

# The Use of CAI Tools in Interpreters' Training: A Pilot Study

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## Abstract

The University of Bologna/Forlì offers students of the MA in Interpreting a course in Methods and Technologies for Interpreting. A recent addition to the software presented to students is InterpretBank, a CAI tool designed to assist interpreters during the entire workflow of an interpreting assignment. We conducted a pilot study to collect information on the students' use of CAI tools to look up terminology in the booth. The aim was to verify how such tools can be integrated in the curriculum by identifying potential issues and suggesting solutions. We ran an experiment with 12 MA interpreting students to observe their behaviour during the simultaneous interpreting of terminology-dense texts. Experience seems to play a key role in helping students integrate the tool in their workflow in the booth. Some students, however, tend to excessively rely on the software program, while others see it as a source of distraction and find it hard to focus on the delivery. There is reason to believe the tool will prove a useful addition to the curriculum of trainee interpreters, yet more empirical studies are needed to test and possibly improve the way it can be integrated with current interpreter training approaches.

## 1 Introduction

New technologies have changed the interpreting world, paving the way for new interpreting modes and settings and changing the job in all its stages, from preparation to the interpreting task to the follow-up work. As Donovan states (2006: 1), “one of the main concerns of interpreting courses is to ensure that the training provided really does prepare graduates for the interpreting market”. These innovations are starting to be reflected in training, also in terms of the software programs presented to trainee interpreters. In this paper we will present the results of a small-scale pilot study conducted at the University of Bologna to investigate the students' approach to the use of CAI tools to look up terminology in the booth during simultaneous interpreting, with the aim of better integrating such tools in the curriculum of trainee interpreters.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Interpreter-specific Software: CAI Tools and Interpreters' Training

While new technologies have provided useful tools for interpreters' training, such as CAIT tools<sup>2</sup>, the interpreters' interest in terminology has led not only to the elaboration of theoretical models, which analyse the terminology work carried out by interpreters (Will, 2007, 2008) and define the features of interpreter-specific software (Rütten, 2000, 2004, 2007), but also to the development of various tools and applications aimed at meeting the interpreters' needs, known as CAI tools.<sup>3</sup> New software supports interpreters in the creation of terminological databases, making preparation more efficient and productive, helping them manage and retrieve terminology in the booth and carry out the necessary follow-up work once the task is completed. Some examples are Interplex, InterpretBank, LookUp, TermDB, Intragloss and The Interpreter's Wizard.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete description of the study design and results, see Prandi (2015).

<sup>2</sup> Computer-Assisted Interpreter Training tools

<sup>3</sup> Computer-Assisted Interpreting tools

<sup>4</sup> See Costa, Corpas Pastor et al. (2014a, 2014b) for a thorough description and comparison of CAI tools.

Over the last few years, the first bachelor's and master's theses have been written on the above-mentioned CAI tools, which shows an interest for interpreter-specific software not only among trainers, but also among trainees. At the Zürcher Hochschule Winterthur, Stalder (2004) assessed the use of Interplex in the interpretation of a technical text, while more recently Janovska (2011) and Mitterlehner (2013) of the University of Vienna analysed various terminology management systems that can be used in the booth, such as Interplex, TermDB, LookUp and InterpretBank. At the University of Bologna, De Merulis (2013) analysed the use of the software program InterpretBank for the creation of a technical glossary.

Our project follows this line of research and adopts a didactic perspective, focusing on the use of a CAI tool in the booth by a group of trainee interpreters with the aim of gaining information that could help in the integration of the tool in the curriculum of trainee interpreters.

