CASE STUDY

TEACHING INTERPRETATION IN HUFLIT: ON-SPOT VS ON-STAGE TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT— During a period of over 20 years, teaching interpretation techniques – relating to a crucial major in the Faculty of Foreign Languages curriculum – have been diligently researched in HUFLIT (Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages & Information Technology) to find out the better pattern, one of which is how to cope with students' passive participation, which usually leads to poor performance in the subjects requiring high independence and confidence such as Interpretation. Some literature reviews almost got a concensus about Asian students' passive attitude in the classroom including unwillingness to respond, rarely asking questions, and passive participation in classroom activities. However, the above-mentioned behavior has somewhat affected the classroom learning environment and impeded the common advance of the whole. The requirements of the course and the final tests focus on the learners' confidence, independence, pressure standing, real competence,… needing a change in teaching process. In the narrow scope of the study, the author presents the background of the research, the pros and cons of the on-site and on-stage techniques based on the lecturers' varied views, some relevant analyses, and some recommendations.

Từ khóa— Teaching interpretation, HUFLIT, Translation-Interpretation, on-spot, on-stage.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Being one of the challenging subjects in the curriculum, interpretation, which is being taught in some Departments of HUFLIT, has some hard-to-please criteria, aiming to produce a firm base for students, those who want to study further for their own career, get a higher hierarchy in the major, or simply, keep on their Transinterpretation as a future work. The following interpretation criteria pose some standards to enhance the learners' performance as well as to confirm the assessment base.

Interpretation Criteria

Pronunciation

Intonation

Fluency

Accuracy: Proper use of vocabulary and structures

Simultaneity

Memory

Confidence

Concentration

Flexibility

(Nguyen, D.C. 2008) [2]

The results of the final interpretation tests show a humble percentage of successful students, though, in terms of testing facets, they should be based on other crucial factors such as test validity, reliability, content validity, practicality, and assessment procedures…. They cannot show the difficulties that the lecturers-in-charge cope with as the negative participation frequently occurs. The procedures of the forementioned techniques is discussed in 5.1.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In teaching interpretation, some teachers prefer on-spot techniques to on-stage ones owing to their time-saving factors, while it requests to train learners to work independently and actively, more and more confident. In reality, with many supporters around and other helps, ranging from electronic devices to co-work, on-spot tasks incidentally build up a firm reliance on the help, which has been seen more harm than good, pasivetivity in front of the audience (Wan, Y., 2021; Takahashi, 2019) [1], leading to poor results in the final test, when the testees

face the individual task. There should be a gradual change to new perceptions and techniques to improve the situation.

Description

- Interpretation courses from low to advanced levels in HUFLIT put a focus on training students' real ability in interpretation skills including bilingual speaking skills (pronunciation, intonation, fluency), highly reliable interpreting, independent working, confidence, and flexibility.

"As conference interpreting is a professional communication service, quality in interpreting is a function of communication…to communicate the speaker's intended messages as accurately, faithfully, and completely as possible…make it your own speech, and be clear and lively in your delivery. A conference interpreter is a communication professional who needs to be a good public speaker, so make your interpretation fluent, expressive, and communicative." [3]

- On-spot techniques: During the meeting, students are randomly invited to stand up to interpret the audio messages provided via the sound system or by the lecturer/ classmates. The audio messages from the sound system are usually English (to assure authenticity) and those from the lecturer/ classmates are usually Vietnamese. Feedback is provided after each turn.
- On-stage techniques: During the meeting, student groups take turns to perform their interpretation in front of the class with the audio messages provided via the sound system or by the lecturer/ classmates. The audio messages from the sound system are usually English (to assure authenticity) and those from the lecturer/ classmates are usually Vietnamese. Individual feedback is given after a round.

The differences between the two forms lie in the position of the students. It is hypothesized that when they are on stage, their stage fright is shown, and how to control themselves, or confidence, can help them conduct their tasks. When they are requested to work at their desks, they feel confident owing to their peers' support and some electronic devices. The results of the same students in classrooms are variant. The results of the same students between classrooms and test rooms also have big gaps.

C. HYPOTHESIS
Test takers' real competence can be better gained and improved if the interpretation tasks and procedures in the classroom are upgraded to produce the washback effect on teaching and learning (Rivers, 1987) [5].

Students' competence in real life can be much improved thanks to what they achieve from the stage-fright control techniques in the classroom.

