The Critical Link: Innovative Theory and Practice for Educating Interpreters

Roy, Winston, Monikowski, Pollitt, Peterson, Davis, Metzger

Interactive, discourse-based studies are contributing to a fuller, and more complex, picture of interpreting (Roy forthcoming; Wadensjö 1998; Metzger forthcoming). Acknowledging that interpreters are an active part of and influence conversational discourse changes our ways of thinking about what interpreters are doing as they expedite the exchange in a face-to-face conversation. With this changing perspective on how interpreters actually accomplish their task will come changes in educational practice. It suggests that what is significant in the process of learning to interpret is understanding the nature of social situations, knowing how language is used, and becoming familiar with discourse processes. Because these processes and the interpreter's role are ineluctably bound to language and patterns of discourse, discourse analysis not only offers a new research framework, but also a new understanding of what aspects are important in the process of teaching interpreting.

As interpreters, researchers, and educators, we explain one teaching practice that works in our classrooms, and which is supported by current knowledge, research and theory about how one learns to interpret. Each of our practices assumes that students learn how to interpret effectively and fluently by becoming explicitly aware of, and in control of, language processes. What distinguishes these practices is that they are drawn from research on language, learning, and interpreting. Successful teaching practices are working for a reason and making the connection to that reason is the fundamental basis of curriculum development.

Eliciting the best practices of classroom teachers and asking them to connect their practice to theory and research is modeled on a successful professional development model already in practice in the United States: the National Writing Project. From this project comes the idea of eliciting the practices of exemplary teachers, having them connect practice to theory or research, and explaining their practice as only teachers can. We think this basic and simple idea of professional development can work with those of us who teach interpreting. So, as a group of teachers who are also researchers, we share one teaching practice that we think is particularly successful with our students. In this paper, we explain each practice briefly as a fuller version will appear in our book, *Innovative Practices in Interpreter Education*, to be published by Gallaudet University Press, Washington, DC.

Using Videotapes of working Interpreters
Cynthia Roy, Ph.D.

The research of Roy (forthcoming), Wadensjö (1998), and Metzger (forthcoming) has demonstrated that, while many community interpreting situations are personal, sensitive and not open to recording, it is possible to get permission to film other, similar types of community interpreting. These films are a valuable resource in many ways in interpreting programs. For example, interpreting students are often told to go observe professional interpreters at work, but beyond trying to see what word or phrase translated into a word or phrase in another language, what are students observing? And what can be observed by an untrained eye and ear as situations unfold in real time? Students can only learn how working interpreters actually execute their practice by observing them work in conditions that allow for "instant replay." This requires assembling a collection of videotapes of real situations, with real

consumers and working interpreters who actually come together for reasons other than to be videotaped. Language studies have demonstrated over and over that people must actually be engaged in a real human activity to get legitimate language and actions from them.

Once a teacher acquires examples of interpreters at work, then students can learn how to observe by transcribing what is said and done. They can watch for examples of the ways in which interpreters do more than relay messages. The researchers mentioned above have written about the decisions interpreters make about: simultaneous talk between speakers, turn-taking, questions directed at the interpreter, getting the attention of speakers, and so on.

Discourse Mapping: developing textual coherence skills
Elizabeth Winston, Ph.D. and Christine Monikowski, Ph.D.

Discourse analysis is the logical level of processing for interpreters. It is the overall meaning of the discourse that we must convey. Historically, considerable time is spent on the analysis of words, signs, sentences, and sign production which leads to a common complaint about new interpreters: they seem to include the main points and information, but the overall meaning is somehow missing. What is often missing is the coherence of the discourse, the goal of the speaker, the point of the presentation. The features of language that often convey this coherence are not found at the phonological, morphological, or syntactic level, but at the discourse level.

