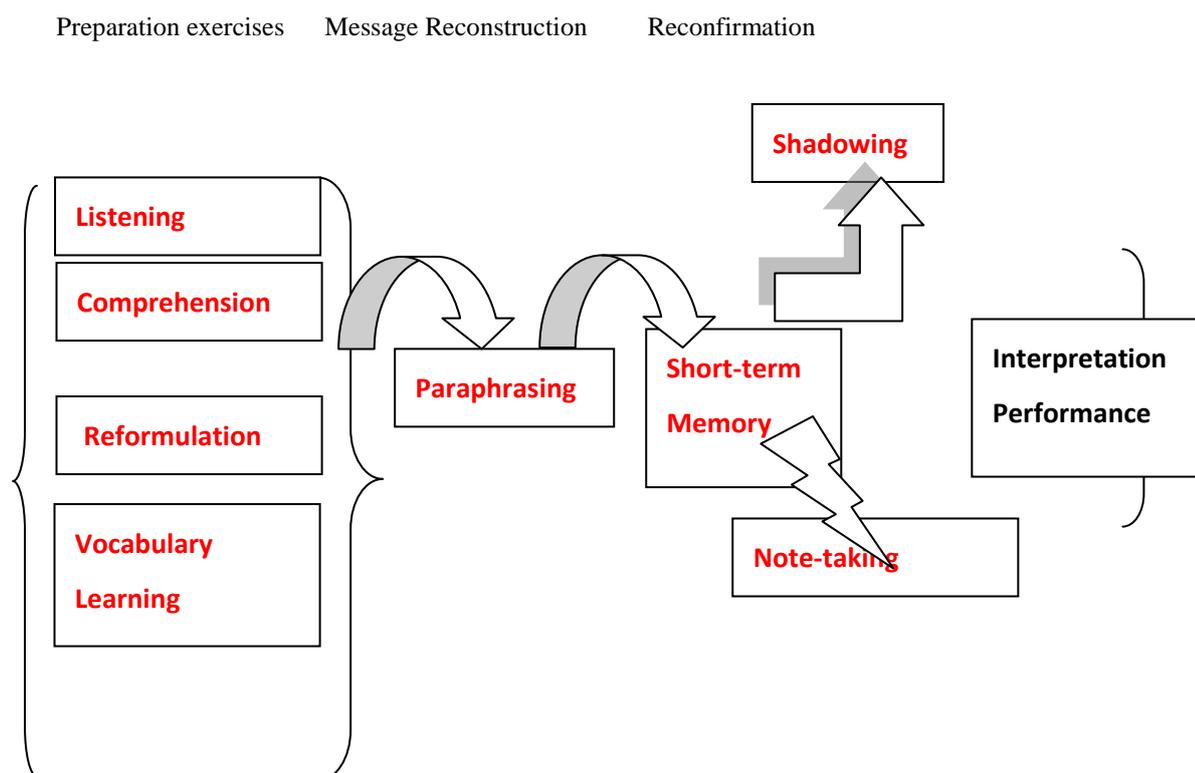


Figure 5: Map of Phases and Functions

During preparation exercises, students are given four kinds of practices including listening, comprehension, reformulation and vocabulary learning. With these practices, they are able to do paraphrasing and then move on to do consecutive interpretation of short-term memory so as to reconstruct the message in the target language. In this design, students are given an opportunity to reconfirm their interpreting production by doing shadowing exercise and meanwhile

practicing note-taking skills. Being aware of the phases and functions of consecutive interpretation can help students focus their available capacities on the tasks that need their immediate attention during the process. Accordingly, the listening phase requires concentration. Consecutive interpreting allows a more careful focus on the listening component in order to detect any missing information of the source message. This listening practice leads to a deeper analysis of the message that provides a foundation to achieve fidelity of interpretation. Greater demands are placed on the interpreter's listening effort, if the news is spoken rapidly with certain set of terminology. During the second phrase, comprehension does not come from an automatic process, so it is subject to restrictions of capacities, and analysis effort. With accumulation of message understanding and processing within the limited time, it then becomes mission possible to reproduce orally the news in their mother tongue, Chinese. In reformulation phase, a set of operations extending from the mental representation of the message to the performance of the speech plan is formed. Vocabulary learning is to strengthen the initiative memory of the news content, and paraphrasing helps to flash back the main information and related details. During the short consecutive interpreting process, short-term memory and long-term memory interact continuously. Cognitive operations occur to deal with information and to reorganize it into a comprehensive order, though the reproduced interpretation and original speech could hardly be the same in style. In fact, this type of short consecutive interpreting practice is to chop the long paragraphs into sense groups and to interpret short segments of discourse such as a sentence or a few sentences.

