A Blended Approach to Interpreter Education: Online and Onsite Learning Activities in Concert

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ABSTRACT

After a brief description of the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Public Sector Interpreting (PSI) at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, its overall structure and the rationale behind the choice of a blended approach model in interpreter education, this chapter examines the didactics of selected learning activities that illustrate the BA's overall experiential-dialogical approach towards learning. The analysis of the didactic experiences is presented, and different factors that necessitate the chosen approach are discussed: some of them pertain to inherent didactic aspects (e.g., who are the students in terms of age, gender, previous education, and language background, and what do they need to learn?) or to broader societal perspectives, such as societal and systemic factors that are advancing or inhibiting the development of interpreter education. Against this background, the main part of the chapter focuses on organised collaborative learning activities, specifically a) onsite role-play and b) online activities, both synchronous (chats) and asynchronous (discussions). Particular attention is given to how online and onsite activities fit together.

Keywords: blended learning, interpreter education, onsite learning, online learning

1 INTRODUCTION

The need to educate interpreters for the public sector is substantial in all European countries but raises a number of challenges, both because of the field's inherent structures and characteristics and because of external and socioeconomic factors, including the constant fluctuation in language needs and, consequently, a changing demand for language facilitators and examiners. Thus, flexible learning options are required in any viable interpreting education.

In this chapter, we describe one such flexible learning option – a blended approach towards interpreter training developed in Norway. Norway has experienced an increase in immigration since the 1970s. As per 2020, 18.2%[1] of the population has an immigrant background, and there is a registered need for interpreting in more than 100 languages (IMDi 2018). Prompted by the need for interpreting in public sector settings, a number of short interpreting courses have been developed since the 1980s, while a full-fledged Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Public Service Interpreting (PSI) sector started in 2017.[2]

When developing education and training courses for interpreters, two aspects should be kept in mind: the first one pertains to the career possibilities awaiting students upon completion, and the second one relates to the background of the students. First, no permanent position awaits an interpreter after graduation. In fact, interpreting students are entering a freelance profession in a market that is constantly changing. To an extent, the interpreter's career path in the public sector can be compared with that of a top athlete, being limited to 5–15 years, depending on the market's needs (NOU 2014). Second, interpreting students often have different backgrounds compared to those of the "regular" students entering higher education right after they finish secondary school. To illustrate, the average age of the students who completed a one-year course on interpreting in the public sector at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) – in the period between 2007 and 2019 was approximately 35 years. Most students already had a higher education degree. Over 90% were adult migrants with Norwegian as their second language, and although some students had already practised as "laymen interpreters" for years, others were novices in the practice or market. In sum, a common denominator for interpreting students is variation – a characteristic that must be taken into account and turned into a resource in the organisation of all learning activities.

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1   https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef. Accessed September 13, 2020.

2   This was the second attempt to establish a full-fledged BA in interpreting in the public sector in Norway. The first attempt started in 2003 at the University of Oslo but was—for economic reasons—discontinued in 2007 after only two groups of students learning Russian and Spanish had completed their three-year study. The attempt illustrates an interesting aspect of interpreting studies: external and socioeconomic factors may hinder the process of professionalisation.

These challenges were met by developing a part-time BA programme with a blended approach towards learning. We define a blended approach as a mixture of online and onsite learning activities that are carefully integrated into one whole.

To situate the blended approach in interpreter training, we will begin this chapter with a brief description of the overall structure of the BA in PSI (Skaaden and Felberg 2012) at OsloMet. After this, we present the blended approach model based on an experiential-dialogical approach towards learning (Skaaden 2013, 2017). The description of this theoretical and methodological framework is needed to contextualise the didactics of the selected learning activities both onsite and online. However, the focus will be a description of organised collaborative learning activities: a) onsite role-play and b) online activities, both synchronous (chats) and asynchronous (discussions).

2 THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF BA IN PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING

One of the main challenges when designing an interpreter education course in the public sector is the definition of the skills and knowledge that interpreters need to practice interpreting in public sector settings. Interpreting is something that you do. Interpreter training courses, therefore, cannot be based solely on gaining epistemic knowledge, that is, abstract knowledge acquired by reading and talking about the subject. The aim of interpreter courses is for the students to learn how to perform the activity of interpreting the craft itself. This is what the ancient Greeks called *techne*, that is, the craft of how to apply practical skills, strategies, and techniques in specific situations. In the field of interpreting, this craft involves the ability to perform demanding cognitive operations in complex interactional situations. Moreover, the interpreting student should also become confident in choosing the most adequate strategies and techniques in each individual case encountered. In other words, the interpreter must learn to exercise discretion (Skaaden 2017) and master what the Greeks called *phronesis*; that is, they need to be able to reflect *in* action, which is different from reflecting *on* action, as Schön (1983) describes it. The interplay between *episteme*, *techne,* and *phronesis* is a trait that the interpreting profession shares with other practising professions, such as the medical and legal professions. The difference lies in the domain over which each profession exercises discretion. In other words, the boundaries of the domain are found in answering the following: What is the professional practitioner's area of expertise? As a result, interpreter education should provide students with insight into their area of expertise and draw the boundaries of their domain of responsibility (Skaaden 2017).