When interpreters take time to analyze discourse and become familiar with the schemas, they have more time to attend to the information that is being presented and, therefore, have the potential to render a more effective and comprehensible message. Discourse mapping provides a systematic approach for teaching students to analyze a text so they can produce successful, effective interpretations. Discourse mapping is a technique that leads students in developing a mental picture of the meaning structure of any given source text, and helps them eventually re-construct a similar map in the target language. It is the creating of an actual map that shows the relationship of the grammatical structures of a text. It is similar to techniques used in reading and writing instruction, often referred to as concept mapping, mind mapping, or idea mapping. Mapping is an effective tool for promoting student growth in developing intralingual production skills and in transitioning to the production of interlingual texts. Requiring students to develop a map of their text first, to think about the underlying meaning they wish to convey, the goal they wish to achieve in presenting the text, and the context in which they intend to situate the text forces them to stop thinking about "what's the translation of that word."

The goal of discourse mapping is two-fold: to identify the external, internal and sequential structures of a text and to create meaningful visual representations of these structures. This visual representation of a complete text allows the student to see how ideas and concepts relate to each other and the relationships established within the text, without depending on words. If discourse analysis is truly the appropriate approach for interpreters, then we must consider how to enhance a student's ability to analyze and provide opportunities to practice this analysis for meaning in a non-threatening, supportive environment. The dated and unsuccessful educational approach of turning on an audiotape and expecting a student to interpret has taught us the value of time and analysis. Discourse mapping is an actual skill we can give students, in the classroom, that will serve them well in actual interpreting

situations.

Critical discourse analysis approach: the key to a postmodern approach to interpreting
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Critical discourse analysis is a practice which was devised by the linguist Norman Fairclough (see particularly Fairclough 1992). Its central ideas have been adopted by scholars throughout Europe (Wodak, Kress, Chouliaraki et al) and applied to many different fields (eg. critical literacy). This classroom practice seeks to apply critical discourse analysis to the training of interpreters.

Critical discourse analysis is rooted in postmodernism and holds that there is no "grand recit," no one culture to which we may lay claim, but that each individual has their own "petit recit," their own particular blend of influences, ideas, and ways of using language. Critical discourse analysis sees discourse (the way we talk about what we talk about) as an act of identity, as social action. It holds that we are all subject to discourses, so much so that our own discourses are largely patchworks or snippets of other discourses to which we have been exposed. It should be possible, therefore, to pick apart what we say and the way we say it to reveal some of the influences and beliefs that shape our lives, frame our perspectives, and make us say what we say in the way that we do. This practice, then, aims to make students aware of the assumptions that they already make about speakers and to encourage them to make decisions and predictions which are based on linguistic, objectively identifiable factors rather than simple "gut instinct." As students become more practiced, they will produce more effective interpretations since they are able to identify speaker intent and effect with greater accuracy and to predict more reliably.

It is important to raise students' awareness of the discourses that surround them in society. This can be done a number of ways, but chiefly students must be encouraged to listen/observe language interaction in a variety of settings between a variety of different people and to begin to identify what makes these language events different from or similar to each other. In this way students begin to perceive that range of discourses to which they are exposed on a daily basis. When students are sufficiently sensitive to this, they can undertake the following exercise.

Students, working in groups, are presented with a text (which can take the form of an audiotape, a written transcript, or a videotape). They are asked to state what they think the speaker (or speakers) of that text; their speculations can include the speaker's education, profession, height, attractiveness, political affiliations, etc. Next comes a detailed and structured textual analysis of the same text. Here features identified by a traditional analysis (features such as topic range, foregrounding and backgrounding of information, turntaking/interruption, hedging, pausing, terms of address, relational markers, register shifts, prosody and intonation, nonmanual features, lexical choices, gender markers, interrogatives, declaratives, modals, definite and indefinite articles, and so on) are married with factors such as the nature of the individuals involved in the interaction, the time and location of the interaction, any institutions in which the interaction takes place, or which the individuals might be said to represent, the place of such institutions in the society to which the individuals are associated, and so on. In this way, students begin to identify the discourses which are shaping and framing the perspectives of the speaker(s). The findings of the analyses furnish an understanding of the speaker which is based, in most

part, on tangible, linguistic evidence. When students compare their post-analysis findings with their initial opinions, the results can be instructive and enlightening.