D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The research question in this minor study circles around the view of Interpretation lecturers on the Interpretation teaching procedures that all of them experienced:

Will the on-stage techniques be of reliable and valid replacement for the traditional on-spot ones?

E. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
The goal of my study is to identify the drawbacks of the traditional on-site interpretation teaching procedures in HUFLIT for modifications to upgrade teaching techniques for the aforementioned subject, to meet the proposed learning outcomes in improving students' motivation and real competence in English, a requirement in the job market, also one of the biggest flaws for Vietnamese job seekers, to help students gain better results, to steer them closer to the norms of the real-life interpretation, and to meet the innovation demand from the institution.

F. 1.6 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study findings can be generally applied in VN's other institutions including those of still apply various forms of the interpretation teaching techniques. However, a clear setback of my recommendations is that not all colleagues are eager for the change their traditional teaching method (I have tried to make many persuasions on my colleagues but got unfavorable results) may be costly, time and effort-consuming in the status of lacking adequate professionals.

This is just a pilot study with a very humble number of participants; therefore, its conclusions may be not true when referring to the same subjects on a larger scale.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Wan Y. (2021) [1] spent quite a time researching East Asian students' reticent and passive participation in the classroom. The rationale withdrawn from a review of some studies shows that they are usually reticent, timid, and unsociable (Takahashi, 2019) [4]. They are good at listening and taking notes, but reluctant to participate in class activities and discussions (quoted in Kim, 2006) [1]. " East Asian students are sometimes reticent and passive learners in class, but they are talkative after class with peers from the same or similar cultural background" (quoted in Tani, 2005: p.1) [5]. "the deathly silence" was used for replying open-ended questions in the lecture (quoted in Biggs, 1991: p.3) [1]. "East Asian students are unwilling to respond; they do not ask questions; and they are passive and over-dependent on the teacher" (quoted inTakahashi, 2019) [4].

Wan Y. (2021) [1] also concludes that the passive and reticent attitude can be "a barrier to the fostering of good learning practice" and "an obstacle to engaging with campus life and fully benefiting from studying in another country" (quoted in Tani, 2008: p. 345) [5]. "Some other negative impacts may include poorer letters of recommendation from professors and insufficient preparation for further graduate study" (Wan Y., 2021: p. 2 quoted from Paulhus, Duncan, & Yik, 2002) [1]. "most of the existing studies only provide a partial understanding of East Asian students' in-class participative performance, while students' behaviors are impacted by many factors, both intrinsically and extrinsically" (Wan Y., 2021: p. 2) [1].

Bendazzoli, C. & Sandrelli, A. (2005: 2) [7] focusing on the research of Corpus-based Interpreting stated: "The speech classification system implemented in the headers of the transcripts and searchable via the EPIC Web interface is a useful source of information for teachers when selecting class materials". They also supported their method by suggesting the use of *Cool Edit* or similar software tools to divide the clip into several portions, to slow it down without altering the speaker's pitch, to insert pauses in the speech, etc., if a selected clip is considered too hard to interpret for the specific stage (p. 10).

Marco Cencini (2002) [8] analyzed the problems of compiling Interpreting corpus including transcription, which poses important practical and theoretical questions before planning a corpus. Next, "it is not easy to get recordings of real events of interpretation, both because interpreters are often reluctant to be recorded, and because speeches at conferences and meetings are often held as confidential material". Some related problems were also mentioned such as Transcription conventions are non-standardized, data are not interchangeable, and tools of analysis are limited.

III. METHODS OF STUDY AND SOURCES OF DATA

A. RESEARCH PURPOSE
The poor performance of the level-1 students in the end-of-course interpreting tests in recent years has caused not only backwash effect but also didactic problems to both test designers and instructors-in-charge (Rivers, 1987). First of all, the teaching method was blamed, of which the increasing decline in students' learning motivation got a big portion. The challenging subject may be the next, and simultaneously, the result of governance, or maybe the final test. The writer conducts the study with the aim to screen out related problems to the methodology to enhance students' learning motivation and to help them achieve their real competence for their future in Vietnam's hard job market.

B. POPULATION OF THE STUDY
43 students of Interpretation 1, semester 2, the academic year 2022-2023, were put into the experiment, aiming to compare the two above-mentioned types of procedures during the course. They were also asked to take part in a public interview to collect information about their preferences, setbacks, problems, and recommendations.