## **2 The Study**

### **2.1 Motivations, Goals and Limits of the Study**

Unlike most professional interpreters and trainers, the new generation of trainee interpreters has grown up using technologies on a daily basis. We therefore expected them to be particularly receptive to technologies as a support to the interpreting process. Furthermore, the use of computers or other kinds of technological devices inside and outside the booth has become part of the workflow of experienced interpreters. For these reasons we believed involving trainee interpreters in the study could represent a useful addition to their curriculum, as they could have the opportunity to learn how to use a tool developed to support professional interpreters in their workflow which they could also use in their future profession. The study also served a practical purpose, that of collecting data on the approach of students to CAI tools with the aim of better integrating them in the curriculum of trainee interpreters.

We therefore set up a pilot study aimed at observing a sample of trainee interpreters using a CAI tool while interpreting a terminology-dense text in simultaneous mode. The pilot study helped us identify interesting trends in the sample analysed as well as specific approaches or phenomena to be taken into consideration in teaching students how to use the software program and which might deserve greater attention in future studies. A sample of trainee interpreters cannot be deemed representative of experienced interpreters. The results should therefore be considered in relation to the specific sample and context analysed. The aim of the pilot study was not that of evaluating whether and how the use of a CAI tool influences the delivery of trainee or professional interpreters, nor that of analysing how it affects the cognitive processes of the interpreting task, but rather to gain insight in the way students use the software program, for didactic purposes. In particular, we were interested in verifying whether more practical experience on the one hand and a more thorough theoretical background on the other hand led to a different perception and a different use of the software program. Booth teamwork, which is part of interpreter training, was also part of our analysis, as we expected the students' interaction to be affected by the use of the tool. As Chmiel (2008: 264) observes, "students are made aware that an interpreter who is off-mike should attend to the speaker's message in order to assist his/her colleague by writing down non-contextual information or by searching for terminology". In the following paragraphs we will briefly describe the tool used in the study and the study setup.

## 2.2 The Tool

The tool used in the study is InterpretBank, a terminology and knowledge management software program for interpreters (Fantinuoli, 2009, 2011, 2012). The tool is used by professional interpreters and has been integrated at various levels in the curriculum of trainee interpreters at some interpreting institutes and universities.<sup>5</sup> In developing the tool, Fantinuoli's aim was to create "a simple and user-friendly terminology management system to access terminology in the booth during interpreting itself" (2012: 71).

The software program is made up of three modalities corresponding to the various phases of the interpreter's workflow: *TermMode*, *MemoryMode* and *ConferenceMode*. They are interconnected, but can be used independently. In fact, "InterpretBank does not prescribe any specific workflow. [...] The user is free to find a personalized way to use the software, as all modules can be used independently from each other" (Fantinuoli, 2012: 78). In our experiment, we decided to focus on *ConferenceMode*, which allows users to easily access their terminology resources created in *TermMode* and memorized with the help of *MemoryMode*. When working in *ConferenceMode*, the tool's interface displays the *ActiveGlossary*, which can be made up of several glossaries. They can be uploaded from *TermMode* or imported, even on the spot, so that interpreters can have immediate access to resources provided by their colleagues in the booth or by clients. It is also possible to add and update terms on the fly, as they are integrated in the glossaries and can be looked up directly. Given the extremely complex task performed by interpreters while working in simultaneous mode, it is essential that the user's input is minimum and the output as specific as possible. In order to do so, the user can choose among the following options:

- "Use Stop Words"
- "Show only terms which have a translation"
- "Search in both languages"

To look up terms in the booth, users can choose between static and dynamic search. With the static search method, users type some characters and then press the enter key. The software program then displays the matching entries and is ready for a new search. With the dynamic search there is no need to press enter: the tool continues searching as the user types the word. After finding the number of results specified in the options menu, InterpretBank is ready for a new search. Other useful options are the "Accents insensitive" search and the "Fuzzy Search". Users can also let the software program resort to the "Emergency Search" when no results have been found. This option starts the search automatically in the entire database where all glossaries are stored.

## 2.3 Study Setup

The study was conducted between October and December 2014. We chose to conduct the study with second-year students, as the CAI tool will be presented to trainee interpreters during the second year of the MA degree. 12 MA interpreting students took part in the study and were divided into two groups of 6 students each, which we will refer to as group A and group B. Group A was made up of candidates A to F, group B by candidates G to L. None of the students had used InterpretBank before.

In order to reproduce the learning process, we organised a short introductory course on the software program. Both groups took part in 4 lessons. Group A attended 1 introductory lesson during which the software program was presented and 3 lessons during which they practiced simultaneous interpreting in the booth with the support of the tool, while group B attended 3

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<sup>5</sup> Fachhochschule Köln (Germany), Universität Leipzig (Germany), University of Osijek (Croatia), Tuzla University (Bosnia and Herzegovina), KU Leuven (Belgium), Universität Wien (Austria), Scuola di Lingue e Letterature, Traduzione e Interpretazione Forlì/Bologna (Italy), University of the West Indies.

lessons on the software program and practiced once in the booth. Students of the first group practiced alone in the booth once and then in pairs for the remaining two meetings. We paired them up with a different boothmate each time to verify whether this led to a more personalised use of the tool. Students of the second group interacted more with the trainer, who provided guided exercises and practical examples to better illustrate the use of the tool. This course structure was chosen to verify whether more extensive practice in the booth helped students develop a personalised and efficient way of using InterpretBank and at the same time to verify whether more guidance by the trainer resulted in greater awareness in the use of the software program. All trainees involved in the study had access to the course material provided on two e-learning platforms created for this study, one for each group.

At the end of the training stage, we ran an experiment with the 12 MA interpreting students with the aim of observing the behaviour of students during the simultaneous interpreting of terminology-dense texts while using the CAI tool. We decided to focus on the use of the tool in the booth, as this represents an element of novelty in the students' curriculum. Students had been taught how to create glossaries before during their studies, but had never used a CAI tool in the booth to look up terminology. Students of group A worked first. Like during the training phase, they were paired up with boothmates with whom they had never worked before. The first 3 couples to work were made up of students A+F, B+D, C+E. After the first turn, the couples were mixed, following the praxis established during previous practice. During the second turn, the students were paired up as follows: D+A, E+B, F+C. Students in group B worked in the same pairs in which they practiced during the fourth lesson, namely: G+J, H+K, I+L. The text they interpreted was similar to those used during the training stage and was accompanied by a power-point presentation.

The test subjects used one computer per pair, following the working method they had established during previous practice. Students were free to choose whether they wanted to look up terminology while interpreting or whether to leave this task to their boothmate. They were also free to choose which functions of the software program to select and to use pen and paper for prompting, as they usually do in class.

### **3 Results**

Students' performances during the experiment were recorded via audio and video. The audio recordings of the students' performances were transcribed and analysed by focusing on the terminology used and its compliance with the terminology present in the glossary provided. Video recordings of the students working in the booth were analysed to study the interaction with the boothmate, while an automatically generated LOG file and the video recordings of computer screens were used to verify what and how many terms had been looked up with the software program, as well as which research parameters had been chosen. If present, the material used for prompting was collected at the end of the experiment.

This data was interpreted correlating the observed behaviour to the terminology performance during simultaneous interpreting. The opinions of the students on the tool were collected through a questionnaire and were compared with the results of this analysis.

#### **3.1 Data Analysis**

In analysing the behaviour of students during SI with the support of the CAI tool, we focused on the interaction between the interpreter, the software program and the boothmate, as well as on the terminology used.

##### **Use of the CAI Tool and Team Interaction**

Given the importance of booth teamwork (2.1), we decided to verify whether terminology search with the support of the tool was accompanied or not by prompting in written or other

forms and what kind of information was conveyed. Table 1 analyses the use of the CAI tool in the booth and the interaction between the interpreter (I) and the boothmate (B).

I	B	SEARCH BY		SEARCH TYPE		PROMPTING		
		I	B	STATIC	DYNAMIC	WRITTEN	ORAL	GESTURAL
<b>GROUP A</b>								
A	F		X		X	X		X
B	D		X		X	X		
C	E	X		X		X		
D	A	X			X	X		
E	B	X			X	X		
F	C		X	X		X	X	
<b>TOTAL</b>		3	3	2	4	6	1	1
<b>GROUP B</b>								
G	J	X			X	X	X	
H	K		X		X	X	X	X
I	L		X		X			X
J	G	X			X	X		
K	H		X		X		X	X
L	I		X		X			X
<b>TOTAL</b>		2	4	0	6	3	3	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		5	7	2	10	9	4	5

Table 1. Use of the CAI tool during SI and interaction with the boothmate.

As we had expected, in all cases in which the students searched for terminology while interpreting, their boothmates always provided prompting by writing down terms or numbers. If we consider the cases in which the boothmate performed the terminology search for the interpreter, we notice a difference between group A and group B. In group A, the boothmate was not only able to search for terminology, but also to provide written support (3/3 cases), as well as oral or gestural (1 in 3 cases respectively). In group B, 2 couples out of 3 decided to have the boothmate perform the terminology search. Only in one case out of four (pair H + K) did the student looking up terminology also manage to provide written help, however limited to three terms, as well as oral and gestural, while in the other three cases no written support was provided, only oral (K + H) or gestural (I + L, L + I) or both (K + H). In most cases, oral cues helped achieve greater terminological precision in the rendition and helped the interpreters in the pronunciation of medical terms, but were picked up by the interpreter's microphone and affected the fluency of the rendition.

As none of the students had used the CAI tool before, we can assume that greater practical experience in the use of the software program helped students in group A coordinate the terminology search with the writing down of other elements useful to the interpreter, even though they worked with a different person each time. On the other hand, students in group B, who had practiced less, showed a lower degree of integration of the use of the tool in the booth teamwork, despite having already worked with the same person during training.

In the pairs where the boothmate looked up terminology we observed a behaviour that seems to confirm what emerged from a questionnaire administered to a sample of trainee interpreters by De Merulis (2013). He noted that when the CAI tool provided a long list of

results during the terminology search, identifying the most adequate term in the list required an excessive cognitive effort by the interpreter. In our sample, with no difference between the two groups, boothmates always pointed out the right term in the results list to the interpreters, relieving them of an additional cognitive task.

The power point presentation was used as a support by five out of six pairs in group A, while in group B this was observed in three out of six pairs, of which two with the interpreter performing the terminology search. Despite the small size of the sample, from our analysis we can suppose that a greater degree of cooperation within the teams in group A could also be due, among various factors, to greater ability in coordinating the various tasks thanks to greater practical experience in using the CAI tool in the booth.

### Terminology Search

We then went on to analyse what happened when the students searching for terminology were not able to find the terms they were looking for. In some cases (7 out of 12, of which 5 in group B) they showed that their search had yielded no results with gestures or facial expressions. Only in some rare cases did the students suggest an alternative solution to their colleagues interpreting or try and apply a strategy to overcome the terminological obstacle. This might show that the students run the risk of relying too much or too soon on the CAI tool, forgetting that they can apply strategies to deal with terminological issues.

In order to analyse the technical ability achieved in using the tool during SI, we verified how much the students used the software program to search for terminology, whether they managed to find the terms they were looking up and how many of the terms found were actually translated as per glossary. Table 2 illustrates the results of our analysis, which we carried out by calculating the percentage of terms present in the source text (ST) searched with the tool, the percentage of terms found and the percentage of terms found in the glossary and translated as per glossary.