The Norwegian BA in PSI is designed to prepare students for performing in all settings of Norway's public service sector. Because the students must be prepared to interpret in different types of institutional encounters – for example, medical and legal settings – specialisation at this educational level is not considered functional. In fact, the focus on the broader "institutional encounter", that is, encounters where "one person who represents an institution encounters another person, seeking its services" (Agar 1985, 147), is beneficial in interpreter training. In our experience, a holistic perspective helps to clarify the interpreter's domain of responsibility in contrast to the responsibilities of the service providers, that is, the professionals in charge of each encounter.

To outline the interpreters' domain of expertise and responsibility, the BA addresses the following overall thematic areas:

- The interpreter's area of responsibility

- The interpreter's toolkit

- General context knowledge and the interpreter's place in it

- Specific context knowledge

First, the interpreter's area of responsibility topicalises the interpreter's professional ethics and its origin in human rights. Against this backdrop, learning activities aim to produce reflections on the interpreter's working conditions and process of professionalisation. Second, to act as a professional, the interpreter depends on excellent general language skills. Hence, the students should develop awareness of linguistic distinctions and details from a bilingual perspective, as well as awareness of their own possibilities and limitations. Nevertheless, a study of interpreting is not language learning *per se*; therefore, at OsloMet's BA in PSI, it is insisted that all students should display solid bilingual skills before admittance. Hence, all applicants must take an oral bilingual admittance test. On a more general level, "the interpreters' toolkit" touches on questions, such as the following: "What is language? What is bilingualism? How should one develop and maintain one's language tools?" Third, with the aim of preparing interpreting students to use their bilingual tools in a functional way in any situation, other questions also arise, such as the following: "What is communication? What characterises institutional dialogues? What characterises an interpreted discourse?" These questions are addressed under the heading of "general context knowledge". Here, the focus is on how the interpreters may find their place in each encounter and how they can avoid getting "in the way of the interlocutors" (Skaaden 2013, 138ff.). Finally, interpreters also need to work with a large number of language domains – something that is practically impossible to achieve during a brief course of studies. Therefore, the fourth thematic area, "specific context knowledge" only covers a limited selection of subject areas from the Norwegian public sector. Here, the aim is for the students to develop effective strategies that will

enable them, from a bilingual vantage point, to enter into new – and constantly changing – language domains and contexts.

Because interpreting is something one does, the learning activities include a number of practical exercises in interpreting. However, ample room for learning through observation and reflection in groups is provided after all exercises.

3 BLENDED LEARNING IN INTERPRETER EDUCATION AND THE EXPERIENTIAL-DIALOGICAL APPROACH

Since its inception in 1999, the term "blended learning" has been defined in a number of ways (Friesen 2012, 1). From 1999 to 2006, it was used to denote a broad spectrum of concepts, including a combination of mixed modes of web-based technology, a combination of various pedagogical approaches or a combination of face-to-face and online training and even job tasks (Friesen 2012, 2). One of the more important issues discussed when defining the combination of face-to-face and online learning experiences concerns how much of the learning would have to be online or onsite to deem it as blended. Consequently, several authors have developed taxonomies of blended learning forms on the operational level (Brayan and Volchenkova 2016, 25–28) (i.e., as opposed to didactic forms of learning, teacher role, etc.). One of those models by Staker and Horn (2012) describes four different combinations starting from onsite and intensive and moving to more online and intensive combinations (in Friesen 2012, 7):

1) The rotation model, in which online engagement is combined or rather, embedded, within a range of face-to-face forms of instruction in a cyclical manner;

2) The flex model, in which multiple students are engaged primarily online, but under the supervision of a teacher who is physically present;

3) The self-blending model, in which students choose different courses to take independently, but do so in a setting where a supervising teacher and other students are co-present;

4) The enriched virtual model, in which online, virtual experiences are seen as being enriched only periodically through arrangements of physical co-presence.

The Norwegian model can be classified as a variation of an enriched virtual model because the students meet in person from three to four times each semester at on-campus gatherings that last from two to four days during their four-year programme. A pattern that is used as a structure in all courses is exemplified in Table 1.