The majority of the respondents were at the same age (20), which accounts for almost 100% of the total. At the end of the course, when the result of the ongoing process was coming, 8 were absent for no reason. the remaining for the experiment was only 35. The population number is rather humble, and cannot be viewed as satisfactory for reliable research but this can be seen a pilot study in HUFLIT for further research.

C. INSTRUMENT USED
With the humble scope of the article, the tools in the study consist of observation, comparison, and data collection from an informal public interview in April, when the end of the course was coming. 35 interviewees provided the essential answers for the data collection of the study. 8 were absent with unclear reasons.

D. STATISTICAL TREATMENT
Statistical data are treated with SPSS to find out the results of the T-test Paired Samples on participants' confidence and performance in two types of techniques, on-site (pretest) vs on-stage (posttest), and the individual solutions/proposals/personal views from the participants.

IV. PRESENTATION, DATA ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

A. PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Table1. *T-Test*

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Task 1 (pretest)	5.5571	35	1.99548	.33730
	Task 2 (posttest)	3.3714	35	1.80009	.30427

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Task 1 (pretest) Task 2 (posttest)	35	.833	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Task 1 (pretest) Task 2 (posttest)	2.18571	1.11200	.18796	1.80373	2.56770	11.628	34	.000

B. PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The survey circles around two tasks conducted by the same group of students, who follow Interpretation level 1, the beginning course of the major. However, this course has been applied to all students of English in the faculty, with the purpose to equip them with a general knowledge and basic skill of the subject. (see 3.1)

The experiment now is set up for both, comprising small components, both English and Vietnamese messages, based on their individual knowledge and skill. Students are supposed to transfer them to the other language with such criteria as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, accuracy, simultaneity, memory (note-taking), and flexibility (see 1.1). Each has 20-25 words with an aproximate 30-second pause for responses. The number of words and the pause in the task are for sophomores and have been thoroughly researched. But in reality, most of them could not achieve the test requirements despite their equivalent number of credits.

The following discussion is to elicit the differences between the results of task 1 (pretest) and task 2 (posttest), in the study that its shortcomings can be identified as posed by the research question (see 1.4).

1. DESCRIPTION

a) Procedures

Participants are invited individually to listen to a message (usually Vietnamese-English first), according to the official ready-made list issued by the management. The message is given only once, they can employ the note-taking skill that was trained in the previous courses (students are programed to take note-taking 1 and note-taking 2 before Interpretation 1).

They are requested, one by one, to conduct their task 1 on-spot (pretest) in the first half of the course and their task 2 on-stage (posttest) in the second half of the course. Their average scores are recorded and processed with SPSS T-Test Paired Samples for a comparison.

b) Teaching materials

The teaching materials used in the classroom labeled "Interpretation and Translation 1" by Nguyen Duc Chau, published by Thanh Nien publisher in 2019, which has been used as the official book for the course. It contains the vocabulary level of Pre-Intermediate (see table 2) and some common structures for this course. Notes are provided in the book, and students are required to learn by heart beforehand. Notes are also checked up at the beginning of the meeting every day to ensure that students work seriously.

Table 2. *The number of words at each level of Macmillan Readers.*

Level		Number of words
Starter – A1	A1	About 300 basic words
Beginner – A2	A1	About 600 basic words
Elementary	A2	About 1100 basic words
Pre - Intermediate	A2 - B1	About 1400 basic words
Intermediate	B1	About 1600 basic words
Upper	B2	About 2200 basic words.

Due to HUFLIT's humble facilities, the recording test in the lab proposed by Nguyen (2013) cannot be applied and the traditional face-to-face oral form is employed instead.

c) Requirements

Their products are rated based on the criteria (see 1.1), with a focus on speaking skills (Pronunciation, Intonation, Fluency), Simutaneity, Accuracy (proper use of vocabulary and structures), and Confidence.

The necessary qualifications for a consecutive interpreter

- Proficiency in two languages and two cultures involved.
- Acute speech and mind
- **Good** techniques **and memorizing verbal utterances and converting them rapidly, accurately and completely into another language.**
- **Power** of concentration
- Confidence
- High moral standards
- High level of education
- Master a number of specific terms in the specific situation, familiarize with the field, e.g. health, education, environment, etc.
- Responsibility
- Remaining impartial and not taking sides.
- Ability of taking notes of the discourse segments, if required
- Be able to work under stressful conditions
- High order **note-taking skills (quoted in Bui T.B., et all 1999: 37)[9]**

2. DATA ANALYSIS

As shown in 4.1, there is a statistically significant difference (α ≤0.005) between the pre- and post-tests of the sample attributed to the difference in the treatment of the post-test. It should be noted that the T value was (11.628). This reaches the significance at (α ≤0.005).