I	B	SEARCH BY		% OF TERMS SEARCHED	% OF TERMS SEARCHED AND FOUND	TERMS SEARCHED AND FOUND TRANSLATED AS PER GLOSSARY	
		I	B				
<b>GROUP A</b>							
A	F		X	35%	94%	21/31	68%
B	D		X	54%	100%	37/51	73%
C	E	X		7%	100%	5/7	71%
D	A	X		20%	94%	12/15	80%
E	B	X		35%	89%	23/25	92%
F	C		X	26%	100%	17/21	81%
<b>GROUP B</b>							
G	J	X		20%	100%	18/19	95%
H	K		X	55%	96%	49/50	98%
I	L		X	52%	98%	29/49	59%
J	G	X		15%	92%	8/11	73%
K	H		X	51%	100%	35/41	85%
L	I		X	36%	100%	25/29	86%

Table 2. Terminology search with the CAI tool during IS

As can be seen from table 2, four out of twelve pairs looked up more than 50% of the terms present in the ST. In these teams, it was the boothmate who looked up terminology. Three out of twelve pairs looked up 35% of terms. In two pairs, one per group (D + A and G + J), more than 20% of terms were looked up by the interpreter, while the interpreter in couple J + G looked up 15% of terms. The candidate who searched for the lowest number of terms (7%) was C, whose boothmate was E.

In half of the cases (3 per group), the students searching for terminology found 100% of the terms they were looking up. In all other couples this value is higher than 90%, except for the couple E + B, where the value is slightly lower (89%). There is no evident correlation between the number of terms searched and the percentage of terms found: both students who looked up a limited number of terms and those who looked up more than 50% of the terms present in the ST were able, in some cases, to identify 100% of terms.

However, as the last two columns of table 2 show, once the term was found it was not always translated as per glossary, which might indicate a difficulty in integrating the terms found in the rendition.

Among the students who searched for terminology while interpreting, 4 out of 5 searched a lower number of terms when compared to the pairs in which the search was performed by the boothmate. The only exception is E – however, he shows the lowest percentage of terms searched and found when compared to the other 4 students. The couple F + C presents a very low percentage of terms searched, although it was the boothmate who was using the tool. This anomaly can be explained with the fact that C, who was not interpreting during the second turn, followed the same line of conduct she had adopted before, when she searched terms while interpreting (only 7%, as we emphasized above). She only looked up the terms she believed were essential for her colleague who was interpreting. The team made up of students I and L is the one in which in most occasions, in both interpreting turns, a term was not searched in time, when compared to other pairs in which the boothmate performed the search.

Finally, there were also cases in which the students were not able to find all the terms they searched, while in other cases they looked up terms that were not present in the glossary. In various cases, although they had not found the term they needed, they repeated the search several times instead of immediately looking for an alternative. We believe it is essential to pay attention to this phenomenon, as trainee interpreters run the risk of relying excessively on the software program.

### **3.2 Questionnaires**

We will now present what emerged from the questionnaires, correlating it with the results of our analysis.

All test subjects deemed the course interesting and useful. The theoretical part and the practical part of the training stage were both appreciated, for different reasons in the two groups. Students in group A liked the theoretical introduction because they were able to discover more about the single modalities, whereas students in group B appreciated the chance to interact with the trainer to clarify doubts or solve technical problems. Group A suggested integrating some practical exercises in the theoretical introduction before moving on to practicing in the booth, which would promote greater awareness in the choice of the functions used during interpreting itself. The practical exercises were considered useful because they enabled students to better understand how the tool works, to verify in what sense the software program can be of help during interpreting and to establish a working method they could apply in the booth. Students in group A emphasized that they were able to compare autonomous search for terminology during interpreting and search performed by their boothmate, while students in group B spoke of the interaction with the boothmate in a broader

perspective, emphasizing the need to consider the approach chosen by their boothmate and to work as a team.

Students of both groups appreciated the tool and emphasized that it was user-friendly and simple to use. When asked whether they had used MemoryMode to memorize the glossary, as we had asked them to do, all students of group B answered positively, which does not surprise as they had received greater guidance by the trainer, whereas only two students in group A did as asked, which suggests a more personalised use of the CAI tool.

