

Developing Navigation Competence in Interpreter Training: A Proposed Classroom-Based Pedagogical Approach

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Abstract:

This study investigates the development of navigation competence in interpreter training courses, for which navigation competence is an element of interpreter abilities, and which are all integrated into interpreters' skill set and all help in further making interpretative tasks more efficient within linguistic capability, cultural competence, and technological literacy via strategic decision-making. Building on the PACTE group translation competence model (2003), this study defines navigation competence as the ability to navigate, assess, and adapt to complex communication, cultural, and technological factors during the process of interpretation. This study recommends an immersive and reflective approach to both practicing and training, as well as immersive and reflective strategies (dual-task activities, memory training, active listening, anticipation, mental agility exercises, simulated conference sessions, cultural immersion, and technology integration) as a possible strategy for the enhancement of cognitive flexibility, real-time processing, and multitasking skills, which is supported by training the interpreter and this will facilitate their development through training.

Keywords: Interpreter expertise, Pedagogical Strategies, Navigation Competence, Interpreter Performance

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نهج تربوي مقترح قائم على الفصل الدراسي : تطوير كفاءة التنقل في تدريب المترجمين الفوريين

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الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تطوير كفاءة التنقل في برامج تدريب المترجمين الشفويين، وهو جانب حاسم من خبرة المترجم الشفوي الذي يجمع بين الكفاءة اللغوية والذكاء الثقافي والمهارة التكنولوجية من خلال اتخاذ القرارات الاستراتيجية. وتستند هذه الدراسة إلى نموذج كفاءة الترجمة باكت (2003)، وتعرف هذه الدراسة كفاءة التنقل بأنها قدرة المترجم الشفوي على التوجيه والتقييم والتكيف خلال عملية الترجمة، والاستجابة للمتغيرات الاتصالية والثقافية والتكنولوجية المعقدة. وتقدم الدراسة نهجاً تربوياً قائماً على الفصل الدراسي يركز على استراتيجيات الانغماس والتأمل، بما في ذلك تمارين المهام المزدوجة، وتدريب الذاكرة، وممارسة الاستماع النشط، وتقنيات التنبؤ، وتمارين المرونة العقلية، وإعداد المؤتمرات المحاكاة، والانغماس الثقافي، والتكامل التكنولوجي. وتعزز هذه الاستراتيجيات المرونة المعرفية، والمعالجة الآنية، ومهارات المهام المتعددة، مما يؤدي إلى تحسين أداء المترجم الشفوي. وتسلط النتائج الضوء على الدور الأساسي لكفاءة التنقل في تمكين المترجمين الشفويين من العمل بفعالية في البيئات اللغوية والتكنولوجية المعقدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : خبرة المترجم الشفوي، الاستراتيجيات التعليمية، كفاءة التنقل، أداء المترجم الشفوي

1. Introduction

Navigating complex cognitive operations is an important quality of interpreting expertise and a hallmark of intercultural work, especially simultaneous interpretation. Interpreters, for example, transmit a message from one language to another, thus they constantly engage in their thinking and focus to shift one subject to another, working one word at a time and trying to interpret the message through the process of listening, understanding, translating and speaking fluently (Nikzad, 2023; Dirir, 2024; Nakamura, 2025). One of the essential parts of this knowledge that matters for its quality and simultaneous interpretation is navigation. Cognitive demands of simultaneous interpretation surpass language ability and include real-time processing, working memory, and language switching (John, 2022).

Interpretation skills are not well-taught by interpreters' education and it is common for linguistic capabilities to dominate over cognitive skills (Congress Rental, 2020; Nikzad, 2023). However, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the process for developing navigation competence using the translation competence model developed by the PACTE group (2003) for interpreter training programs. Such studies contribute with an understanding of how interpreter training programs can facilitate the development of navigation skills in simultaneous interpretation that can be optimized for translation performance in terms of improving interpreters' performance and how this translates into interpreter performance.

Based on the PACTE group translation competence model (2003) for interpreter training programs, this study focuses on the following question: What are some of the main pedagogical strategies in translation training programs in improving the performance of interpreters in navigation competence and how can this be achieved?

