

Reflective Approach in Teaching Note-Taking¹

Práctica reflexiva en la enseñanza de la toma de notas

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Abstract: Interpreter training represents a crucial period for discussing one's strengths and weaknesses, introducing new skills, and applying those successfully. Assessment of students has already shifted from being the sole privilege of teachers to emphasising the role of peer assessment and also self-assessment, all kinds being crucial not only for the overall performance but also in learning individual skills. This paper focuses on the role of self-assessment and reflective approach in teaching note-taking. The empirical research was carried out over the course of four semesters with four different groups of students, each comprising approximately twenty students with various backgrounds in note-taking (theoretical knowledge, self-taught, or no experience at all). Students started with taking notes using their own style, then followed a short course introducing the theoretical framework and explaining the principles, which were gradually introduced and practised. After each session, the notes were archived and, with active participation of students, analysed in class. After five sessions, students were asked to analyse their own notes and set their goals. This strategy positively affected their motivation and led to better results. After another five sessions, the students once again carried out self-assessment, this time reflecting on their improvement, contrasting their first and last/

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best notes. This strategy resulted in a boost in motivation and confidence, and overall improvement.

Keywords: self-assessment; consecutive interpreting; note-taking; interpreter training; motivation; reflective approach.

Resumen: El período de formación ofrece un espacio importante para los estudiantes de interpretación para reflexionar sobre sus puntos fuertes y débiles, para introducir habilidades nuevas y aplicarlas. Le evaluación de los estudiantes ha visto una transición desde la evaluación proporcionada de manera exclusiva por el formador hasta un enfoque en la evaluación por pares o incluso autoevaluación; todos estos modos de evaluación tienen un papel importante no solo en la evaluación holística de la interpretación, sino también de la evaluación de las habilidades individuales. Este artículo aborda el papel de la autoevaluación y la práctica reflexiva en la enseñanza de toma de notas para la interpretación consecutiva. La investigación de carácter empírico se desarrolló a lo largo de cuatro semestres con cuatro grupos de estudiantes de aproximadamente 20 estudiantes con un nivel heterogéneo en cuanto al dominio de la toma de notas (estudiantes con conocimiento teórico, autodidactas e incluso estudiantes sin conocimiento ninguno). Al principio del semestre los estudiantes tomaron notas al estilo libre; a continuación se les presentaron los principios teóricos de la toma de notas, que se desarrollaron por práctica sistemática. Después de cada clase, se archivaron las notas tomadas por los estudiantes y se analizaron con la participación activa de los estudiantes en clase. Después de cinco clases, los estudiantes analizaron sus notas y marcaron objetivos individuales, lo que reforzó su motivación y se plasmó en mejores resultados. Después de cinco clases siguientes, los estudiantes volvieron a realizar el autoanálisis de sus notas reflexionando sobre sus avances y comparando sus notas de mejor y peor calidad. Este enfoque didáctico resultó en una motivación y confianza reforzadas y en el mejor rendimiento de los estudiantes a la hora de interpretar.

Palabras clave: autoevaluación; interpretación consecutiva; toma de notas; formación de intérpretes; motivación; práctica reflexiva.

1. INTRODUCTION

The core of education in all disciplines, including interpreter training, is implementing a student-oriented approach, focusing on students' needs as well as their perspective regarding the learning process, or as Lee-Jahnke (2001) mentions, shifting the focus on the student and the process rather than the result. As Setton & Dawrant mention, students must be «active, responsible participants in their own learning» (Setton & Dawrant, 2016, p. 27). This emancipation is crucial for continuous lifelong learning after graduation, and the skills should be learned through group learning, collaborative

knowledge building, and reflective action (Kiraly, 2000). As Piotrowska states, «it is generally argued in European pedagogy that critical self-reflection enhances personal growth, for which merely experiencing something is not enough» (2012, p. 110). Her-ring *et al.* (2022) confirm that «a professional who applies a reflective framework is one who allows time for discussion and evaluation about their work to learn from previous experiences. (...) [It] also implies having an open mind or an open climate, if working in groups, to allow for unbiased discussions», which applies to university instruction as well — the students need to learn how to carry out such activities and apply such framework, doing so in an open, safe climate of a seminar group.

Interpreter training research seems to be focusing more on later stages of study, usually master's degree programmes with fewer students, striving to acquire as much theory as possible before they enter the world of professional interpreters and fully start their careers. Such students are usually more aware of the basics; they have better knowledge of the theoretical frameworks and often already have an experience from practice. On the other hand, interpreter training occurs not only at the master's level, there are also bachelor's degree programmes and it is the students of such programme this study focuses on. In contrast with the study groups at the master's level, bachelor's degree interpreting training often faces challenges such as mixed groups of students with various backgrounds, knowledge, experience, potential, and aspiration: they are often unsure about their future specialisation or even profession in general and, at least in the Czech-Slovak environment, often study a double major (see for instance Djovčoš *et al.* 2021, Miketová 2019, or Mraček & Mračková Vavroušová 2021). It aims to provide students with knowledge of the basic concepts and frameworks as well as hands-on experience, both within the practice-oriented seminars and on-site practice. The initial stages of training may be challenging not only for the students but also for the instructor, knowing that their approach forms the base the students will build on, thus emphasising the need for quality training as well as support for a vulnerable group of novices. Such a group needs to be provided with constructive feedback and needs to hear not only about the negative aspects of their performance, but also some positive motivating comment. Learning from the instructor's feedback, they are later capable of providing both constructive peer feedback and self-assessment. Novice interpreters also struggle with the vagueness of some concepts, not being able to put them into practice or relate them to any experience, as Takeda confirms - students would love to get specific solutions for specific problems and get explicit training regarding strategies (Takeda, 2010). It is the role of the instructor to guide them, which might be difficult without any insight into how the students perceive the concepts, the instruction, and the situation. As Takeda (2010, p.38) points out, «student input is a valuable resource to help teachers reflect on their practice and modify it, if necessary, for continuous improvement».

The approach described in this study arose from a round-table discussion with students of the bachelor's degree programme in interpreting at Palacký University Olomouc enrolled in the fall semester of 2020 and approximately 50 graduates of the same

programme. One of the burning issues they struggled with the most (more than 30 out of 50 graduates mentioned it) was the concept of note-taking, describing their feelings as «being stuck» due to the vagueness of the phrases used by some instructors such as «*notes are personal; an interpreter should develop their own individual system; do not write too much; do not write too little*». It is more than evident that students are finding it difficult to put theory into practice. This discussion motivated a change in the curriculum and served as the basis for this study, which was conducted over the course of four semester with four different groups of students enrolled in a course in consecutive interpreting focusing on note-taking. The study investigates a corpus of self-assessment reports complemented with notes taken during in-class interpreting. The hypothesis is that this self-reflective approach helps students see their progress in note-taking and increases their motivation to engage in further exercises and interpreting in general.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Reflective Approach in Interpreter Training*

Interpreter training has already shifted from a teacher-centred approach, often using a combination of teacher feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment. A reflective approach involves a process of looking back at previous experiences to gain insight into one's behaviour, value, and knowledge gained (Desjarlais & Smith, 2011, p.3). In the context of translation and interpreting, self-assessment (as Desjarlais & Smith [2011, p. 3] conclude, a more proactive process for analysing one's performance following defined performance criteria identifying one's strengths and weaknesses and gaining insight in order to improve one's performance) is often included within reflective practice, as both processes are essential to produce self-growth and in this case also professional growth, since self-evaluation promotes awareness of student's learning (Russo, 1995).

Herring *et al.* (2022) also see a close connection to deliberate practice, relating to expertise. Working rather with the term *skill development-focused practice*, they also included «learners engaging in self-assessment and reflection» as one of the essential features of such practice (p.84), even though they argue that «*reflective practice* is a professional rather than a training concept» (p. 83). Although the author agrees with Lee (2011) that «self-assessment is not only important during interpreter training, but even more so after students graduate and become professional interpreters» (p. 248), as well as Herring *et al.* in that professionals are capable of performing reflective practice leading to improvement in specific areas using specific techniques, the author also believes that reflective approach can be applied already during interpreting training, thus teaching the students self-awareness and showing them effective techniques.

Researchers comment on all kinds of feedback, teacher, peer, and self-assessment, discussing their positive and negative aspects and mutual influence. As Lee (2018) found out, students perceive teacher assessment as considerably more effective and helpful for improvement than other types of feedback. However, peer assessment usually helps the students see another perspective and offers solutions; «peers, having experienced similar difficulties and challenges, may become more motivated and less inclined to indulge in [negative forms of] self-criticism» (*ibid.*, p. 153), while in self-assessment, the tendency towards self-criticism is very high (both personal experience but see also for instance Djovčoš *et al.*, 2021). Feedback and assessment should not be left to the student alone; it is the gradual cooperation with the teacher and peers that leads to the desired results (Lee-Jahnke, 2001). Several studies focus specifically on self-assessment in interpreting, for instance, Tipton & Furmanek (2016), Dean & Pollard (2013), and Bancroft *et al.* (2015); there are also several papers discussing self-assessment as a part of interpreting practice (e.g., Postigo Pinazo 2008 or Schafer 2011), and some are focusing on performance (Riccardi, 2002; Lee, 2011; Lee, 2022; Milcu, 2012). Some works also include note-taking (Čirvinskienė, 2007 or Mraček & Mračková Vavroušová, 2021).

Self-reflection tends to be recorded in oral or written form; in the oral form usually in the form of unstructured or semi-structured interviews; the written form is also known as logbooks or diaries. Although there are several studies using diaries for interpreting, Motta (2013) mentions several drawbacks to their use in instruction, for instance, the efficiency and frequency with which they were used, as well as their confidential nature, the latter, on the other hand, being highly valued by Piotrowska (2012). Arumí and Esteve (2006), working with beginner students in consecutive interpreting, argue that such metacognitive instruments incite the learner's awareness about themselves and their learning process and stimulate the relationships with the teacher and peers. All the findings presented here suggest that an adequately introduced self-reflection carried out in an open and safe environment can bring considerable benefits to all involved in the instruction process.

From this point on, this study works with the term self-assessment as a term covering both self-reflection and self-assessment or self-evaluation.

2.2. Teaching Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting

Setton & Dawrant (2016) propose five stages of progression in consecutive interpreting: Initiation, Coordination, Experimentation, Consolidation and Reality. The subjects of this study should all have passed what Setton & Dawrant call the «necessary preliminary stage» in which they should have become familiar with active listening, remembering, and speaking used as professional tools (Setton & Dawrant, 2016, p.167), practising them in a variety of exercises. Such exercises are usually followed by practising short consecutive without notes or short dialogue interpreting, mastering the basic

skills used in professional interpreting. As Setton & Dawrant (*ibid.*, p.159) point out, «initiation to interpreting should be stimulating and enjoyable». However, this might not always be the case and students might feel overwhelmed, noticing all the aspects they still need to improve.