8 students out of 12 (i.e. 5/6 students of group A and 3/6 of group B) deemed ConferenceMode the most useful of the three modalities for its speed and intuitive use. They emphasized its usefulness in improving the rendition of technical terms. Some students, however, stated that the use of the tool could prove a source of distraction during the interpreting task. This points out a problematic aspect in the use of the software program by students. The CAI tool can be used as the first source to immediately resort to when technical terms must be interpreted, instead of trying to remember the equivalent or adopting a strategy. During the training phase, it could prove counterproductive to get used to resorting to the tool whenever the speaker uses a technical term, unless it is not strictly necessary because no other strategies can be activated.

Students of both groups preferred the dynamic search. As for the choice to search for terminology while interpreting or leaving the task to the boothmate, there were no significant differences between the two groups. However, the students who chose to search for terminology while interpreting emphasized the practical side of this approach, as no one better than the interpreter knows what terms to look up. At the same time, they pointed out the importance of the boothmate in the prompting task, e.g. in the rendition of numbers. These aspects correlate with the results of our analysis. Although these students recognised that searching for terminology represents yet another task to be performed while interpreting, they had no doubts about having made the right choice, both if they had experimented both approaches (group A) and if they had always worked with that approach (group B). On the other hand, the students who had asked their boothmate to look up terminology with the CAI tool emphasized the importance of good team spirit. Most students in group B who had chosen to leave the terminology search to their boothmate raised doubts about the efficacy of their choice.

Another important aspect was that of awareness in using the CAI tool. Some differences emerged between group A and group B. Students in group A had enjoyed more extensive practice and had been given the chance to experiment with the various approaches and search options, working with a different boothmate each time. This led to a more personalised use of the software program both in terms of search options chosen and in terms of awareness of the most efficient working method with the tool and in interacting with the boothmate. They were able to understand whether for them it is preferable to perform the terminology search while interpreting or to leave the task to their boothmate. However, they were less aware of potential critical aspects in the use of the software program, in particular in terms of the role played by the tool and in its integration in the interpreting process.

Students in group B gained greater insight in the role played by the software program (i.e., helping them in the rendition of the technical terms present in the glossary) and showed greater awareness of potential issues in relation to the software program. However, given the limited practical experience, they were not sure about the best configuration in the use of the tool while working with the boothmate.



## 4 Conclusions

In this paper we presented the results of an experiment in which we compared the performances of two groups of students in the use of CAI tools to look up terminology in the booth, in order to collect information to better integrate such tools in interpreters' training.

Unlike what we had expected from a sample of trainee interpreters, almost half of them preferred searching for terminology while interpreting, rather than leaving this task to their boothmate. Due to more extensive practice, students in group A expressed greater confidence in the method they had developed than students in group B.

The use of the CAI tool did not eliminate the interaction between the interpreter and the boothmate. Unsurprisingly, greater practical experience helped group-A subjects integrate the CAI tool in the workflow.

The percentage of terms searched and found is overall very high, which shows that students did not have practical difficulties in searching for terminology with the CAI tool, whatever the amount of practice they had enjoyed. Further studies will be necessary to analyse more thoroughly how the terms found are incorporated in the delivery and with what results on the interpreting quality. Since the highest percentages of terms searched were found, with one exception, in the pairs in which the boothmate performed the search, while the lowest percentages were found for the students who looked up terms while interpreting, we can assume that if students search more than a certain percentage of terms, it is more difficult for them to carry out an effective search, as this might lead to cognitive overload.

We believe the problematic aspects that emerged from our study can be addressed with specific didactic activities that will be beneficial to trainee interpreters not only in terms of the use of CAI tools, but also in terms of attention skills and interaction with the boothmate.

There is reason to believe the tool will prove a useful addition to the curriculum of trainee interpreters, yet more empirical studies are needed to test and possibly improve the way it can be integrated with current interpreter training approaches.

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