2. Pedagogical Strategies and Navigation Competence

Comparing the different types of simultaneous interpretation demands us to be competent cognitively in navigating complex cognitive tasks. Navigation competence, which is a critical module, is one of the most vital components of interpreter training to meet the cognitive demands of communication in real time (Nikzad, 2023) and another essential skill to acquire that helps interpreters respond to the cognitive loads inherent in communicating on the spot, comprehending and making sense of the communication and processing the true meaning and making effective communication (Nikzad, 2023). By learning navigation competencies, interpreter training education programs can contribute to the field of interpreter training with a key but often underappreciated part of communication, explore ways to practice navigation competence, including dual-task exercises, active listening, and cultural immersion to improve interpreter performance (Chen & Dong, 2010; Gile, 2009). This aspect is very important because it represents the cognitive load as interpreters are expected to respond to, interpret tasks confidently, and navigate difficult communication environments (Nakamura, 2025), hence, more comprehensive navigational competence should be part of the training program. In order for learners to succeed in the high stakes of the learning environment, navigation competence must be developed. Based on the PACTE group translation competence model (2003) for interpreter training programs, pedagogical strategies to facilitate cognitive flexibility, real-time processing, as well as multitasking can help develop navigation competence, especially for interpreters. Here they are:

- Dual-task exercises: Modelling real-time interpretation, getting trainees to listen to but also work simultaneously, thus teaching them how to multitask.
- Memory training: Creating working memory, in the short-term, through the

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recognition of numbers or lists.

- Active listening practice: After reading live speech and having a handle on speech, we need to get better at putting meaning into the speech in real time. Interpreters will learn what speakers will say and have a strategy they can use and learn to be quick listeners (the secret to flow and accuracy).
- Good mental agility exercises: Practice crossword puzzles for improved attention and decision taking.
- Simulated conference environments: Building realistic environments so that trainees can simulate with actual lives through things and scenarios such as virtual rooms and environments.
- Cultural immersion: enabling students with cultural skills and knowledge to learn how to comprehend context and nuances so that interpretations overall are handled better.
- Technology integration: Using digital tools and programs for high-quality practice and feedback loops.

3. Literature Review

The navigation competence is very important in interpretation, especially in high-pressure situations, similar to simultaneous interpretation. Navigation competence is the skill and transfer from one cognitive process to a completely new one that allows interpreters to negotiate and adapt to incoming communication demands. While the term navigation competence is not recognized in interpreting studies, the problem is indirectly addressed through task switching, cognitive flexibility, real-time processing, multitasking, and working memory management. A huge body of knowledge in cognitive psychology, translation research, and simultaneous interpretation evidence all

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suggest the significance of navigation competence; in other words, the skill of an interpreter to seamlessly translate between cognitive activity (i.e., listen, understand, translate, speak) within real time. Gile's Effort Model (2009) highlights listening vs. production as a crucial role for navigation skills. Interpretation is called “multi-phase cognitive orchestration” (Pöchhacker, 2016), moving us from comprehension to reformulation. Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory (1988) presents that cognitive load needs to be managed in mind. Pedagogy emphasizes teaching the navigation skills by using dual-task exercises and simulations (Chen & Dong, 2010). However, a number of them rely on language skills as their primary objective, instead of cognitive skills, thus not honing the navigation experience. Based on the PACTE group translation competence model (2003) for interpreter training programs, navigation competence should be included in such programs in future work.

4.Methodology

With the PACTE group translation competence model (2003) in mind, this study adopted a qualitative classroom-based pedagogical approach to examine the importance of structured pedagogical approaches in the participants' navigation of 4th year translation students, particularly for simultaneous interpretation. Those who had learned the strategy of interpretation practiced various activities to improve their navigation skills, including dual-task training, memory training, active listening practice, anticipation techniques, mental agility exercises, simulated conference settings, cultural immersion, and technology integration.

Data was collected in the class based on an observation checklist to measure qualitatively the improvement in navigation competence. Some of the training

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materials were short general speeches emphasizing ideological sensitivity, ambiguity, and pragmatic complexity, which would help students build the skills of navigation in a real-world interpretation environment.

5. Data Analysis

Based on the PACTE group translation competence model (2003) for interpreter training programs, the data collected from the classroom observation will be analyzed qualitatively to identify the 4th year student interpreters' improvement in navigation competence. This will be done in the following way:

the 4th year student interpreters, particularly for simultaneous interpretation.

Dual-Task Exercises: A summary of key points in native language while listening.

Speech: "The Impact of Climate Change on Global Economies" Original (English):

"Climate change's impact on the world economy is immense. But temperatures are rising and ice caps are melting and oceans are rising with it, and sea level rise and extreme weather events. The global economy is suffering from damage to infrastructure, loss of life on plants and people and displacement of families. The economic impacts of climate change are going to be high with estimates of up to 5% loss in global GDP by 2050. We must immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions and turn to renewable energy sources."

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Task:

- Listen to the speech and summarize the main points in your native language (e.g., Arabic).
- Write down key phrases or sentences that support your summary.

Example Summary (Arabic):

تأثير تغير المناخ على الاقتصادات العالمية

"إن تأثير تغير المناخ على الاقتصادات العالمية كبير. يؤدي ارتفاع درجات الحرارة إلى ذوبان الأغطية الجليدية القطبية، مما يؤدي إلى ارتفاع مستوى سطح البحر وأحداث طقس قاسية. هذا يؤدي إلى خسارة في البنية التحتية وتضرر الزراعة ونزوح المجتمعات. التكاليف الاقتصادية لتغير المناخ من المتوقع أن تكون كبيرة، حيث تشير التقديرات إلى خسارة تصل إلى 5% من الناتج المحلي الإجمالي العالمي بحلول عام 2050. يجب علينا اتخاذ إجراءات فورية لتقليل انبعاثات غازات الاحتباس الحراري والانتقال إلى مصادر الطاقة المتجددة."

Key Phrases / Sentences:

- "Rising temperatures are causing melting of polar ice caps"
- "Loss of infrastructure, damage to agriculture, and displacement of communities"
- "Up to 5% loss in global GDP by 2050"
- "Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to renewable energy sources"

This strategy requires the students to listen to the speech, process the information, and summarize the main points in their native language while writing down key phrases or sentences. This helps develop their ability to multitask, process information in real-time, and retain key information.

Memory Training: Enhance working memory with short-term memory exercises, such as recalling numbers or lists.

Speech: "The History of the United Nations"

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Original (English):

"The United Nations was established on October 24, 1945, with 51 founding members. Its primary goal is to promote peace and security worldwide. The UN has 193 member states and operates in six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish."

Task:

- Listen to the speech and recall the following information:

- Founding date of the United Nations
- Number of founding members
- Primary goal of the United Nations
- Number of member states
- Official languages of the United Nations

Example Recall:

- Founding date: October 24, 1945
- Number of founding members: 51
- Primary goal: Promote peace and security worldwide
- Number of member states: 193
- Official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish

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Example Summary (Arabic):

"تاريخ الأمم المتحدة"

"تأسست الأمم المتحدة في 24 أكتوبر 1945، مع 51 عضواً مؤسساً. هدفها الرئيسي هو تعزيز السلام والأمن في جميع أنحاء العالم. الأمم المتحدة لديها 193 دولة عضو وتعمل بست لغات رسمية: العربية، الصينية، الإنجليزية، الفرنسية، الروسية، والإسبانية."

This strategy requires the student to listen to the speech, process the information, and recall specific details. This helps develop their working memory and ability to retain key information.

Active Listening Practice: Identification of benefits of renewable energy.

Speech: "The Benefits of Cultural Exchange"

Cultural exchange is a powerful tool for building bridges between nations. Sharing our traditions with others will foster a better understanding and respect. Economic growth, education, and international relations will all be enhanced by cultural exchange programs. We must encourage more students and professionals to participate in this field.

-Write down key phrases or sentences that support your summary.

Example Summary (Arabic):

"فوائد التبادل الثقافي"

"السيدات والسادة، التبادل الثقافي هو أداة قوية لبناء جسور بين الأمم. من خلال مشاركة تقاليدنا وتعلم الآخرين، يمكننا تعزيز التفاهم والاحترام. برامج التبادل الثقافي يمكن أن تعزز النمو الاقتصادي، وتحسن التعليم، وتحسن العلاقات الدولية. يجب علينا تشجيع المزيد من الطلاب والمهنيين على المشاركة في هذه البرامج."

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Key Phrases/Sentences:

- "Cultural exchange is a great tool for building bridges between nations."
- "Foster more understanding and respect."
- "Promote economic growth, enhance education and improve international relations."
- "Encourage more students and professionals to participate in these programs."

This strategy involves a time where the student has to listen to the speech, process the information, and summarize the main points in their native language while writing down key phrases or sentences. This will hone their ability to multitask, process information in real-time, and retain the essential information.

Anticipation Techniques: Prediction of speaker's next points about challenges of AI.

Speech: "The Future of Artificial Intelligence"

Original (English): "Ladies and gentlemen, artificial intelligence is transforming industries and revolutionizing the way we live and work. AI continues to advance, it is likely to have a significant impact on healthcare, transportation, and education. However, there are concerns about job displacement and bias in AI decision-making..."

Task:

- Listen to the speech and predict the speaker's next points about the challenges of AI.
- Write down key phrases or sentences that support your prediction.

Example Prediction (Arabic):

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"من المرجح أن يناقش المتحدث الحاجة إلى لوائح وإرشادات لمعالجة استبدال الوظائف والتحيز المتعلق بالذكاء الاصطناعي. قد ينكر أيضاً أهمية تطوير أنظمة الذكاء الاصطناعي التي تكون شفافة وقابلة للشرح ومسؤولة."

Key Phrases/Sentences:

- "Concerns about job displacement and bias in AI decision-making"
- "Need for regulations and guidelines"
- "Importance of developing transparent and accountable AI systems" Speech (Arabic):

"مستقبل الذكاء الاصطناعي"

"السيدات والسادة، الذكاء الاصطناعي يغير الصناعات ويحدث ثورة في طريقة عيشنا وعملنا. مع استمرار تقدم الذكاء الاصطناعي، من المرجح أن يكون له تأثير كبير على الرعاية الصحية والنقل والتعليم. ومع ذلك، هناك مخاوف بشأن استبدال الوظائف والتحيز في اتخاذ القرارات الذكية..."

This strategy requires the students to think ahead, anticipate the speaker's next points, and provide a logical prediction based on the context.

Mental Agility Exercises: The speech presented by the speaker contrasts this. Speech: "The Impact of Social Media on Society." Communication across people has made things possible, building community worldwide and voicing different segments of the population. But it also raises concerns about privacy, misinformation, and mental health.

Task:

Listen to the speech and think of possible counterarguments to the speaker's ideas on social media, compile examples of specific phrases or sentences that support those counterarguments.

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Example Counterarguments (Arabic):

"يمكن القول إن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تساهم في انتشار المعلومات الخاطئة وتزيد من العزلة الاجتماعية. كما أنها قد تؤثر سلبًا على الصحة النفسية للمستخدمين، خاصة الشباب."

Key Phrases/Sentences:

- "Contributes to the spread of misinformation"
- "Increases social isolation"
- "Negative impact on mental health, especially for young people"

(Arabic): Speech

"تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على المجتمع"

وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي غيرت طريقة تواصلنا والحصول على المعلومات. لقد مكنت الناس من التواصل مع الآخرين عبر العالم، وعززت المجتمعات العالمية، ووفرت منصة للأصوات لتُسمع. ومع ذلك، تنشر أيضًا مخاوف بشأن الخصوصية والمعلومات الخاطئة والصحة النفسية..."

This strategy requires the students to listen to the speech, process the information, and think of counterarguments to the speaker's points, developing their mental agility and critical thinking skills.

Simulated Conference Settings: Using appropriate terms and tones of speech in a simulated conference context.

It is worked with a simulated conference environment, namely, "The Role of Renewable Energy in Sustainable Development" presentation.

Task:

- At a conference, you have time to listen to a presentation on "The Role of Renewable Energy in Sustainable Development" and you listen to the

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presentation and take notes.

- Prepare some questions for the speaker to ask during the Q&A session.

Engage in a panel discussion on the topic

- Presentation: The Role of Renewable Energy in Sustainable Development

Original (English):

"Ladies and gentlemen, renewable energy is a crucial component of sustainable development. It reduces greenhouse gas emissions, enhances energy security, and creates jobs. We need to invest in renewable energy technologies and develop policies to support their adoption..."

Task:

- Listen to the presentation and take notes on the main points;
- Prepare questions to ask the speaker during the Q&A session;
- Participate in a panel discussion on the topic.

Example Notes (Arabic):

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دور الطاقة المتجددة في التنمية المستدامة

"الطاقة المتجددة هي جزء أساسي من التنمية المستدامة. تقلل انبعاثات غازات الاحتباس الحراري، وتعزز أمن الطاقة، وتخلق فرص عمل. نحتاج إلى الاستثمار في تكنولوجيات الطاقة المتجددة ووضع سياسات لدعم اعتمادها..."

Example Questions (Arabic):

-What are the main challenges facing the adoption of renewable energy in developing countries?

