

Adapting interpreter training to constructivism: meeting the challenge of a new paradigm

Abstract:

In the past few years we have been witnessing dramatic changes in the way we understand the training of interpreters. Our previous theories about training in general have been deeply transformed by the Bologna Process, the constructivist paradigm (Kirali, 2000) and the fast development of new technologies. Interpreter training already had some features that set it apart from other less practical disciplines (Gile, 2009) and have facilitated the implementation of new technologies in the classroom. Nowadays, blended learning in our field is already a reality.

Influences from constructivism and aligned outcomes-based teaching and learning (Biggs and Tang, 2011) have undoubtedly played their part in creating a new learning environment for interpreter trainees, yet one of the major challenges we are currently facing in our field of expertise is that of encouraging teachers and learners to develop a deep approach to learning and a high level of engagement. Scientific research concludes that the training of experts, such as professional interpreters, requires a more dynamic, progressive problem-solving approach (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993), that could be enhanced by matching up the most effective methodology with the existing resources in order to maximize the potential of the wealth of pedagogical material the Internet provides.

We are aware, however, that this cornucopia of pedagogical resources and new technologies must be accompanied by a profound soul-searching exercise about our goals and methodologies. In other fields of expertise, the combination of clearly defined intended learning outcomes and pedagogical innovation, such as the use of rubrics, learning diaries or flipped-classroom methodologies, have been successful in achieving the students' engagement and understanding of their own learning processes. The capability of learning to learn is not only vital for the purpose of attaining the degree of expertise that will enable a student to pass a test, it will also accompany the journeyman in the full development of that expertise, and facilitate the expert's adaptation to new working environments in an ever-changing profession such as ours.

In this paper, we aim to analyse the main differences between a teacher-centered pre-Bologna approach and a student-centered framework that leverages the use of new technologies focusing on the organisation of blended learning/virtual coaching activities, the integration of innovative training content, new pedagogical methodologies and tools in interpreter training.

(374 words)

References

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Keywords

Conference interpreting; constructivist approach; pedagogical material; problem solving-approach; Bologna Process