Table 1: The enriched virtual model of blended learning as used at OsloMet

Online learning activities	Onsite learning activities	Online learning activities	Onsite learning activities	etc.
Autonomous learning (online lectures, focus texts, reading list, self-tests, etc.) Collaborative online activities a) synchronous discussions (chats) b) asynchronous discussions (forums)	On-campus gatherings: lectures, group work, interpreting exercises (role-plays and role cards)	Autonomous learning Collaborative online activities a) synchronous discussions (chats) b) asynchronous discussions (forums) Self-assessing progress	On-campus gatherings: lectures, group work, interpreting exercises (role-plays and role cards)	

Online learning activities are performed weekly and are either synchronous or asynchronous. Between the campus gatherings, the students acquire knowledge through studying on their own, that is, by reading books, articles, and focus texts and participating in collaborative online activities. The on-campus gatherings facilitate the application of the knowledge acquired previously online. That knowledge is elicited during interpreting exercises. This methodology of using contact hours for discussions and the application of theoretical knowledge rather than for monologue lectures is often referred to as a "flipped classroom" (European Commission 2020, 7).

In all courses, particular attention is given to the thematic integration of onsite and online activities. Online discussions are integrated into preparations of the material that are later the topic of onsite activities and vice versa. Reflections and problems that appear in workshops onsite are transferred online in the form of collaborative learning activities, for example, through chats and forum discussions. Depending on the topic and learning goals, these activities are carried out in language-specific groups or in "mixed" groups with students from different language backgrounds. Language discussions may start during the interpreting exercises in the workshops and are continued online in language chats. In that way, online and onsite activities are integrated to form a whole.

3.1 EXPERIENTIAL-DIALOGICAL APPROACH TO LEARNING AND TEACHER'S ROLE

Blended learning is not only about combining online and onsite learning activities. Of equal importance is the pedagogical or didactical approach chosen by the programme coordinators. The Norwegian model is based on the experiential-dialogical approach to learning, which aims to support student-centred learning (Skaaden 2013, 2017). Its aim is to increase students' autonomy, initiative, and motivation in an online classroom. Student-centred learning activities are essential for the online classroom to come alive. Hence, it disfavours the traditional teacher role of "lecturing monologue".

Because we are all accustomed to the image of the "traditional" or lecturing teacher's role, it is important to clarify the expectations of the current model of learning at the outset: "The pedagogical approach is outlined for the students both online and during their first gathering. Hence, they are made aware of their responsibility for own learning and that student involvement is considered a main path to learning" (Skaaden 2013, 16). Some students – and even some teachers – will initially express frustration with the approach. Hence, comments such as "Why do you (the teacher) always answer a question with a question?" or "What does the teacher get paid for here?", which mirror expectations of a more traditional teacher's role as provider of the "set answer" (Skaaden 2013, 16), are not uncommon. However, the interpreting students usually learn to appreciate the mode of learning where they have the opportunity for a dialogue within and across language groups.

The experiential-dialogical approach to learning is motivated by pedagogical models that view student involvement as the main vehicle in learning and that utilise principles of collaborative or cooperative learning. First, in an experiential approach, students should make their discoveries first-hand rather than hearing or reading about the teacher's experiences. Therefore, an important task of teachers is to facilitate the students' observations and reflections on their first-hand experiences. Thus, as a facilitator of learning, the teacher should (1) organise student activities that (2) create concrete experiences to be (3) observed, and that can be (4) jointly reflected on. Second, according to the principles of collaborative knowledge building or cooperative learning, the fourth step of joint reflection pertains to the engagement of students in interactivity and dialogue over their observations. The importance of classroom dialogue rests on the idea that students and their experiences are a main resource in the learning process. Moreover, the accentuation of dialogue and joint reflections builds on the idea that students may capitalise on each other's resources by sharing their experiences and ideas. In this setting, the teacher's task is to provide the right questions rather than the right answers (Skaaden 2013, 2017).

4 BLENDED APPROACH – ONSITE AND ONLINE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Web technology has opened up new prospects for flexible learning and, thus, has met the needs of interpreter education with new opportunities. In this section, we briefly describe a selection of onsite and online learning activities with a special emphasis on role-play and online discussions.

4.1 ONSITE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Learning activities onsite, that is, on-campus, are given in the form of workshops and include the following:

- Lectures by:

- teaching staff on interpreting issues, for example, professional ethics, interpreting strategies and institutional discourse, language, and memory;

- invited professionals from the public sector (e.g., doctors, nurses, psychologists, police officers, lawyers, and child welfare officers) who lecture on the specifics of their own institutional encounters and discourses.

- Role-play in mixed-language groups (see the chapter on tandem teaching in this volume).

- Bilingual work on terminology and context knowledge in language-specific groups.

A typical on-campus gathering consists of learning activities, both in plenum and in smaller groups. The number of students in plenum varies from 30 to 80, depending on the size of the class. Plenum activities are given in the form of lectures and discussions and focus on topics about the aim, structure, and pedagogy of the course, as well as a variety of topics on interpreting in the public sector. Smaller groups of 10 to 15 students are reserved for interpreting exercises and collaborative work on language topics in a bilingual context.