How can investment in renewable energy technologies be improved?

Panel Discussion:

- Discussing the role of governments in promoting renewable energy.
- Debating the effectiveness of current policies in supporting renewable energy adoption.

This strategy simulates a real-life conference setting, requiring the student to listen, take notes, prepare questions, and participate in a discussion, developing their ability to process information, think critically, and communicate effectively.

Cultural Immersion: Avoiding relying too much on translating a speech, considering the cultural context and references in the text.

Speech: Traditional Iraqi Hospitality

Task:

- Being a guest at a traditional Iraqi dinner party and need to:
- Greeting the host and fellow guests using proper cultural greetings
- Participating in dinner conversation and ask questions about Iraqi culture and traditions.
- Appreciating the hospitality and the food.

Scenario:

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Arriving at the host's house and are met with a big smile and a warm, traditional Iraqi greeting.

Host: "Hello! Welcome and make yourself at home!"

Your Response: "Hello! Thank you very much."

Conversation:

- Asking about the significance of hospitality in Iraqi culture
- Asking about traditional Iraqi dishes and ingredients
- Showing interest in Iraqi customs and traditions

Example Questions (Arabic):

- ما هي أهمية الضيافة في الثقافة العراقية؟

Interpretation: What is the significance of hospitality in Iraqi culture?

- "ما هي الأطباق العراقية التقليدية التي تقدم في المناسبات الخاصة؟"

Interpretation: What are the traditional Iraqi dishes served on special occasions?

Show Appreciation:

- Expressing gratitude for the hospitality and food.
- Complimenting the host on the delicious meal.

Example Appreciation (Arabic):

!" الطعام لذيذ جدًا. شكرًا جزيلاً على الضيافة الرائعة -"

Interpretation: "Thank you very much for the wonderful hospitality.

The food is delicious!"

This strategy simulates a cultural immersion experience, where the student is expected to use appropriate cultural greetings, participate in a conversation, and express appreciation for the hospitality.

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Technology Integration: Using relevant technical terms and referencing interpretation technology.

Speech: "The Role of Technology in Translation".

Task:

Being a part of a group project with international team members, and need to:

- Use online collaboration tools to communicate and share files.
- Attend a virtual meeting to discuss project progress.
- Provide feedback on the project plan and suggest improvements.

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Scenario:

Participating in a virtual meeting with team members from other countries.

Meeting Agenda:

- Discussing project progress and milestones.
- Addressing challenges and propose solutions
- Reviewing and finalizing the project plan. Online Collaboration Tools: - Use Zoom or Google Meet for the virtual meeting.
- Sharing files and collaborate on Google Drive or Trello.

Example Conversation (English):

- " Hello everyone, let's review the project milestones and discuss any challenges." - "I suggest we adjust the timeline to accommodate the delays."
- " Can we share the latest project report on Google Drive?"

Example Feedback (Arabic):

" أقترح إضافة خطة للتعامل مع المخاطر المحتملة في المشروع."

Interpretation: "Suggesting adding a risk management plan to the project."

Task Requirements:

- Using online collaboration tools effectively.
- Communicating clearly and provide constructive feedback. Work together to achieve project goals.

This strategy simulates a real-life scenario requiring technology integration, online collaboration, and effective communication, developing the student's ability to work with international teams and manage projects using digital tools.

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Building on the PACTE group translation competence model (2003) for interpreter training programs, it seems that student translators need to adopt a qualitative classroom-based pedagogical approach, incorporating the strategies above, as a possible strategy for the enhancement of cognitive flexibility, real-time processing, and multitasking skills, which is supported by training the 4th year student interpreters, particularly for simultaneous interpretation.

6. Conclusion

Based on the PACTE group translation competence model (2003) for interpreter training programs, the classroom-based pedagogical approach offered to the participants' navigation of 4th year translation students, particularly for simultaneous interpretation, could be potentially contribute to sound navigational competence. This study establishes that linguistic competence must be paired with cognitive strategies and confirms the necessity of such navigation competence necessary for student interpreters' preparation in high-pressure contexts. Considering the conceived pedagogical strategies incorporating the dual-task activities, memory training, active listening, anticipation, mental agility exercises, simulated conference sessions, cultural immersion, and technology integration, the interpreter training programs can potentially be very fruitful. Simply because they yield practitioners with improved cognitive flexibility, real-time processing skills, and multitasking skills in order to be able to perform their interpretive missions most effectively.

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