After the training of message reconstruction, shadowing is practiced by reading aloud after the slow reading of the native speaker offered in the package program. Reading aloud helps students to improve articulation and fluency. In particular, to Taiwanese students, within time constraints, trembling tone, high pitch, screaming voice, distorted pronunciation often occur during the interpreting process. Thus, articulation practice becomes crucially important to gain distinct pronunciation and speaking confidence. For spoken language, interpreters' note-taking skills make the job easier to break down the source message, and effectively help to retrieve information from memory. The message retrieving process is via visual mechanism. Interpreters rely very much on visual memory in the arrangement of their notes to reflect aspects of the original message. I asked students to take down notes in the target language, abbreviation, or the mixed symbols, because "taking notes in the target language often produces a smoother delivery" [10]. Besides, during the interpreting process, "priority is to be given to representing an idea quickly so as not to jeopardize the task of listening to incoming information" [8]. After students have produced their personalized notes at home, during the following class, I always compare students' notes with each other and develop a discussion on what particular key words or main ideas should have been noted. We all agree with Weber [11] that

The proportion of memorizing vs. note-taking will vary greatly from one interpreter to the next and depends on the subject matter, the stress factor, the language combination, the training and personal preference of the interpreter as well as his professional experience.

There is no point to train students to take identical notes. Quite often, students' notes differ greatly from one another, and that makes the comparison and analysis more interesting and more challenging. After the discussion, students have to

create their own speech based on the notes they produced without listening to the source language speech, and see how much the new speech could reflect the original story.

In this multimedia package, there is an extra sound recording device which offers an opportunity for students to compare their sound wave with the native speaker's sound wave, and students can redo it as many times as they like until both waves look alike (See Figure 6).

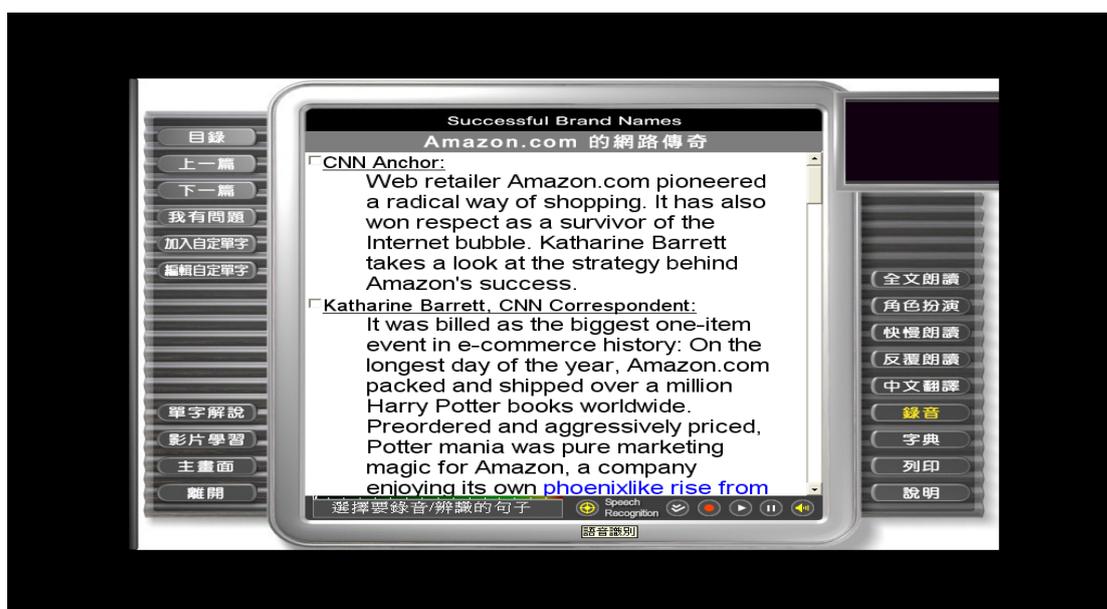


Figure 6: Screen from *Global Business Focus*, showing the recording design.