The learning activities, both online and onsite, include selected topics from the Norwegian public sector given by professionals with whom an interpreter would typically work. These professionals give lectures about the perspectives and structure of the institutional dialogues of which they are in charge. This represents a unique possibility for the students to meet future professional clients of interpreting, learn about relevant contexts and discuss any issues they may have. An important synergy effect in these lectures is the professionals' chance to meet interpreters willing to share their experiences from the sector. During these lectures, the students are, moreover, instructed to take notes on specific terminology and context knowledge for later discussions in their respective language groups – both onsite and in online chats.

The central learning activity in the workshops is the interpreting exercises through the use of role-play, where students are divided into groups of 10 to 15 and will represent two to three different languages.

Scripted role-play and role cards have been common in the education of different professionals, including healthcare professionals (Nestel and Tierney 2007; Pilnick et al. 2018). Interpreter education has also taken advantage of role-play both in interpreting skills training and in testing (Wadensjö 2014; Dahnberg 2015). The rationale behind the use of role-play as a means for training interpreting skills lies in the assumption that role-play helps students develop a variety of skills, such as interpreting, critical analytic skills, and those skills necessary to connect theory and practice. This methodology helps students involve themselves in their own learning and allows them to create a "community of learners" (Hourigan 2008, 19–20). Developing a community of learners is particularly important for professionals who are going to practice in a "lonesome" profession, such as what interpreters do. The role-play sessions are videotaped, and the videos are later used for self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and, in some cases, as a part of the final exam portfolio.

Role-play is either based on scripts in which all roles are written out in full or role cards that provide some props and allow for more improvisation. Role-play and role cards are based on real-life situations from public sector settings; they are developed by teachers and relevant practitioners and are regularly updated (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Each role-play is briefly introduced by the facilitator, who also distributes the roles to the group. The students, who play the roles of a professional and a client, are given a few minutes to prepare. Because the student groups consist of several working languages, the students chosen to play the professional have a different working language than the interpreter and the client.

In some cases, professionals-to-be, for instance, psychology students, who are likely to need interpreting in their future jobs, are invited to play themselves in the role-play. The feedback from both interpreting students and psychology students from these sessions is very positive because both student groups appreciate this way of learning about each other's areas of expertise and responsibility. When students of other professions are not available, the interpreting students play the roles of the professional and client or patient while taking turns playing the role of the interpreter. Playing both parts in mock institutional encounters is an important experience for interpreting students. Playing different parts may inspire reflection on real-life experiences, as is typically displayed in the discussions following each role-play.

Most of the focus in role-play is given to the student in the "interpreter's chair". This is also the toughest "part" to play because revealing your weaknesses in front of a group of future colleagues, and their potential critique, may be face-threatening, as

discussed in Example 1 below. If you highlight the fact that even the student in the interpreter's chair is just "playing a part" in a role-play situation, this might alleviate some of the pressure. Despite some perceived pressure, role-play represents the learning activity that most students find "very relevant" in their regular evaluations of each workshop (Skaaden 2013, 21).

Example 1

1) [Course coordinator] 20:54> It might be difficult to digest critique on the spot. How often does it happen that a student argues in favour of the solution he chose—even if it turned out not to be such a great solution?

2) FacilA3 20:54> It might be nice if they write down the feedback from their fellow students instead of defending themselves. That way, they may afterwards view their recording and check against the feedback.

3) FacilA2 20:55> I believe it is more fruitful to try and defend your own choice than to surrender and display low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is often general, not specific, while attempts to explicate your choices tend to be more specific. Hence, it turns into a fruitful discussion.

The students who are not playing parts in the role-play are given the task of observing the actual interpreting and jotting down points for the following discussion and reflection. It is the facilitator's task to assist the group in eliciting points for reflection upon each brief role-play session. To secure similar progression across exercise groups, the facilitators are provided with a set of "focus points" for each gathering; these points include, for example, the use of pronouns, turn-taking signals, body posture and body language, and informing about the interpreter's function at the outset of each encounter. They are presented in a didactically structured manner that seeks to open the students' perspectives on interpreting techniques and strategies, moving from the concrete to the more abstract, from simplicity to complexity, and so forth. Observational tasks are distributed by the facilitator so that students who speak the relevant language focus on the "interpreter's" choice of terminology, register, and style. The students who do not speak the language pair are instructed to observe the nonverbal strategies of discourse coordination.

The focus points are used as a methodological tool to ensure similar progression in all groups (see the chapter on tandem teaching in this volume). In our experience, the mixed-language groups where students with different language backgrounds observe each other raise awareness among the students about what they have in common across languages and the fact that the activity of interpreting is independent of the language pair. Hence, the reflections in these groups are a great starting point for good discussions on "what is interpreting", "what was the challenge in this situation", and "what could the solutions – and consequences be" because the students have a variety of experiences and, thus, learn from each other.

