

Overview

What can tutor-student and peer-to-peer interaction teach us about online interpreter training?

Two novel teaching experiences in online interpreter training:

- **Glendon's** online Master's degree in conference interpreting, and
- **techforward's** on-demand course for interpreters

Four delivery modes:

- Online teaching with **real-time interaction** between tutors and students
- Online teaching with **asynchronous tutor and peer interaction**
- On-demand training materials with **asynchronous peer interaction**
- On-demand training materials with **no support**

Glendon

Survey of Year One students halfway through the online introductory Conference Interpreting course

- Survey run yearly from 2014-2019
- Seven open-ended questions
- Optional and anonymous
- Aim is to gauge students' engagement and hear their views on course format
- For the present study, all comments referring to tutor-student and peer interaction were compiled

Total response rate: 40% of 101 students in 5 cohorts

| Type of interaction | Positive comments | Negative comments |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Synchronous tutor-student | 14 | 22 |
| Asynchronous tutor-student | 7 | 19 |
| Peer-to-peer interaction | 21 | 24 |

Figure 1. Comments on interaction, Glendon survey



Check out the Glendon MCI!



Try the techforward course!

techforward

Students randomly assigned to "peer interaction" or "no support" modality
Pilot ran for 39 days in summer 2019
Students completed post-course survey

Population:

- 17 respondents (of 63 total students enrolled) from 23 countries/5 continents
 - 6 in peer interaction modality
 - 11 in no support modality
- 82% interpreters, 76% translators, 41% trainers, 12% writers
- Average experience: 17.7 years (range: 1-32)
- Most students already tech-savvy: 3.7/5
- Knowledge of tablets before course: 3.0/5

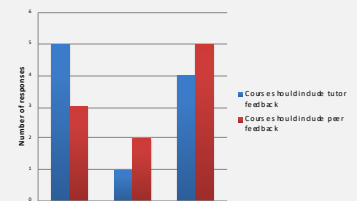


Figure 2. Views on tutor vs. student feedback, techforward

Results: Glendon

- Broad range of views expressed, some contradictory (e.g. "not enough classes", "too many classes"; "too many forums", "not enough forums").
- Many students feel most engaged during live classes, but also believe class size limits authentic interaction and feedback.
- Most students want as much personalized tutor feedback as possible, which must be asynchronous, as live class time is limited.
- Peer interaction and feedback can supplement tutor feedback.
- Most students learn from and are engaged with both synchronous group work with peers and asynchronous peer interaction on online forums.
- However, too many forums may overwhelm students, and organizing group work is time-consuming.
- Also, peers cannot provide the same expert input and guidance as the tutor can.

Results: techforward

- Little to no peer interaction in the "peer interaction" modality.
- Most students want instructor feedback but are unsure about peer feedback.
- Despite limited peer interaction, the average interactivity rating was 3.8/5 in both modalities.
- Most students watched videos once (53%) or twice (35%).
- Most participants complete the course in 1-2 sessions.
- Nearly half of students (47%) completed "practice on your own" exercises.
- Student knowledge of tablets increased 40% after the course.
- Students felt very comfortable with the skills that were taught (4.3/5).
- Students found the course highly useful (4.5/5).
- Course completion rate of 36% far outstripped MOOC average (4%; cf. Reich & Ruipérez-Valiente 2019).

Conclusions

1. Online courses permit scaling of training and reaching learners where they are.
2. Online training allows trainers to think outside the box and adopt non-traditional approaches.
3. Materials and course design and a flipped classroom promote interactivity, scalability and student acceptance of non-traditional pedagogical approaches.
4. Individualized tutor or peer feedback may not be necessary for knowledge acquisition.
5. Bite-size videos and on-demand courses may be a good match for busy professionals.
6. Online courses should have a clear structure, clear instructions and clear communication channels.
7. On-demand courses should feature short, snappy video lectures; show rather than tell; and create spaces for practice and interaction.
8. Course design should ensure a mix of interaction types to account for different student aims, needs and learning styles; there is no "perfect mix."

Reference: Reich, Justin & Ruipérez-Valiente, J. A. (2019). The MOOC Pivot. *Science*, 363(6423), pp. 130-131.