Obviously, these practices with multimedia tools are not confined in certain limited time. Students can choose the modelling readings of normal speed or of slow speed. During the process, the time that allows message processing and personalized note-taking is tricky. However, with multimedia application in a kind of cyberspace, time pressure could be temporarily reduced through the design of slow-speed reading. After practices without much time constraints, students are then able to carry the real job in the real time. *Additional time* in consecutive interpretation makes the process easier than simultaneous interpretation. But that *additional time* can only be obtained, when cognitive competence works. This is usually the case in particular when the speech is short and topic is familiar. The repeated cyberspace practice makes possible achieving familiarity of the content and the required speed of interpreting. In fact, after the training of a semester, virtual exercise without much time pressure and real practice under time constraints worked well together to result in much greater accuracy in the transmission of the message during students' final exam. This kind of multimedia experiment allows a greater focus on target language production for two reasons. There is less interference from the source language and from time pressure. The focus on target language allows more precision in selecting appropriate terms and syntactical constructions in the target language. The design of vocabulary learning offers basic word bank and the device of slow reading provides self-correction function, and thus, after practices, students felt less intimidated with the goal I set for them. Indeed, the multimedia application in consecutive interpreting allows a better opportunity to diagnose weaknesses in interpreting production.

After the eight steps practiced at home, students were given follow-up activities, targeting on the content of the weekly episode in class, and as the time-consuming practice has strengthened students' basic listening and speaking capacities, the instructor saved time on language teaching and could concentrate more on interpreter training. Lambert [12] suggests that exercises in interpreter training should be presented in a systematic approach aligned with human information processing. In my course, sound-recording is conducted during the class activities and thus students are able to examine their interpreting production and to listen to their voice performance. To us, the best way to gain control over the interpreting production is to develop insight into and control over the process. Only via retrospection can the interpreter gain insight into his process. According to my course design, the voice production is the observable part of students' work. It is the message in the target language that the audience receives from the sender via interpretation. The production can be recorded for future analysis, while the process cannot. Seal [13] emphasizes the importance of analyzing one's own work:

Self-analysis, the zenith of any professional development activity, is highly facilitated when we step back and take a look at ourselves. Routine videotaping and observing videotaped performances for strengths and weakness and for changes over time, are quite possibly the most valuable, yet least frequently accomplished activity we can engage in.

In order to achieve more learning outcome and to gain insight of the process through retrospection, interpretation performance is required during the final exam of the course.

Students in different language group would present their interpretation performance based on the topic chosen related to the course content. And they would have learned interpretation skills and gained the confidence via the training of "Eight Steps of Heavenly Dragon". Through assimilated practices, students are given the opportunity to do self-analysis and self-criticism. Students' learning interest has been encouraged tremendously and interpreting production has been shown positively through this design. In terms of the final interpretation performance, the group work will be filmed along with peer evaluation. With great creative input, students are able to fulfil the project's requirements, and in a kind of assimilated scenario, students are integrating both interpretation skills, multimedia design principles, and assimilated interpretation performance in the presentation during the final exam week. In order to achieve such a high-level intensive leaning, training, teamwork, and product-making, students will have to come to the class, actively participate in discussions and profoundly learn the various interpretation skills. Teamwork is the basis to train students to respect classmates' comments and help one another in every working situation. Students will learn different approaches, and improve more their ability of multilingual communication and public speaking skills. They shall be able to apply the interpretation skills so as to make a successful interpretation performance. And they will have to do the peer evaluation for other classmates' performances. Furthermore, they shall gain the insight of substantial multilingual interpretation and digital application Besides, peer evaluation will be discussed during the group discussion; as planned, along with group presentations, peer learning will be guided step-by-step. Therefore, unexcused absences will negatively affect final grade; students are encouraged to participate in every interpretation situation. A line-group and Moodle will be intensively used for idea-exchange and communication. Some class activities will be designed via Moodle or Zuvio. Students' grade will

measure their effort, improvement, and achievement. The final grade will be assessed according to the individual design assignments and group presentation of interpretation performance. Students' final presentation will be open to the public, other teachers or classmates are all welcome to come and give comments. By doing so, students' interpretation performance will be improved as they would have to find time outside the class to get together and practice the content of the presentation orally in order to achieve a good performance. To be short, students can be benefited from interpretation training method, teamwork, interpretation performance, peer evaluation, and preparation for the future internship as professional interpreter.

CONCLUSION

In Taiwan, interpretation was commonly taught in universities, and has become integrated into the curriculum of English department. The demands on interpreting programs are higher. The interpretation learners are required to integrate all they have learned in order to solve the learning problem in specific language leaning situation, based on their choice. They will have to do the research actively to decide which topic should be based on and how to design the outline of the practical project in the real learning situation. The final interpretation performance may be used as the model in the following year. This suggests ways of improving training to ensure the quality of multilingual performances and thus provides a reliable service for the multilingual communities in Taiwan. In line with a growing trend in digital application and interpreting training, interpretation will not only be interdisciplinary in its sources, but must also combine effective models with qualitative perspective, which call for more methods as well as creativity and imagination. In this digital experiment, various types of training and note-taking exercises are designed, and learner's participation and learning outcome are increased in this virtual learning environment.

In the discipline of interpretation, the use of technical equipment is its tradition. In terms of digital technology, students are asked to film their interpretation performance by Power Director, or by cell phone, so as to make the digital material as the learning output to this course. Interdisciplinary work is itself the characteristic of interpretation. Fabbro and Fran [14] comment on interdisciplinary in the following terms:

We interpreters have got in closer contact with psychologists, linguistics, experts in communication etc. Much as we owe to these scholars however, we shall have to become more and more aware of the specificity of our discipline, identify our own problems, set our own goals and be able to use the tools we need to inquire into the various facets of the interpretation process.

This view in the light of interdisciplinary interaction offers a rather sophisticated account of the development of interpretation research. In terms of interpretation practice research, students will complete two presentations during the midterm and final exam period. The first one is to demonstrate their research outline of the interpretation topic. The second one is to give an assimilated interpretation performance with digital input based on the design of group topic. In terms of interpretation teaching and training, we need to consider the real context in the interpreting situation and the learning environment. In order to meet the needs of real interpreting working environment and personal goal, when the students are familiar with the model of interpreting training, and have practiced accordingly, they are strongly suggested

to redesign the details of the model to suit their needs (See Appendix C). That is to say, a learner-centered process can be customized and established through this model training. During the time of interpretation practice, students will exercise their creativity, reuse their experiences and recycle their language knowledge, an innovative and cooperative process will then be established definitely. The training method offered in this paper is only a beginning to integrate digital tools to interpretation teaching, and my attempt is to stimulate further discussion and research on interpretation training methods. The training will be attached to the whole project-based instruction, and the teamwork and detailed arrangements will be decided according to students' preference. The full and deep student-centered organization will be highlighted importantly and communication skills will be practiced in order to fulfil the task of interpretation performance.

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Appendix A:

Guideline for Weekly Homework

The purpose of the following guideline is to facilitate your interpreting practices at home. Almost every week, I will assign a section from our CNN material, and you are expected to do interpreting practices on that section by yourself.

These practices will take you about 50 minutes. Find a computer and a quiet place and do it!! Don't hesitate! You will see the magic effect fairly soon.

- 1) Watch *2, without any subtitles.
- 2) Watch *2, with English subtitles.
- 3) Give a brief Chinese summary.
- 4) Watch*1, with both Chinese and English subtitles.
- 5) Give a brief English summary.
- 6) Do sentence-by-sentence interpretation.
- 7) Go to 'Vocabulary Learning' section. Follow 'Slow Reading' and read the text out *LOUD* (Practice until you can fluently articulate all words)!
- 8) Do note-taking practice to draw main ideas.

Finish this "Eight Steps of Heavenly Dragon" and you would possess a wonderful English Shen-gong. With that, you would gain confidence and be so happy!!! Why don't you give it a try!!!

Appendix B:

Guideline for Weekly Homework (II)

The following guideline is our previous framework for CNN material. These practices will take you about 50 minutes.

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- 1) Watch * __ times , without any subtitles.
 - 2) Watch * __ times, with English subtitles.
 - 3) Give a brief Chinese summary.
 - 4) Watch* __ times, with both Chinese and English subtitles.
 - 5) Give a brief English summary.
 - 6) Do sentence-by-sentence interpretation.
 - 7) Go to 'Vocabulary Learning' section. Follow 'Slow Reading' and read the text out *LOUD* (Practice until you can fluently articulate all words)!
 - 8) Do note-taking practice to draw main ideas.
-

The design of this “Eight Steps of Heavenly Dragon” is subject to be redesigned by YOU now. Find your learning pace and speed. Reset a training program, which is practical and doable to YOU.

Appendix C:

MY _____ Practices are designed as follows:

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Step 4: _____

Step 5: _____

Step 6: _____

Step 7: _____

Step 8: _____

I promise myself that I would achieve the goal I set. Signature: _____ Date: _____
