

Título: Assessment of Interpreter Performance: Methods and Models from Impressions to Empiricism

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Itinerario: Interpretación y Lenguaje Oral

Lengua en que se imparte la materia: Inglés

Curso: 2008-2009

Course description and rationale:

This course is designed to familiarize students with the evolution of thought that has taken place as regards the assessment of the quality of interpreter output both at the professional level and during training. As is the case in translation, the measurement of success in meeting the goal of producing a target language rendition that is accurately, thoroughly and stylistically equivalent to the source language text, is extremely difficult. When the specific additional difficulties of time restraints, immediacy and the variables related to spoken language production are added to the mix, the challenges related to achieving successful TL renditions increase as do those related to performance evaluation.

Much of the research that has been done as regards interpretation has focused on the development of language proficiency (correct usages as regards lexicon, syntax, structure, pronunciation, etc.), basic interpreting strategies and techniques, or training. There is much less in the literature about evaluation or performance assessment. In the attempts that have been made in recent years to try to establish evaluation criteria for interpreter performance, attention has often focused on issues such as who should be charged with evaluating performance (the audience, the client, the interpreter him/herself) or once again, on the "measurement" of strictly linguistic elements (number of grammatical, structural, lexical or pronunciation errors). Research in Translation and Interpreting has stretched across disciplinary boundaries, including theories of communication and cognitive processing. In recent years, partly due to advances in technology, theoretical constructs have begun to be tested through empirical studies of language mediation in both the textual and spoken forms. As a result, approaches to evaluation and instruction of interpreters are moving away from impressionistic and anecdotal data and toward empirical evidence as a theoretical base.

This course will introduce students to the evolution of methods and models for evaluating interpreter performance over the last few decades, will discuss the issues and criteria that should be taken into account when assessment is undertaken, will introduce students to the need for empirical models of evaluation, will present the challenges and limitations involved in using the different models presented, and will help students explore new avenues for assessment in the future.

Objectives:

- to familiarize students with the evolution of thought that has taken place as regards the assessment of the quality of interpreter output both at the professional level and during training
- to provide guidelines for the establishment of evaluation criteria for interpreter performance
- to train students to understand and use corpus-based approaches to interpreter evaluation
- to develop a critical attitude in students as regards current practices and approaches to interpreter performance and evaluation

Content:

- I. An introduction to evaluation techniques related to language-based performance fields
- II. A review of the approaches used in the past to evaluate interpreter performance
- III. The evolution of evaluation models, their criteria, application and shortcomings
- IV. Corpus-based models for the evaluation of interpreter performance
- V. The MCR method of empirical measurement of interpreter performance
 - a. Application in training programs
 - b. Application at the professional level
 - c. Self-evaluation techniques
- VI. Future trends in interpreter performance evaluation techniques

Methods:

The class will be a combination of lectures, commented readings, and practice exercises based on actual student and professional performance.

Evaluation:

Students will be expected to attend sessions and participate actively. Formal evaluation will consist of students completing a detailed, annotated evaluation of a series of interpretations provided by the professor using the MCR method which will include comments on the perceived usefulness of the method, recommendations for improvement and/or suggestions for alternate approaches.

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