In learning activities on topics and issues related to interpreting strategies, the groups characterised by variation are particularly valuable. A homogeneous group, on the other hand, may easily conclude that all the challenges are because of "different cultures". The following exchange (2) in a synchronous chat session (Skaaden and Wattne 2009, 85) illustrates that the students are aware of the learning potential created by a didactic approach that turns their diversity into a resource:

Example 2

1) Moderator - 20:43> Do you have any suggestions as to how the interpreter – in the process of adopting a professional attitude – may develop strategies to handle difficult episodes in his work situation?

2) mAmha1 - 20:43> Interpreters from different language groups may cooperate.

3) fFren1 - 20:44> Agree. Language is not crucial in such a case, since we as interpreters experience much the same, and we do have the Norwegian language in common.

4) fSora1 - 20:45> mAmha1, where I work as an interpreter, there is no one to cooperate with.

5) fAmha1 - 20:45> This course is an arena to become acquainted, and we may continue our collaboration, make appointments and exchange experiences.

6) fFren1 - 20:46> Totally agree with you, fAmha1. The web provides an excellent opportunity to start a new way of cooperation and communication!

4.2 ONLINE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Learning activities between workshops take place on the chosen learning platform. The activities are both synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning activities – chats – take place in real time, that is, the students meet at a particular time for one- to two-hour sessions. The topics for both types of activities include discussions about a) topics of interpreting ethics, role, and strategies and b) topics of language in a bilingual context. Asynchronous learning activities are forum discussions that introduce a brief case description, including a dilemma related to the current week's topic (e.g., an episode from a lawyer's office on impartiality, see below). Subsequently, the students are invited to post similar case descriptions themselves and eagerly do so.

Synchronous chats and asynchronous forum discussions about topics of interpreting

Topics about interpreting issues and dilemmas are discussed in chat groups of 10 to 15 students who are from different language groups. These groups meet every second week. As a way to prepare for the discussions, the students are expected

to read relevant focus texts and chapters and articles from the reading list. Here, a focus text is a text provided in the learning platform prior to each chat meeting, and it spotlights the chosen aspects of the week's learning topic and sums up the points from the curriculum on the topic, as well as points of relevant texts in the curriculum. The students are supposed to read the focus text and relevant curricular texts before each chat. As mentioned previously, however, the aim of the chat is not to "control" whether the students have understood each detail. Instead, the aim is to inspire the students to reflect on theory and relate to practice so as to capitalise on their own and shared experiences.

Therefore, these discussions are led by facilitators whose main role is to encourage reflection about students' own experiences in connection with the relevant topic through the posing of open-ended questions. The facilitators follow a list of open-ended questions prepared by the course coordinator for each online discussion (see Appendix 3). This list was developed to help each facilitator and ensure that different groups have similar progression.

At the beginning of every discussion, the facilitators remind the students of the form of the discussion:

Example 3

Facilitator 19:00> Welcome to the chat on topics and issues of interpreting. This week's topic is "the interpreter's own health", burdens of the practising professional, and dangers of burnout. As usual, you engage in the discussions while I supply questions.

Students discuss interpreting topics every second week in mixed-language groups. Asynchronous discussions take place in online forums. A case with different solutions is presented to the students, and their task is to discuss different alternatives and their consequences. An example of such a case is found in (4), representing the very first asynchronous discussion forum presented to the students in the BA course:

Example 4

Discuss the dilemma described below after reading the text "The interpreter's area of responsibility" (Learning topic 1):

You interpret for a lawyer in an asylum case. During the conversation, the lawyer tells the client that "This is serious. You have to go to the newspapers with your case. But as a lawyer, I cannot help you with that. You have to do it yourself, possibly with the help of the interpreter."

Discuss what the interpreter can and should do in this situation. Also discuss the consequences of the interpreter's choice if:

1) The interpreter immediately interrupts and reminds the lawyer and the client that finding a journalist who will write about the case is outside the interpreter's area of responsibility.

2) The interpreter waits until the interview is over, and then tells both the lawyer and the client that the task is outside the interpreter's area of responsibility.

3) The interpreter lets it all pass without comment.

You should also consider the consequences of the interpreter's choice: if the interpreter chooses 1, then...; if the interpreter chooses 2, then...; if the interpreter chooses 3 then ...

In this forum, you can also comment on other students' reflections. But remember to justify why you agree or disagree.

Have you experienced any challenges similar to the case above? In discussion forums, you can also address interpreting and interpreting topics of your choice. You can start your own discussion: Describe a short "case" that illustrates the situation and an issue you want to discuss. Remember always to anonymise your story.

When students post their own case study descriptions based on their real-life encounters, the exercise of anonymisation is a learning opportunity in and of itself because it creates distancing from the particular case or experience.

Synchronous (chats) and asynchronous (forum) discussions in "language rooms"

The value of the experiential-dialogical approach comes to the fore during the cooperative learning sessions in the language-specific groups. In line with the nature of bilingual competency and skills, it becomes clear that the group as a whole is more knowledgeable than each individual. Because bilingual knowledge depends on previous experiences, even the most skilful students may have "holes" in their bilingual context knowledge – an awareness that is particularly important for interpreter students to develop. Students discuss language topics in language groups every second week. A week before each chat, the students receive access to the links on relevant topics from selected domains of the Norwegian public sector, for example, health services, including the anatomy of the human body; pregnancy and child welfare; psychiatry and therapeutic methods; the social welfare services; the asylum process, police interviews, and legal processes; and so forth. The students' task is to extract relevant terminology and find relevant information about the week's context in the other language. At the beginning of their BA studies, the students are presented with lists of relevant terms and after some time, they are expected to extract the relevant terminology on their own. The students are also expected to prepare themselves for each discussion.

Initially, the students are presented with a list of approximately 20 to 30 randomly selected terms from the topic under discussion. Example (5) from the Mandarin group (Skaaden 2016, 55–56) illustrates the group's very first chat, where the topic is the anatomy of the human body:

Example 5

1) fStudent1 21:04> bihuler 鼻窦 blindtarm 盲肠 blodtype 血型 føflekk Fødselsmerke痣 korsrygg 下背 mandler 喉头 melketann 乳牙 mellomgulv 膈 albue 肘 mellomkjøttet Perineum 会阴 avføring 大便 brystvorte 乳头 nakke 脖子 navle 肚脐 ryggmarg 脊髓 ryggrad Ryggsøyle脊椎 vev 组织 visdomstann 智齿 øreflipp 耳垂 øyelokk 眼皮

[sinuses, appendix, blood type, birth mark, small of the back, tonsils, milk tooth, diaphragm, elbow, perineum, faeces, nipple, neck, navel, bone marrow, backbone, spine, tissue, wisdom tooth, earlobe, eyelid]

2) fStudent1 21:05> Er det for mye tro? [Is it too much, do you think?]

3) Facilitator 21:05> det var litt mye på en gang kanskje. [A bit too much all at once, maybe.]

As the course proceeds, the students are expected to extract terminology for discussion based on the links and context information provided by the course coordinators and group facilitators. This is exemplified below in (6), which is from the German group, where the topic is migration and the asylum procedure. Excerpts (5) and (6) illustrate how facilitators may take on slightly different roles in inspiring the students' collaboration and also how students bring their different resources into the group discourse (Skaaden 2016, 56).

Example 6

1) Stud1 19:00> Werfe gleich mal mein erstes Wort in den Ring: overføringsflyktning [I immediately throw my first word in the ring: overføringsflyktning "transfer refugee"].

2) Stud2 19:00> ich habe hier noch kein gutes wort gefunden [Here, I have not found any good word/translation].

3) tud3 19:00> Kontingentfluechtling? [Contingent refugee?].

4) Stud3 19:01> oder: [Or:].

5) Stud4 19:01> Danke für die vielen Links, [Facilitator], die Seiten waren wirklich informativ und nützlich [Thank you for the many links [Facilitator], the sites were very informative and useful].

6) Stud3 19:01> Fluechtling im Rahmen einer Uebernahmeerklaerung des Bundesministeriums des Innern [Refugee within the framework of an attest of assumption by the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs].

7) Stud4 19:01> Super, habe gerade gegoogelt, da war ich nicht frauf gekommen [Great, I have just googled it, but did not find that one].

8) Stud3 19:02> Findest du, Stud2, dass beides geht? [Do you agree, Stud2, that both [terms] are viable?].

9) Stud2 19:03> Stud3, glaube deins ist nicht das Gleiche und zu lang [Stud3, I think your [suggestion] is not the same, and also too long].

Asynchronous discussions in the language rooms are open discussions about relevant language topics. These discussions are initiated by the teachers and students alike. Usually, the discussions starts with students posting relevant terms of their own choice from various contexts. Possible equivalents in other language contexts are discussed. Tips about where to find possible solutions are also discussed here. The below illustration shows a discussion in the asynchronous forum of the Bulgarian group, where they discuss different uses of polite expressions through pronoun choice in Bulgarian and Norwegian, respectively.
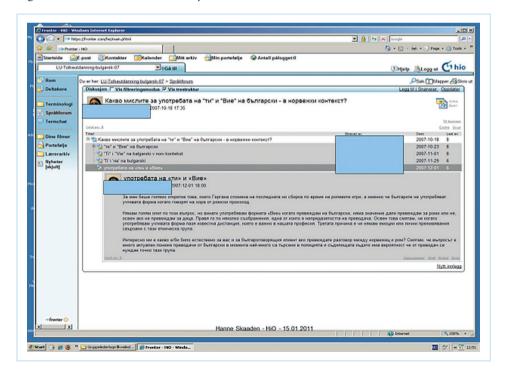
Figure 1: A screenshot from an asynchronous discussion

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The model for interpreter education outlined in this chapter utilises the student group's large variation in experiences and language backgrounds. This pedagogical approach also appeals to the adult interpreting students, who come to the course with experience from a number of domains. By facilitating structured reflection based on the students' own experiences, the approach makes the students' total experiences of value for the whole group.

Interaction and activation are the foundation of all learning. The need for interactivity is made clear in the digital learning environment as well, where long monologues, such as lectures, become unengaging and appear "boring". At the same time, the pedagogical approach has an attitude-creating effect in and of itself. The learning activities stimulate collaboration in the individual language group and across the groups, both through the exercises at campus gatherings and in synchronous chat meetings online. This collaboration is also valuable in the sense that the students may continue to collaborate in their future careers as practising interpreters. In several language groups, a positive development of collaboration instead of competition between students has been observed. The weekly online synchronous chat meetings are an important tool for students to maintain their commitment. The allocation of learning themes and focus texts in the learning platform at fixed times also helps to maintain students' commitment to meeting online.

Experience in developing a blended course of interpreting in the public sector shows that the technology enables fruitful learning activities for interpreting students. In sum, a blended approach towards education appears to be a cost-effective alternative to the attendance-based education. It also gives freelance interpreters the opportunity to raise their competence without having to give up their careers as practising interpreters. As illustrated here, digital learning environments open up new paths for having a functional education for interpreters in the public sector.

6 FURTHER READING

1) European Commission Blended Learning in School Education – Guidelines for the Start of the Academic Year 2020/2021

With the 2020 Corona pandemic, the blended learning approach has been fully put on the European and world agenda. A useful overview and practical guidelines on blended learning is to be found here: https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Blended%20learning%20in%20school%20education_European%20Commission_June%202020.pdf

2) More details about training interpreters online are provided in the following articles:

Skaaden, Hanne. 2016. "Training Interpreters Online. An Experiential Dialogic Approach." In *TraiLLD: Training in Languages of Lesser Difusion*, edited by Katalin Balogh, Heidi Salaets and Dominque Van Schoor, 46–68 . Leuven: LannooCampus Publishers.

Skaaden, Hanne and Maria Wattne. 2009. "Teaching Interpreting in Cyberspace – the Answer to All our Prayers?" In *Interpreting and Translating in Public Service Settings. Policy, Practice, Pedagogy,* edited by Raquel de Pedro Ricoy, Isabelle Perez, and Christine Wilson, 74–88. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.

7 ACTIVITIES

1) Discuss the need for interpreting languages in your society and in your region.

2) Make a role card using the role-play from Appendix 1 as a template but situate it in your particular context.

3) Make a scripted role-play situation based on the role card from Appendix 2 but situate it in your particular context.

4) Make a case description using Example 4 as a model.

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9 APPENDIX 1

Role-play: Police interrogation topic: possession and smuggling of illegal drugs

Roles: Police officer (P), Suspect (S)

The suspect (S) was taken at the customs control point at the airport with drugs in his luggage and is being questioned by the police.

P: Good afternoon, I am officer Larsen, and I am going to ask you some questions now.

S: Why am I here, why am I arrested?

P: You are charged with violating the Narcotics Act.

S: (angrily) But I did not have any drugs with me.

P: Can you please calm down. We must first get some information from you. (Looks down into the documents.) We received all your personal details when you were taken into custody.

S: Yes! What will happen to all my things that you took away from me?

P: We will keep them as long as you are here. I see you have a permanent address in Oslo. Where have you been?

S: I went to Copenhagen to visit some relatives.

P: What relatives? We must get their names and addresses.

S: A cousin. He is about to move now. I do not have his new address. He will send it to me as soon as he is settled.

P: But you have his name and his old address, right?

S: His name is XX, but I do not remember the address, but it is in my wallet, which you took from me.

P: We have not found any papers with an address there.

S: Then, it must have fallen out. But where did you find drugs? How much have you found? What is it? I have never smuggled anything, so there must be someone else who has placed it there.

P: How much it is, we will come back to it later. So, you do not remember the address?

S: No.

P: Have you been to Denmark often?

S: Three or four times over the last year.

P: Isn't it quite often to travel to a cousin whose address you do not even remember? How can you afford it financially?

S: I work a lot of overtime! Do I have to answer these questions?

P: You have no obligation to answer, but I would recommend that you cooperate.

S: Am I not entitled to a lawyer?

P: Yes, you are entitled to a lawyer, but we do not have the opportunity to call in one until tomorrow.

S: Well, then I will definitely wait to explain myself further until I have consulted with my lawyer. But what will happen next?

P: We will keep you in custody during the investigation. You will be brought before the court tomorrow.

S: And how long will this investigation take?

P: From three months to half a year. It is hard to say. But we are not going to solve this today since you do not want to cooperate. We'll end it there.

10 APPENDIX 2

Role cards

Topic: A baby with a severe cold

Role card mother:

(Speak freely and try to use the underlined words in your speech)

You have an eight-month-old daughter who has been very ill. She seems to have a cold all the time, and she has a strong cough. Yes, the cough sounds abnormal – it's almost like hearing an adult man cough. She also seems much quieter than her two-and-half-year-old brother when he was at her age. When you went to see a nurse on a so-called four-month check-up, she referred you to your GP, who in turn sent you to the hospital. In the weeks that have passed since the visit to the nurse, you have been to the hospital several times to take blood tests. You are now summoned to receive answers to the latest tests.

You find it frustrating that there are constantly new GPs, and you have to tell the story of your child to a new doctor over and over again. You end by saying:

"It amazes me that it is necessary – and possible – to draw so much blood from such a small body – and without even finding a medicine that works."

You react with shock and disbelief to what the doctor has to say about the tests. You feel that your trust in Norwegian doctors has shrunk with each visit, and you

react with scepticism to what you now hear. You had a <u>completely healthy child</u>. You wonder if this all is because of the terrible <u>climate</u> in Norway.

Role cards

Topic: A baby with a severe cold

Role card doctor:

Speak freely and try to use the underlined words in your speech.

You are about to inform the parents of an eight-month-old baby girl that the child has been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. You convey what the diagnosis is and explain the following:

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is a disease that affects the lungs and gastrointestinal tract.

The disease is <u>congenital</u> and causes <u>tenacious mucus</u> to settle in the airways, which in turn lays the foundation for frequent or <u>chronic</u> lung infections.

The disease is <u>recessively inherited</u>. This means that both the mother and father must be carriers for the child to get the disease. If both the mother and father have a defect in a specific gene (CFTR gene mutation F508), there is a 25% chance that the child will get the disease.

Therefore, the disease is very rare, but it occurs more frequently in areas where marriage between close relatives is practised. In Norway, 10–15 cases are detected annually.

There is great variation in the degree of cystic fibrosis and how severely afflicted one becomes. However, the disease lasts a lifetime and <u>cannot be cured</u>. CF affects the body's secretions, and for example, <u>mucus</u> in the airways becomes extra tough.

Most people need <u>daily treatment</u>, not to get well, but to <u>relieve the symptoms</u>.

Despite treatment, a r<u>educed life expectancy</u> must be expected. CF patients live often to be only 40–50 years old.

There are courses for parents of CF children, and there is a separate association for CF families in Norway.

11 APPENDIX 3

Chat questions

Welcome to the chat on topics and issues of interpreting. This week's topic is 'the interpreter's own health', burdens of the practising professional, and dangers of burnout. As usual, you engage in the discussions, while I supply questions.

1) What characterises burnout?

   a. Other symptoms?

   b. What is the difference between being generally tired and being burnt out?

2) Which occupations are often mentioned as particularly prone to burnout?

3) What distinguishes the interpreting profession from other professions in relation to the pressures that can arise when working closely with people and their existential challenges?

4) How does "lack of influence on one's own work situation" apply in the interpreter's case?

5) "Unclear boundaries for one's own area of responsibility" is mentioned as another factor. How does this apply in the case of the interpreter?

6) Emotional stress at work is a third factor. How can this factor be expressed in the case of the interpreter? Provide examples.

7) What examples do you have of other types of situations that can seem particularly tiring/stressful to the interpreter?

Alternative questions / concretisations if the response from the students is slow:

a. How can interpreting the same types of cases over time affect the interpreter, for example, with a psychiatrist or immigration services?

b. The amount of work can vary greatly for interpreters – what consequences does it have for stress and strain?

c. How can the interpreter's professional ethics help the interpreter in relation to burdens that can lead to burnout?

d. What is perceived as stressful depends on each individual. For some, it is emotions that are stressful; for others, it is not being able to exercise one's professionalism. What concrete suggestions do you have for how the interpreter, as part of the professionalisation, can find strategies for dealing with difficult situations at work?

e. Some people like to talk about experiences to get through them. How can the interpreter, despite the duty of confidentiality, talk about his or her experiences?

f. An interpreter once said that she danced to "empty" herself of impressions. What advice would you give each other to cope with the challenges you experience as an interpreter?