According to the data, the null hypothesis that is there are not any statistically significant differences at (α ≤0.005) in the mean scores of the participants' performance between the two tests (pre- and posttest) that was rejected. While the mean score of the task in the post test (3.3714) remarkably lower than the pre-test (5.5571), the analyzed data revealed that there should be a significant improvement in the first task and it, in this study, closely relates to the requirements of the interpreting learners and the HUFLIT's course learning outcomes.

Especially, 9 students got bigger variance than the rest were cordially interviewed for finding out the embedded causes and then, feedback and solutions could be given in time. The question circled around why they got very poor performance on stage compared to what they did on their site. Some got a concensus from all respondents.

Their anwers were rather similar spinning out the following key points:

- They felt more confident standing amid close friends.

- They got no or little pressure doing the on-site task.
- They always got neccesary help from peers whenever they got hard words, mispronunciation.
- They always got neccesary reminders from peers whenever they got stuck, forgot the messages.
- Their friends could look upto dictionary and use other softwares to support them in time.
- They could change/modify their interpretation product quickly if it was not proper.
- They could mimic their peers' interpretation.

In sum, the causes are very clear to explain why there is a difference between pre- and posttest.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
There is a variance between the pretest and posttest of the interpretation-1 tasks.

All respondents of the sample affirmed there is a difference between on-spot task and on-stage task for their own stage fright.

Most felt more confident standing amid close friends.

All agreed that they got no or little pressure doing the on-site tasks leading to higher results than on-stage tasks.

All students said they always got neccesary help from peers whenever they got relevant problems.

B. CONCLUSION
The result could reveal that there should be an improvement from the traditional on-spot tasks to on-stage tasks to meet the course requirements and the course learning outcomes. Interpreting learners should be trained to be able to work under stressful conditions, independently, confidently, with high morals, and gain the outcomes of an acute speech and mind.

That the construct validity of the classroom tasks should also be modified is a setback when they somewhat cannot help measure what have been taught; henceforth, it may lead to negative backwash in teaching and learning (Nguyen, 2021 quoted from Rivers, 1987).

C. RECOMMENDATIONS
1. FOR INSTRUCTORS
Teaching interpreting is a hard task for all students, who come from different majors (this is a common course) with different background. Besides getting knowledge of both L1 and L2 cultures, general fields ranging from society, business, cultures, lifestyles, foreign affairs, medical science,...they need to gain some skills of proper use of vocabulary and simple structures, acute listening and speaking, and good interpreting. However, helping learners to get the learning outcomes set up by the course outline (confidence, independence, pressure standing, real competence,...) should be considered a priority; so, various and attractive teaching techniques should be studied and applied.

2. FOR TEST DESIGNERS
The proposal is that the test designers should further study the testees' competence for the reliable data before working out with designing testing words in each topic. Their memory, process ability, and interpreting skill, are also need to be researched.

In sum, to gain better evaluation on the classroom tasks and the final tests related, there should be a more diligent investigation and some quantitative and qualitative research for a scientific comparison among variances and proper validity and reliability criteria.

3. FOR STUDENTS
Students should try their best to practice interpreting not only in the classrooms, but also at home or online, pairwork or groupwork, whenever and wherever they have a chance. Free English speaking clubs' activities and teamwork can be the perfect choice for both learning and entertainment. The economy in Vietnam after Covid-19 pandemic is facing more difficulties, resulting in higher and harder competition in the job market. English proficiency, in general, and interpreting skill, in particular, is always an advantage.

4. FOR RESEARCHERS
This is just a pilot study with a humble number of respondents, unreliable for real research. There is a need for further research on whether or not HUFLIT learners, especially students of Interpretation 1, really gain their course learning outcomes as posted, how to improve their achivements to meet the set academic goals.

5. LIMITATIONS

Besides the above-mentioned limitations of a small sample, the research may be viewed just a case study in HUFLIT, not popularly to be applied in other English classrooms. It is also difficult to convince busy instructors to make an update or improvement from the traditional procedures to the new, if they cannot recognize the real benefits, especially when it is still a controversy in Vietnam's modern universities.

The findings in the pilot study may not gain the same results when being applied to a bigger population, with different teachers, or in different institutions.

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