Critically analyzing discourses can be repeated many times with texts which increase in complexity. This practice develops a reflex ability to analyze quickly an deftly on the part of the interpreter. Unlike discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis can be applied to any text from magazine articles to television broadcasts, and both natural and synthesized texts. I have found it practical, however, to work from texts which are synthesized from one's experiences of real conversation in the first instance. Students can later progress to natural data, which tends to be more complex in its content.

Instructors should begin with monologues in the students' first language (L1), working up to complex L1 dialogues before moving on to monologues in the students' second language (L2). When students are proficient at analyzing complex L2 texts, then an instructor can move to using bilingual texts. Students should attempt to interpret these texts before and after analysis, comparing the difference in performance.

It is beneficial to students to undertake this practice in groups in order to share perspectives. Students who have undertaken this activity have reported increased overall language awareness, increased sensitivity to the perspectives of others, broadened personal perspectives, and an increased appetite for knowledge of other cultures/belief systems.

Recall Protocols as an Instrument for Assessing Comprehension Competence
Rico Peterson, MA

From the field of second language reading comprehension comes the technique of evaluating the discourse comprehension ability of students by means of an instrument called the Recall Protocol. An accurate assessment of the discourse comprehension of students is both desirable and problematic. This focus on comprehension derives from the theoretical stance that the quality of our comprehension of a language and culture defines our ability to function in that language and culture.

The recall procedure entails the following steps, which have been adapted from Bernhardt's (1991) description::

1. select and prepare a text (45-60 seconds of speech or signing);
2. allow the students to hear/view the text as often as they like;
3. once students think they "know" the text, tell them to say or write everything they remember from the text in English;
4. collect these protocols;
5. use this student-generated data as a basis for future lessons or individual educational plans that address: cultural features, conceptual features, and/or grammatical features that seem to interfere with comprehension.

The advantages of recall protocols are that the tests are easy to construct, and that they have demonstrated high internal consistency reliability. In preparing the text, it is necessary to create a transcription with line numbering. The breakdown or arrangement of these glosses is done by discourse features, targeted vocabulary, grammatical features, or even by individual lexical item. By arranging the

source material, it is possible to score student texts by the absence or presence of targeted discourse features.

Allowing students ample access to the source message, the issue of memory is negated. Since recall is done entirely in the words of the student, there is no danger of the test providing a separate "text" for the student to negotiate. Standard comprehension measures, fill-in-the-blank, cloze, short answer, and others tend to work at the lexical level. Moreover, they contain assumptions about student comprehension that may confound the validity of the measure. The scores not only indicate discourse features that may be problematic for individual students, but there may be across a range of students similar features that are problematic for the majority of students. Once students identify problem-causing features, students can be assigned to find other examples of these features from other sources. The student-centered identification and resolution of troublesome discourse features is an exercise that puts students in control of their own learning.

Using Translation Techniques to teach Interpreting
Jeffrey E. Davis, Ph.D.

Using translation techniques allows interpretation to be taught as a series of successive learning situations. In a systematic approach, learning to translate comes before consecutive interpreting which is followed by simultaneous interpreting. Teaching translation techniques allows students time to process beyond the lexical and phrasal level to levels of pragmatics, semantics, and semiotics. Learning skills such as concentration, visualization, short term memorizing, language restructuring, and others are the skills learned in translation practice. Learning these skills without the constraints of speed and other pressures helps students get not only at the meaning of a message but also the manner in which the audience for which the text is intended are likely to understand the message.

For the purpose of translation exercises, instructors should select source language texts that include: 1) a variety of contexts and registers, 2) naturally occurring discourse, but frozen texts may also be used, 3)various linguistic models (i.e., young/old, male/female, ethnic/cultural, and others), 4) idiomatic, figurative, and culturally embedded words, phrases, and utterances). Texts may range from monologic (one speaker) to dialogic (conversational/interactive). The original source language texts should be audiotaped or videotaped. Ideally, there will also be a written transcription of the source language text.

Once source language texts are selected, prepare several model translations or interpretations into the target language using professional interpreters or naive users of the target language. These models can then be used for comparative and text analysis purposes later.

