Abstract

Practice groups are an essential element in Conference Interpreting training courses, and frequently feature as a stipulation on course curricula. Students are recommended to spend large amounts of time in group practice; and yet, there are very few dedicated, student-focused resources to aid them in tackling this complex part of their training. Once graduated, qualified interpreters may continue to meet in practice groups without ever having received proper instruction on how to make the most of such group practice. In addition to being a non-productive use of both students’ and graduates’ time, poorly executed group practice can be at best unhelpful and at worst detrimental to learning and performance [4, 5]. In light of this context, this study aimed to remedy this situation, by providing guidance to interpreters engaging in group practice as to how to best make use of their time. To do so, it sought to establish what habits can be adopted to lead to productive and constructive group practice. Based on a synthesis of guidelines for group practice put forward by groupwork experts and interpreting trainers, the final product of this study took the form of an interactive learning resource developed with Articulate Storyline 360 (educational resource production software). The resource delivers guidelines and training in an easy-access, self-paced online format, and responds to calls for “training for cooperation” [2], whilst adapting to the increasingly distance, modular nature of contemporary interpreter training.

Guiding Threads:
- Build on established guidelines
- Insist on the importance of objectives and proper feedback
- Reconsider a “productive use of time”
- Avoid stagnation and maintain motivation
- Consider Group Work from a Deliberate Practice perspective

Method

The module is an interactive learning resource produced using the Articulate Storyline software, and subsequently published within the FTI Interpreting Department’s Intranet. It aims to visualize and render accessible guidelines synthesised from an extensive literature review [me]. The module was built in 3 phases and subsequently user-tested before release.

Conclusions

Group work can be productive and constructive if it is regular, taken seriously, and approached with a deliberate practice mindset (see below). Particular attention should be paid to the following:

- **Group Membership**
  - Participants should reflect
    - Complementary language combinations
    - Different life experiences

- **Session Structure**
  - Structure should be: clearly established feedback

- **Objective Setting**
  - Objectives should be:
    - Clear
    - Specific
    - Achievable
    - Evaluable

- **Feedback**
  - Feedback should be:
    - Clear
    - Specific
    - Objective-focused
    - Constructive
    - Diligent
    - Consistent (not repetitive)

Group practice is a unique opportunity to learn, and therefore group time should not be used completing exercises that could be completed in individual practice.

References