The next step leads the students to an introduction to note-taking. As Daniel Gile suggests, consecutive interpreting consists of two phases where in the first (listening and note-taking) phase, note-taking «reduce[s] the [processing] capacity available for the Listening and Analysis Effort» (Gile 1991, p. 178); however, it is not the quantity of notes taken that influence the capacity available, but rather the interpreter's readiness and professional skill in taking notes (Gile 1991, pp. 177-179). Kornakov's opinion — «the instructor's role, to aid self-preparation, is to provide some useful guidelines, strategies and exercises that can be used outside the language laboratory, without an instructor and without sophisticated equipment» (Kornakov, 2002, p. 248) can be used for note-taking as well, and Takeda (2010, p. 42) confirms with her findings that students prefer being introduced to various approaches and techniques, supported by relevant empirical findings to establish their own system instead of following a 'trial-and-error' course without further guidance. The present study follows Setton & Dawrant's approach to «demonstrate and explain the full toolkit of note-taking principles and techniques, then let students try them out, integrating them progressively» (2016, p. 169), shifting from mere what to note to how, when and to what extent when under pressure and find the right balance between all skills necessary for successful interpretation (*ibid.*, p. 178) as the interpreting instruction continues, entering the coordination stage. Setton & Dawrant considered this stage to be crucial regarding students' motivation since the problems that occur at this stage are numerous and lead to students experiencing negative feelings connected with their performance (*ibid.*, p. 180).

This view is supported by Gillies, who states that note-taking has enormous impact on the overall performance and «not knowing how to take notes and the detrimental effect that that will have on [one's] interpreting performance could discourage [the person] from joining the profession before [one] even really get[s] started.» (Gillies 2017, p.7). He also suggests addressing the basics such as public speaking, analysis and consecutive without notes first before learning how to take notes. In his system consisting of several stages, the recommended method is chunking the framework into several stages following each other, each to be practiced and mastered before moving to the next one (Gillies 2017, p.8).

Within his framework of process-oriented translation training system, Gile thinks of novices as students of relevant methods rather than professional producers, and teachers should take a normative approach and ask thought-provoking questions instead of criticising (Gile 1994, p. 108). He also observed that students' interest in the rules and models presented to them corresponds with their acceptance of those, but the rules are often too general for students to implement. A self-reflective method, problem reporting, proved to be (once well-established) an efficient tool; however, only for students whose motivation is strong (Gile 1994).

2.3. Motivation

Motivation is crucial not only for students' will to proceed in their studies and engage in further exercises but also specifically for their performance. Without motivation, there is no progression, and even the students who are willing to improve and keen on practising do not reach desired results without being motivated. With motivation, interpreting becomes a «stimulating and enjoyable experience» (Setton & Dawrant, 2016, p. 19) when «the tension and adrenalin inherent in this profession [is] harnessed and converted into 'constructive stage-fright'» (*ibid.*). As Herring *et al.* (2022, p. 85) state, «the goal is to support learners (novices) as they develop their skills and become proficient practitioners of interpreting and to prepare them for continuing development throughout their careers». An instructor should be a figure the students can trust, someone they believe will help them improve, someone who creates a safe, open environment and encourages peer feedback as well as self-reflection. For instance, Ericsson (2000) found: «Improvement of performance was uniformly observed when individuals, who were motivated to improve their performance, were given well-defined tasks, were provided with feedback, and had ample opportunities for repetition» (p.193). This paper focuses mainly on the students' motivation to engage in further exercises and interpreting in general.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was motivated by a round-table discussion with 20 third-year students of the bachelor's degree programme in interpreting at Palacký University Olomouc enrolled in the fall semester of 2020 and approximately 50 graduates of the same programme. At the beginning of the semester, the then current students confessed that due to COVID-19 restrictions² they lack some knowledge they should already possess and asked for more practice in and insight into their note-taking even though they were enrolled in a successive course in consecutive interpreting, focusing on the experimentation and consolidation stages of progress in consecutive interpreting, working with a wide range of authentic speeches of longer duration. Consequently, a specific course in note-taking was implemented and complemented by a self-assessment exercise. This self-assessment and the overall form of the course thus served as a pilot test for this study, which was conducted in the following semesters. In their reports, the

2. At the beginning of the pandemic the government completely closed universities down and the students had only home assignments and online consultations for some time before some form of online instruction was provided. The initial chaos may have led to some problems mentioned in the text. Starting from spring semester 2021, online instruction was standardized and since fall 2021, offline form of instruction was the standard again.

students indicated their frustration that they did not have such a course earlier — their recommendation was followed and the content was moved to a seminar most students undergo in their second year of study and after careful analysis of the students' reports, an additional exercise of home assignment note-taking and a comparison with in-class notes was introduced in the final study to help students with a mid-semester self-assessment exercise, described later in this section.

The hypothesis behind this study was that the self-reflective approach used in teaching note-taking helps the students see their progress in learning how to take notes and increases their motivation. The study itself was not purely research-oriented; it rather aimed at helping the students while answering the following questions: (1) *Does the use of self-assessment in instruction improve the students' performance?* (2) *Does the use of self-assessment in instruction improve the students' overall impression of their performance during and after the course?* (3) *Does the self-reflective approach increase the students' motivation to engage in further exercises and interpreting in general?* The answers could likely lead to a boost in students' motivation and tailoring the instruction to their needs.

3.1. Research sample

The study investigates a corpus of self-assessment reports complemented with notes taken during in-class interpreting of students enrolled in a course called Interpreting seminar 3 under the bachelor's degree programme in English for Translation and Interpreting at Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic. The programme is designed as a three-year curriculum focusing on translation and community interpreting, including a variety of subjects related to contrastive linguistics, cultural studies, and literature. This programme can also be studied as a double major. The design of the interpreting curriculum for this programme and the individual seminars follows the five stages of progression in consecutive interpreting, i.e., initiation, coordination, experimentation, consolidation, and reality (Setton & Dawrant, 2016, p. 78). In the first two semesters, students usually go through the initiation and coordination stages, practising active listening, doing memory exercises, enhancing their vocabulary, practising dialogue interpreting and sight translation. In the second year, the initiation stage focuses on more specific skills — note-taking in consecutive and speaking while listening and other skills and exercises in simultaneous interpreting (two separate seminars), continuing through coordination stages to experimentation and partly consolidation through on-site practice. The last two semesters focus on the last two stages, consolidation and reality.

The material for this study was collected over the course of four semesters (from February 2021 to December 2022) with four different groups of students, each comprising approximately twenty students. For most of them, the Interpreting seminar 3 is a compulsory subject; however, students of double major can choose whether they want to enrol, and it is also included in the curriculum of the master's degree programme

English for Translation and Interpreting for students coming from non-interpreting programmes as a mandatory subject. The data used in the present study are derived from a corpus of 150 self-assessment reports and notes of 75 students (58 female and 17 male) whose mother tongue was Czech, 45 enrolled in the English for Translation and Community Interpreting bachelor's degree programme, 6 enrolled in the English for Translation and Interpreting master's degree programme, and 24 enrolled in English for Translation and Community Interpreting bachelor's degree programme under double major studies, in combination mostly with other linguistic programmes, but also other programmes (see Table 1).

Study programme	Programme combination	Number of students
Master's degree English for Translation and Interpreting	--	6
Bachelor's degree English for Translation and Interpreting (ATP)	--	45
ATP + linguistic programme	General linguistics and Communication Theory	3
	German for Translators and Interpreters	3
	Czech Philology	3
	Spanish Philology	3
	French Philology	1
	Chinese Studies	1
	Jewish and Israeli studies	1
ATP + non-linguistic programme	International Relations and Security	3
	Journalism	2
	Film Studies	1
	Economic and Managerial Studies	1
	Musicology	1
	Sociology	1
Total number		75

Table 1: Sample characteristics regarding general background.

Most of the students take the course in the second year of their studies; however, the number of students interested in this course is higher than the capacity of the seminar (as well as the room), and Erasmus+ programmes are most often pursued in the second year of studies, therefore some students might take the course later in their studies, i.e., third year, and for the master's degree students it is usually their first year of studies. Since the curriculum is flexible and there is a wide variety of students who

can and do enrol in this course, they usually have a varying background of courses passed. However, generally, they all have passed the introductory practical course into interpreting, community interpreting class and introduction to theory and methods in interpreting.

Study group	Number of students		Year of study				Basic courses passed		
	M	F	BA 2nd	BA 3rd	MA 1st	MA 2nd	Introductory practical interpreting	Introduction to theory & methods	Community interpreting
SS 2021	3	17	17	0	3	0	20	20	17
FS 2021	5	13	5	12	1	0	16	18	17
SS 2022	6	15	17	4	0	0	13	14	21
FS 2022	3	13	13	1	0	2	16	16	14
Total	17	58	52	17	4	2	65	68	69

Table 2: Sample characteristics regarding instructional background.

3.2. Course description

The seminar in question, in which the material was collected, focuses on consecutive interpreting and note-taking; the first session started with a group discussion focusing on students' expectations, discussing what they expect to learn and do in the course. Next, due to the varying background (theoretical knowledge of note-taking, self-taught, no experience at all) caused by the factors mentioned above, a short course on theory, methodology and good practice in note-taking was conducted within the first three sessions of the course. The short course made the cohort more comparable since they were all provided with the same basics. From the beginning, following the short introductory course, the students practised the main features of the note-taking techniques, including simplification, abbreviations, use of symbols, and structure, by noting down structured speeches in each of the sessions (starting with shorter recordings of approximately 3 minutes and gradually moving to longer ones, up to 15 minutes, with pauses for interpreting varying as the course progressed, starting at after ca. 30 and leading up to after 120 seconds), including the first session where students started with taking notes using purely their own style. The students agreed to collecting, storing, and examining the data. After each session, the notes they made were collected and archived and then commented on, providing feedback with active participation in class, i.e., specific segments from anonymised notes were commented on and discussed, providing not only feedback from the instructor but also peer-feedback and a form of self-reflection. The in-class discussion brought objectivity and a detached

Study group	Material collected		
	Notes and recordings (number of files)	Self-assessment (number of comments)	
		Mid-semester	Final
SS 2021	175	153	399
FS 2021	144	96	325
SS 2022	188	128	338
FS 2022	143	148	363
Total	650	525	1425

Table 3: Material collected.

view, and through peer feedback combined with discussion and instructor's feedback, the students better understood what the «do's and don'ts» are and how to make the note-taking system work. They also gained better insight into note-taking techniques and improved in self-evaluation.

After four sessions, the students were assigned to make notes at home using a transcript of a speech as if they were to use it for interpreting, applying all the principles discussed in class. In the following class (mid-semester), the students interpreted the exact speech (without knowing it would be the same speech), making in-class notes. As a follow-up home assignment, they were asked to compare the notes they made at home with those made in class, determining the differences as well as weak areas in general and setting a goal. The course then continued with more practice in interpreting and note-taking, as well as in-class discussions and feedback. After another five sessions, the students were again assigned to carry out self-assessments, this time reflecting on their improvement, contrasting their first and last/best notes³.

Both the self-assessment assignments were a simple Microsoft Word document written in Czech⁴ as the students' mother tongue. The students were asked to be open and write what came to their minds; however, they were also given some supporting questions to make use of. Those were related to the differences, the goal, and the progress (*In what aspects do the notes (taken at home and in class/first and last ones) differ? Do you see any weak areas? What do you perceive as your strong or least prob-*

3. Last notes are the last notes students took in class; best notes mean the ones they found to be the best ones to interpret from. The majority of students chose last notes, and those who missed the last class compared the ones from the previous session, therefore not all «last notes» were taken during the last session. Only two students chose to analyse other than their last notes, and those were the notes taken during the lesson just before the last one, because they considered their **interpretation** of that speech the best and because the speech's topic and/or tone/structure was closer to them than in the last recording.

4. All direct quotations used for illustration will be translated into English.

lematic area? What would you set as your personal goal?; for the final self-assessment What techniques did you use? and How did those work? were added).

The analysis was based on individual comments, defined as a clause commenting on one specific relevant aspect. The sample comprised 525 comments collected from the first self-assessment assignment and 1,425 comments collected from the final assignment.

The comments were grouped according to the respective areas they focused on, namely *Overall Feelings*, *Techniques Used*, *Cause of Failure*, *Further Use*, *Room for Improvement*, *Setting a Goal*, *Progress*, and *Motivation*. Both *Techniques Used* and *Further Use* are comments focusing on specific techniques used in note-taking such as a specific approach to abbreviations, use of symbols, specific structure, verticality, etc., as described in Gillies (2019). The first category comprises comments mentioning the use of those, the latter consists of comments regarding the future use of those. The comments in each area were counted to see what areas were commented on mid-semester and at the end of semester. The main findings will be presented on the following pages.

Lastly, there were also recordings collected and archived from each session; these were considered briefly as part of the improvement assessment procedure but only as supportive evidence to see whether improvement in note-taking corresponds with improvement in overall performance.

Each student has been assigned a specific code consisting of a letter and number indicating the semester and year of the group and a number (e.g. 21S01) to anonymise the reports and the notes but to be able to link them to one another as well. The recordings were collected automatically under students' names and shared directly with the specific student (to be able to comment on their performance) and renamed for the purpose of this study to match the written input as well; however, these were not discussed publicly in class. Both students' reports and notes were submitted electronically in a slot on the course's university system website Moodle. Notes were taken during classes, online in spring semester 2021 and offline in the following semesters under similar conditions, both reports were home-assignments in all the semesters. Students' reports were analysed for their perception of progress, motivation and overall experience, and notes were examined for (peer-)feedback, in-class discussion, and overall improvement.

4. RESULTS

The analysis focused mainly on the students' reports, their approach towards the task and their perception of progress and motivation, i.e., whether students found motivation to engage in further exercises and in interpreting in general, not taking it only because they must. The content of the reports was analysed and comments (i.e.,

clauses commenting on one relevant particular aspect) were grouped into individual areas they focused on. The analysis focused on whether and how the students commented on the specific areas mentioned above and whether there was a difference in their first mid-semester report and the final one. The quantitative analysis showed what areas students tended to comment on and whether they mention any motivation or perception of progress at all. The qualitative analysis of the content of these comments focused mainly on how the students viewed themselves and their performance and how it was reflected in their reports, the motivation to engage in more exercises both in-class and on their own, or in more seminars, and their perception of progress. The students' notes were considered only briefly to see whether they showed an improvement in the students' note-taking.

4.1. *Students' Openness and Willingness to Cooperate*

Before discussing the individual areas, a brief note on students' willingness to cooperate and overall attitude should be made. As mentioned above, the cohort comprised mainly students of bachelor's degree programme and some students of master's degree programme coming from non-interpreting programmes, both studying programmes focusing on interpreting and also translation, thus not having all interpreting courses as obligatory. This was partly reflected also in the first mid-semester report in which some students did not write more than just three comments (the average number of comments in the first self-assessment assignment was 6 comments per person). However, in the final report, even those students commented more, although they were still the ones with the least comments (the average number of comments in the final self-assessment assignment was 19 comments per person, the highest number being 35, the lowest 5 comments). Nevertheless, the openness of all students was highly appreciated as it showed their trust towards the instructor (e.g. 22F12 mentioned she «was disgusted with [her] notes at first and felt like a complete idiot», and 21F05 confessed, «I thought you'd fail me at first because I suck, but I actually managed to improve at least a bit but I don't think I'll interpret ever again after I graduate»).

4.2. *Students' Expectations and Involvement*

The course started with a group discussion regarding the students' expectations. Students were asked to think about their answers to the presented questions, which were consequently written on a whiteboard and commented on in a group discussion. The first question was aimed more at the students in double major studies, however the answers to *Why did you enrol in this course?* were rather pragmatic, students mentioned reasons such as «because these should be the basics; I need one more course to have enough credits in this module; this course is obligatory for me; to improve my

skills», which was not very surprising, but showed almost zero motivation. The most frequent answers to *What do you expect to learn in the course? What do you expect us to do in this course?* were:

- to get better at interpreting
- to learn how to write notes
- to learn specific strategies for note-taking
- to improve my memory
- to practice consecutive
- «... because I do not know how to do that/I am not good at it».

Even though the answers were rather vague and general, the course, in general, focused on consecutive with note-taking, therefore the students' expectations were met. Nevertheless, the more important outcome from the group discussion is the finding that students have a vague idea about what it means to take notes and do not form any specific requirements, set specific goals, or identify specific areas for improvement.

Through the self-assessment assignments, the students again gained a more detached view. This is reflected not only in the number of comments but also in what areas were commented on in the mid-semester and the final report (see Figure 1).

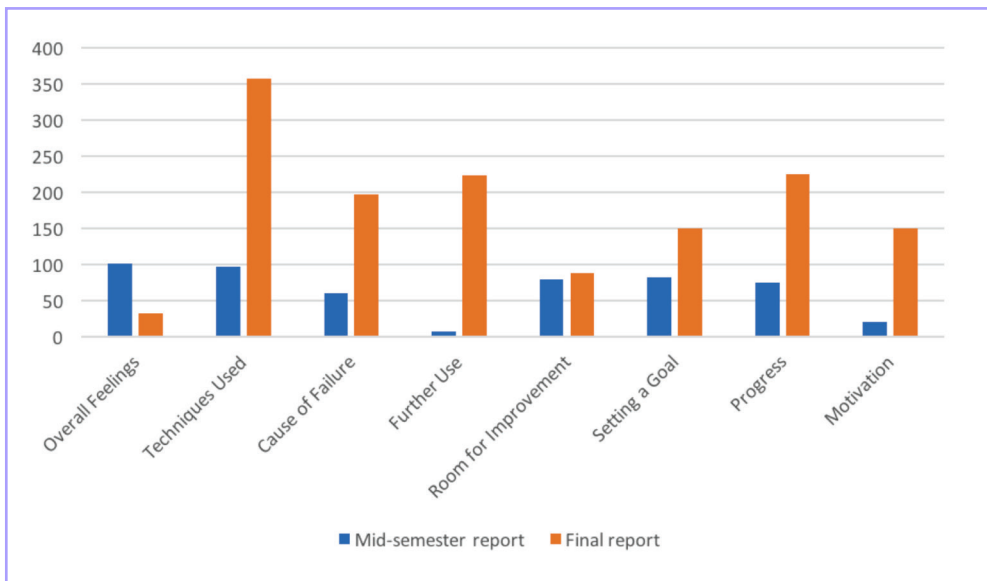


Figure 1: Number of comments in individual areas in the mid-semester report and final report.

The first area, *Overall Feelings*, relates to the students' openness discussed above; those were the comments mentioning, mostly negative, students' feelings towards note-taking, either in general or with regard to the specific notes taken. The overall feelings appeared more in the mid-semester report (102 comments mentioning overall feelings), even though some comments towards this area were also included in the final report (32 in total, see the examples given in the section *Student's Openness and Willingness to Cooperate*). The higher number of comments in this area in the mid-semester report might be caused by zero experience with writing self-assessments and focusing more on the emotional self-reflective part. In the final report, students mentioned some overall feelings as well, but more prominent was motivation to engage in more exercises and continue with interpreter training, which was put in a separate area and will be discussed later.

4.3. Techniques Used and Cause of Failure

It is not surprising that *Techniques Used* are the area that was commented on the most (with 98 comments mid-term and 358 comments in the final report) since the students were instructed to comment on what they tried and, in the final report, literally asked to describe what techniques they used. The difference between the mid-semester and final reports shows mainly the fact that by the end of the semester, students naturally tried more techniques than they had room for within the first five sessions.

Far more interesting is the *Cause of Failure* area. In the mid-semester report, students mainly mentioned that the technique did not work or that they failed using a technique due to lack of practice (21F10 «I wasn't really used to it»; 22F03 «the left margin didn't seem natural to me»), both regarding the in-class notes and those taken at home — these were taken after four weeks of the semester and after one session following the end of the crash course in theory, methodology and best practice, the students were still in training. Some students mentioned a cause (21S02 «I forgot the symbol I wanted to use and then couldn't remember what I meant»; 22S10 «as always, I tried to note down everything in class and then I couldn't read it»), but quite often they did not mention any specific cause or wrote down that they «don't know why, I just can't do it, interpreting isn't for me».

The higher number in this area for the final report, 198 comments, corresponds, of course, with the high number in *Techniques Used*, but it is evident that by the end of the semester, students were more aware of the cause that led them to try various techniques or improve the ones used. They were also far more specific in their comments, indicating the reason standing behind the changes and the cause of failure (e.g. 22S01 «I started using X for negation. I was using NO, but because I often confused NO for an acronym, I won't use that anymore.» 21F04 «First I noted negation in the form of crossing the word. But I scribble a lot and some words are just illegible — I don't know whether I crossed them for negation or because I changed my mind or noted it wrongly. I also use a lot of arrows and lines and then it's just a mess»).

4.4. Further Use

As Figure 1 shows, *Further Use* was the area with the most significant difference in the number of comments in the mid-semester and final report, 7 and 223, respectively. The high number of comments in the final report again corresponds with the high numbers in the two previous areas, but it can also be linked to the students' raised awareness of what they do. The students are not yet sure about the techniques that suit them, and they did not have that many opportunities to try various ones by mid-semester, and they practically do not have any idea whether they will use those or not, with only a few exceptions (e.g. 21F04 «I won't try using the left margin anymore. I don't like it.»).

In the final report, students commented on further use far more, and some (30 comments in total) also included a comment about finding their style:

22S07: «I tried using the left margin for links, but I dropped it. I switched to noting them in capitals in the text and use the left margin for recurring key information instead — the links in there confused me and now they stand out. That is much more convenient for me.»

21F16: «I struggled with note-taking a lot, oscillating between the notes being too verbal and full of symbols. Now I completely changed my course, I rely more on memory and use rather abbreviations and symbols in form of acronyms, accompanied by lines and arrows and brackets. I guess that is my style.»

22F08: «I tried both NO and X for negation, but I ended up using a small minus in front of the word. It really works for me, I finally found something useful for me.»

This reflects a more mature, experienced approach and indicates conscious, deliberate choice. Unless students analyse their notes, these realisations might never occur.

4.5. Room for Improvement and Setting a Goal

These two areas were comparable, looking at the number of comments for the mid-semester and the final report, with 80 and 89 comments regarding *Room for Improvement* and 82 and 150 comments about *Setting a Goal*. The area *Room for Improvement* is closely linked with the previous one; however, after thorough analysis, comments identifying and mentioning specifically a room for improvement were put into a separate group. That included comments such as «I still note quite a lot of words, not always necessary though.» (21S02) or «The structure is still messy; I can do better I hope» (22S13).

Since the students were explicitly asked to set a goal, finding a number of those occurring in the reports was predictable. Students fulfilled the task and all set a goal in the mid-semester report, but in the final reports, they were much more specific regarding the goals and commented on that more. Compare:

21S12 (mid-semester): «I would like to improve the structure a bit more.»

21F03 (final): «I am still not happy with the structure. I started using the left margin, I am still not fully used to it, but I want to give it more time. I also want to focus more on how I use the space on the page, having the left margin, leaving bigger gaps, not scribbling just to fit it on the same line and rather move it.»

21F05 (mid-semester): «I write a lot of words, should change that probably.»

22F14 (final): «I still tend to use a lot of words, long words, in their full form. I want to develop and use a system of abbreviations I could follow.»

Again, more experience and deliberate reflection on their notes and the system practised brought more specific insight.

4.6. Progress and Motivation

The most prominent areas in this research were the last two, *Progress* and *Motivation*. Looking at the number of comments in mid-semester and final reports, 75 and 225 regarding *Progress* and 21 and 150 concerning *Motivation*, the results are very promising. The group discussion at the very beginning of the semester showed almost zero motivation to engage in (especially additional) exercises and sometimes even generally in interpreting and mainly negative feelings were shared. The mid-semester report brought some negative overall feelings as well, but some comments mentioning students' motivation (21) were detected already after five sessions, and some students (75 comments in total) noticed some progress made, which, compared to none at the beginning, might be viewed as a promising outcome. The final report's outcome is even more positive, identifying 225 comments on the progress made and 150 on students' motivation.

22F09: «I was sceptical because I still think my notes are not good enough. But then I saw where I started and I was amazed how much my notes changed. I mean, wow, I never thought I could do better. Seeing this progress made me look forward to the next seminar and more interpreting.»

21S11: «There really is a big difference between the first notes and the last ones. I didn't even notice that I changed so many things. My notes finally look a bit professional, not as random words or sentences jotted down. I don't feel so dumb, yay me. This is so motivating.»

22S02: «Starting the master's seemed like an awful idea at the beginning of the semester. I feared every interpreting class. But it looks like I improved somehow, both in interpreting and note-taking. If you told me in September, I'd never believe you. I still don't feel like interpreting is going to be my future job, but I quite enjoy it and it changed from a dreadful activity into an interesting one. I might take another seminar next year.»

Such comments represent a positive outcome of this study, gaining motivated students instead of having a class of unmotivated students.

4.7. Shift in students' self-assessment

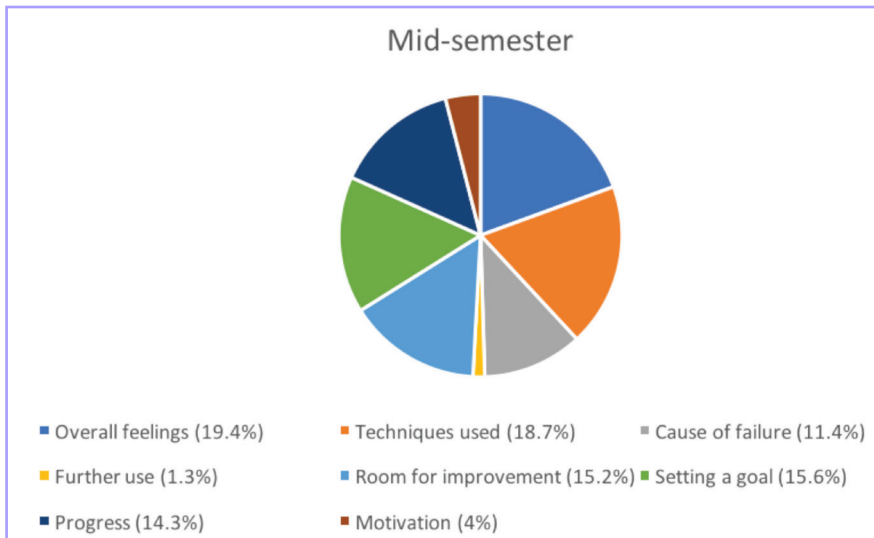


Figure 2: Proportion of comments in individual areas in the mid-semester report.

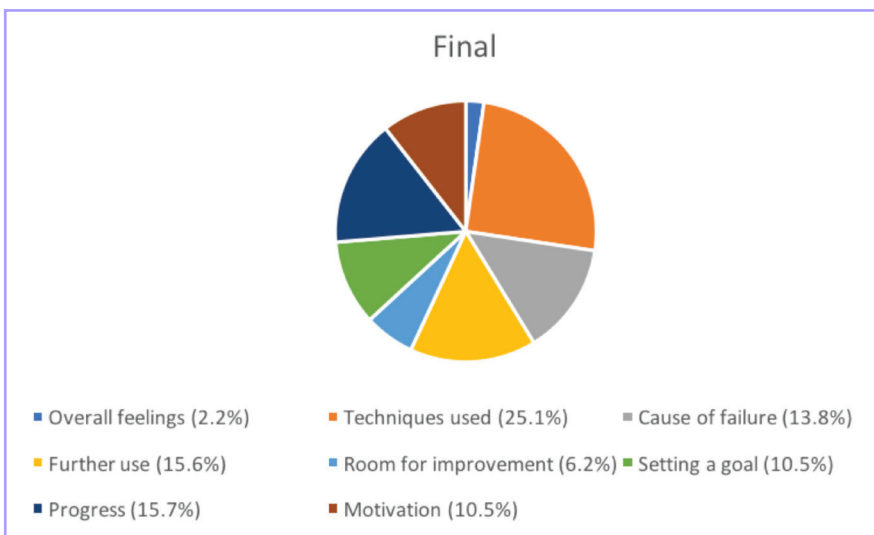


Figure 3: Proportion of comments in individual areas in the final report.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the changes in students' self-assessment. In mid-semester reports, the most significant portion was dedicated to *Overall Feelings* (19.4%), included by the students without specific instruction, very closely followed by the *Techniques Used* (18.7%). The number of comments on techniques used was nearly the same as the number of comments regarding *Progress* (14.3%) and *Motivation* (4%) together — these were not so prominent in the mid-semester reports. Besides feelings and techniques, very prominent were also the remaining areas the students were specifically asked to comment on — *Room for Improvement* (15.2%) and *Setting a Goal* (15.6%). In the final reports, the most significant portion was dedicated to *Techniques Used* (25%), which was predictable and, again, comparable to the number of comments regarding *Progress* (15.8%) and *Motivation* (10.5%), which became more prominent compared to the mid-semester reports and accounted for the same number of comments as *Setting a Goal* (10.5%), making it less prominent than in mid-semester reports. Besides techniques and progress, *Further use* was also prominent (15.6%), which rapidly changed compared to mid-semester (1.3%). What decreased was the prominence of *Overall Feelings*, the comments on which accounted only for 2.2% in the final reports. This comparison shows a shift from commenting on what the instructor asked the students to a more self-aware practice-oriented approach.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study collected a considerable amount of various data, and it is not surprising that the reports varied in the number of comments as well as content, specificity and personal nature. Nevertheless, the results show that the students used this opportunity to their advantage and put serious effort into their tasks. Several limitations arose from this study. Firstly, the group discussion at the beginning of the semester confirmed Takeda's (2010) findings, but since there was no detailed record of the discussion, it could not be analysed in-depth. For further research, obtaining a detailed record would be recommended. The design of the reports can also be seen as one of the limitations to the present study as it provided quite specific questions but also very vague instructions for some parts, and the area of overall feelings might have been more specified, for instance by using a specific question for this area.

The main findings of the present study led to the following conclusions. The hypothesis that *Self-reflective approach used in teaching note-taking helps the student see their progress and find motivation* was confirmed, proved by the high number of comments, starting essentially from zero at the beginning of the semester, which also answers research question (3), *Does the self-reflective approach increase the students' motivation?* — the author can safely state that the students found motivation and consider even self-assessment as a valuable source of feedback and tool for improvement.

The analysis of both the reports and students' notes positively answered also research question (1), *Does the use of self-assessment in instruction improve the performance of the students?* The students' notes and note-taking systems improved significantly, based on the analysis of the reports, it was caused both by sharing tips, practising the notes, and having feedback discussions but also by the self-assessment reports assigned, which allowed the students a more detached view, noticing both strong and weak areas and room for improvement but also progress made, enabling the students to set a specific goal. Setting a goal proved very important; at the beginning, students enumerated mainly very general goals in the group discussion. In their reports, the number of comments again shows that students realise what their needs are. This skill is essential not only during their studies but also in their future careers, where self-assessment and self-reflection will be the two keystones they can rely on.

The *Further Use* area confirms the increase in students' ability to self-evaluate and identify their needs. Being able to discuss the techniques used, the success in their use, and room for improvement or further use shows an increased level of self-awareness, which, as Piotrowska (2012, p. 112) states, is of particular value for professional advancement, even if for some it might mean leaving this career path.

Using a reflective approach, students became more aware not only of their learning but also of their progress, as confirmed by the comments. Being able to notice their progress by themselves, students' motivation increased, even in those students who are not even considering a career in interpreting. The number of comments regarding the *Progress* and *Motivation* area as well as the shift in *Overall feelings* also gives an answer to the last research question, (2), *Does the use of self-assessment in instruction improve the students' overall impression of their performance during and after the course?* This brings satisfaction and optimism not only to the students but also to the instructor.

Students' self-reflection and self-assessment also bring benefit to the instructor, not only in the form of reassurance but also in giving feedback regarding what is useful and what should be altered. As Mraček & Mračková Vavroušová (2021, p. 244) conclude, «it can be argued that teachers become more empowered by knowing more about their students' needs, emotions and learning potential» and «it is reassuring (...) that even those trainees who have concluded by this stage of their training that interpreting is incompatible with their personality do appreciate a gradual improvement of the different sub-skills involved». Such self-reflective approach also enhances mutual interaction between the instructor and their students, which is not limited only to the classroom (Arumí & Esteve, 2006, p. 184). Such an atmosphere of mutual partnership is in line with the current trend in interpreting training, yet it is still not much common in Central Europe, where teacher-centred approaches traditionally prevail in education in general. Self-reflective tasks may help students with their confidence by giving them a voice, a voice that is being heard.

This study arose from the author's direct teaching experience. It has its limitations and proposes several areas that might be studied, such as in-depth analysis of

group discussions, more specific self-assessment reports or studying self-reflective reports and self-assessments separately. Nevertheless, the present study's findings may be applicable to interpreters' instruction and how note-taking instruction may be enhanced. The self-reflective approach not only brings data for research but, more importantly, motivates students and enhances self-awareness and self-reflective and self-assessment skills, which the students can utilise later in their studies and their professional life. Once an interpreter starts their professional career, they can rely primarily on self-reflection and self-assessment, sometimes peer feedback. Such skills will be useful also to those not pursuing this career path.

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