Students use source language texts, beginning with texts in their first language and later progressing to texts in their second language, for discovering words that have more than one meaning or words that require more than a single lexical item as a translation. They can also debate cultural meanings in both the source and target language texts. Then they move on to phrases, utterances, and larger chunks of language. For example, in English, the word "have" has a different meaning depending upon how it is used. Later, showing the model translation or interpretation allows students to compare and discuss similarities and differences in interpretations.

Translation teaches for there to be successful transfer of meaning between languages, the interpreter/translator must make certain linguistic and cultural adjustments. The two central issues shared in translation and interpretation studies--equivalency and cultural untranslatability (i.e., understanding a language entails understanding the culture's world-view and cross-language translation is possible only to the extent that cross-cultural translation is possible). In this way, students can go beyond the lexicon and grammar to levels of semantics, pragmatics, and semiotics.

Interpreter-Participant Alignment: Interpreter Generated Utterances in Interactive Role Plays

Melanie Metzger, Ph.D.

Interpreting students are often taught that the interpreter's role in interactive settings is that of a neutral service provider. This is likely due to the fact that interpreting has long been viewed as if an interpreter is merely a tool to interaction. Yet, recent research calls into question the assumption that it is possible for an interpreter to function as a passive conduit. For example, interpreters have been found to take an active role in the turn exchanges in interpreted encounters (Roy forthcoming), and to contribute self-generated utterances that not only relay the utterances of one or another of the primary participants, but also fulfill a coordinating function, at times providing information that no one has uttered but which everyone has acquired through the interaction, such as who is the original source (Wadensjö 1998, Metzger forthcoming). These findings raise questions both about how interpreters influence or participate in interpreted interaction, and how this issue is addressed in interpreter education pedagogy.

Although it is possible for students of interpretation to practice interpreting interactions that have been prerecorded, for instance, from a videotaped source, these prerecorded activities leave little room for true interaction. Metzger (1995) has demonstrated that student interpreters cannot help but be involved in interactions for which they are present. Thus students must have opportunities to practice interaction before they actually begin interpreting.

Role plays provide student interpreters with opportunities to learn and practice some of the strategies that are required for participating in interpreted interaction. As Metzger's research shows, a lack of utterances from the interpreter can be just as disruptive as too many or the wrong kind of utterances.

Students need to be provided with opportunities to learn and practice the strategies used by professional interpreters. As research has demonstrated, interpreters generate talk which helps the interaction unfold. When a student interpreter leaves a question-answer pair unfinished, in an attempt to avoid direct interaction with one of the primary interlocutors, then the interaction as a whole can be disrupted. Students who participate in these types of role-plays have an opportunity to try out strategies and then review the result of their participation within the interaction. If interpreter educators provide explicit information related to the structural features of interactive discourse, such as adjacency pairs, then the student can use a role-play to practice applying this knowledge.

Student interpreters can analyze how they frame their encounters with primary participants and in what ways they interact with these interlocutors. Students and teachers can see if students are

avoiding direct communication with one interlocutor, usually the service provider such as a doctor, while engaging in repeated interaction with the other interlocutor, the non majority language speaker.

Interpreter educators can teach a series of strategies that are goal-oriented (i.e., minimizing the interpreter's influence as a participant) and sequentially ordered (a non-response might precede a minimal response, which, in turn, might precede e an explanation). These strategies could be taught as a result of empirically based analysis of their impact on interpreted encounters in a variety of settings.

Selected Resources:

Bernhardt, E. 1993. *Reading Development in a Second Language*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.

Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.

Larson, Mildred. 1984. *Meaning-Based Translation: a guide to cross-language equivalence*. New York: University Press of America.

Metzger, M. Forthcoming. *Simultaneous Interpretation: Deconstructing the Myth of Neutrality*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Roy, Cynthia. Forthcoming. *Interpreting as a Discourse Process*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wadensjö, Cecilia. 1998. *Interpreting as Interaction*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.

Wodak, Ruth. 1996. *Disorders of Discourse*. London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman.