Project-Based Learning through Simulation: How to Run a Training Session Using Role-Play as a Learning Tool

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ABSTRACT

The chapter deals with project-based learning through simulation. In particular, it focuses on how to design, organise, conduct and evaluate simulations of real-life assignments in the classroom in order to make dialogue interpreting training closer to the real world. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first is devoted to a brief review of the literature on role-play as a training tool and to the identification of their potential and limits. In the second section, two main issues are dealt with. The first sub-section concentrates on the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM) developed by Stokoe and other strategies that can be used to tackle problems deriving from the fictional nature of role-play. In the second sub-section, all stages – from planning to conducting to evaluating – are considered, taking into account different degrees of complexity reflecting specific training goals. Finally, the last section addresses assessment objectives and methodology, with special attention being paid to the importance of finding ways to involve the whole group of trainees, not just those playing roles, as it is the only way for role-play exercises to be really useful.

Key words: role-play, simulation, real-life assignment, dialogue interpreting, interaction, didactic tool, assessment, as-text approach, social interactivity perspective, coordination

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to role-plays (RPs) used as a training tool for project-based learning through simulation of real-life assignments and simulation of real-life interactions. "Project-based learning" refers to training activities to be carried out to reach specific training goals. In this case, the overarching training goal is the acquisition of knowledge and skills enabling the interpreter to manage interaction in institutional settings (education, courts, law enforcement, healthcare, social services, etc.). The theoretical framework is based on research in the field of dialogue interpreting (through the Conversation Analysis lens) and on RPs as a training tool aiming at helping trainees "take their role in the 'real world'" (Niemants 2013, 306) and take decisions at crucial points in interaction, bearing in mind that effective communication is the goal of the unfolding interpreter-mediated interaction itself. As Corsellis puts it, "interpreters' training addresses interpreters' personal and professional growth" (2008, 65). This chapter may be used for both community interpreters and intercultural mediators, when and if the latter are trained to acquire interpreting and interactional skills as needed to serve as interpreters in face-to-face interactions.

The chapter is divided into 3 sections. Section 2 concentrates on RPs as training tools, their potential and limits. Section 3 is about different ways of preparing and conducting RPs. Section 4 is devoted to RP assessment.

2 ROLE-PLAY AS A LEARNING TOOL

Literature on RPs as a training tool is rather extensive and mainly covers two areas: the advantages and the shortcomings of RPs as a learning activity. An exhaustive review of RPs as didactic tools goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Just the main issues will therefore be mentioned,[1] starting with a working definition of RP.

A number of authors (e.g. Niemants 2013; Wadensjö 2014; Cirillo and Radicioni 2017) have defined RPs using reflections, analyses and definitions by scholars working in the fields of sociology and communication, and adapting them to the goals of interpreter training. For example, following Boccola (2004, 17), Cirillo and Radicioni (2017, 121) define the RP as "a *representation of social role behaviours* achieved by simulating real situations for training or awareness-raising purposes. It requires the presence of a *leader/facilitator*, one or more *actors*, and one or more *observer/s*".[2] Dwelling on the meaning of the words "role" and

1 For a review up to 2014, see Wadensjö (2014, 338-340).

2 Emphasis in original.

"play", they analyse different aspect of this training tool. "Play" implies taking part in a performance as an "actor" who plays a given role in accordance with the "let's pretend" principle. "Role" refers to rules and expectations characterising a given figure in society. As a result, "what is staged during an RP is a set of different behaviours associated to individuals representing socially recognizable roles" (Cirillo and Radicioni 2017, 121). As Wadensjö (2014, 438) notes, "[…] the guiding assumption with regard to role playing, and a more or less implicit assumption also present in many studies on this method, is that role-plays mimic actual interaction."

RPs are extensively used and widely recommended as a tool to be used for training community interpreters[3] (cf. D'Hayer 2013, 329; Ozolins 2017, 55).

Just like any other tool, RPs have strong points and weak points. Fundamentally, RPs make it possible to narrow the gap between training and real life through simulations of real-life assignments and/or the reproduction of real-life cases and therefore are "the most realistic approximation possible to actual interpreting situations" (Ozolins 2017, 55). They are also characterised by some difficulties, though, in particular in terms of the way they are organised and run. Able interlocutors (actors) must be available and time is needed to prepare and conduct them (Ozolins 2017, 55). Niemants and Stokoe (2017) stress the RPs' weak points and identify two aspects. The first is the "framing activity", i.e. "the simulation involving a series of actors (typically teachers and learners) who are pretending to be different characters"; the second is the "framed activity", i.e. "the simulated activity involving the characters being acted, for example, a doctor, a patient and an interpreter". Referring to Francis (1989), Niemants and Stokoe (2017, 297) state that RP participants "are required not only to play their roles in the game [role play], but also to pay attention to the context in which it is framed, for instance that of a lesson". In simulated interaction, it often happens that participants tend to orient more to the *framing* activity (i.e., the training activity) than to the *framed* activity (i.e. the simulated communicative situation) – it clearly appears in specific interactional moves accurately described by Niemants (2013) and has also been highlighted by Wadensjö (2014, 446). Examples in this respect are the trainee interpreter looking for the right word or paying special attention to grammar rather than trying to make himself or herself understood, or the trainer, playing an institutional role (doctor, judge, etc.), nodding his or her approval after hearing the right term used by the trainee interpreter. When the framing activity prevails over the framed activity, the very essence of RPs – simulated interactions reproducing real-life interactions – is undermined. According to Niemants (2013, 317), the problem is that "in the 'real world' things matter […],

3 In literature consulted for this chapter, the term "public service interpreters" is often used instead of "community interpreters". For the purpose of this chapter the two terms are regarded as synonyms.

while in the RP the only thing that matters is linguistic quality". Along the same lines, Ozolins (2017, 57) says that, unless they are properly prepared, RPs often focus "on the translation aspects only" neglecting "students' coordination skills", i.e. their capacity to manage interaction dynamics, which is crucially important in real-life interactions. Hence the "inauthenticity" of RPs (Stokoe 2013), as "it is hard to support a claim that participants in role-play are oriented to the same interactional contingencies as they would be in the actual setting" (Stokoe 2011, 122). The gap between simulation and real world, however, can be narrowed, if not closed down, as will be shown in the following section.

3 SOLID FOUNDATIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE ROLE-PLAY

The issue at stake is how to counterweigh the negative aspects of RPs and, if possible, strengthen the positive ones.

On the basis of what has just been said and taking into account the shortcomings discussed by several authors, proposals will now be put forward to tackle the main problems and arrive at RPs that are as close as possible to real-life situations. Two lines of action may be identified that are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing and are based on the trainers/facilitators' knowledge and experience of interpreter-mediated interactions in specific institutional settings. The first line of action covers activities that are complementary to the RP (see 3.1). The second line of action is about the design and running of an RP based on real situations (see 3.2). Both make use of authentic interpreter-mediated interactions that may be available as (a) transcripts of audio/video-recorded interactions, (b) personal accounts of professional events or situations experienced by trainers or professional interpreters, or (c) interpreter-mediated interactions attended and observed by the trainees. All three require the participation of a trainer/facilitator leading the trainees and helping them analyse interactions and identify their main features and issues. They also require at least some basic notions of Conversation Analysis or the ability to identify interaction sequences that may be regarded as significant and particularly interesting in terms of actions undertaken by the participants, including the interpreter. The approach is based on Wadensjö (1998) who identified the two activities carried out by the interpreter, namely *relaying* (translational activity) and *coordinating* (interaction management).[4]

The materials listed under (a), (b) and (c) are in descending order of knowledge and tools the trainer/facilitator must necessarily have to be able to use them. Option (a) may only be chosen by a trainer/facilitator who is familiar with research findings and has access to transcribed interaction data; option (b) may be chosen

4 For further analysis and a revisited approach to the coordinating activity, see Baraldi and Gavioli (2012).

by a larger number of trainers/facilitators who can draw on their professional experience to present examples or interaction sequences that may contribute to the achievement of the training goals; option (c) requires trainers/facilitators who can make sure their trainees attend and observe real interpreter-mediated interactions, and can stimulate them to reflect on and discuss what they have heard and seen.

3.1 COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

While a properly-run RP (see 3.2) enables trainees to develop skills and decision-making abilities, the observation and analysis of real interactions – through materials such as (a), (b) or (c) as described in the previous section – give trainees the opportunity to see and understand what goes on in the real world: “observer as well as participant roles can allow learning: observation allows strategies of interaction to be noticed, while participation allows such strategies to be tested” (Gavioli and Aston 2001, 241 in Niemants and Stokoe 2017, 299). Through observation, trainees may increase their awareness of the interactional features characterising a variety of settings, identify and discuss the (linguistic and interactional) choices made by the interpreters and the interlocutors (Ozolins 2017) and their (interactional) effects.

Transcripts of audio/video-recorded interactions (see option (a) above) may be used in different ways. The most sophisticated and effective is probably the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM), a method developed by Stokoe (2011) to train communication skills that has also been used in interpreter training (Niemants and Stokoe 2017). The "transcript sequence", selected on the basis of specific goals to be reached, is presented turn by turn together with the corresponding audio/video segments. Trainees are asked to comment on different aspects, interactional moves or translation choices. The trainer leads the discussion and keeps it focused. At the end of this first stage, further turns are shown until the presentation is stopped, typically at a crucial point just before the interpreter’s turn. The trainees are then asked what they would have said if they had been working as interpreters (Niemants 2019; Stokoe 2014)[5]. Three or four answers are collected and then the transcription of the words uttered by the interpreter is shown with the corresponding audio/video recording. At that point the trainees’ answers and the interpreter’s turn are compared and contrasted which leads to a debate and an assessment of the interactional effects.[6] Professional ethics issues may also be discussed (see Viezzi, this volume). CARM is a complex method that has been patented and requires specific training for the trainer/facilitator.

5 See also the videos at www.carmtraining.org.

6 Niemants and Stokoe (2017, 303-314) give detailed examples of the work the trainer should do in the classroom for an effective implementation of the method.

Alternative methods do exist, though, that are easily implemented. One such method is the organization of a data session, i.e. an organised discussion of transcribed interactional data made available to the trainees. Davitti and Pasquandrea (2014, 379) propose to use simplified transcripts that may be analysed using either a "narrow focus", i.e. the selection of specific interactional phenomena to be discussed collectively, or a "broad focus", i.e. the analysis of an interaction as a whole with all its complex features. Based on the method developed by Stokoe (2011), Niemants (2013, 314) proposes a simpler way to analyse transcripts of authentic interpreter-mediated interactions and the active participation of trainees in predicting the interpreter's choices, a practice she adopted during seminars addressed to trainee interpreters:

> "[…] each learner was provided with a sheet of paper for each extract, the transcript of the first part of the extract being on one side, that of the second part on the other. […] we introduced the extract, played the audio, and asked learners to read through the corresponding transcript. We then asked them to observe and comment on what had happened in the interaction, and then to respond to its last turn. After collecting three or four proposals, we asked learners to turn over the sheet of paper and observe the real interpreter's response, of which we also played the audio."

Option (b), i.e., personal accounts of professional events or situations experienced by trainers or professional interpreters is a training method that has always had a place in interpreter training and is common to several disciplines. It is based on examples and personal accounts of situations, events, moments that may be significant from different points of view. According to Niemants (2013, 318) "narration involves the telling of significant personal experience by trainers, who thereby convey their 'gut-level' learning of what interpreting actually means, and enhance learners' interest and discussion". In this author's experience, trainees themselves may report on cases where they had problems in managing the interaction and in choosing what to translate and how. The choice they actually made may then be discussed by the whole group with reference to ethical, translational or interactional issues.

Option (c), i.e. interpreter-mediated interactions, attended and observed by the trainees, requires the same knowledge and skills as the two other options and an opportunity to have access to specific settings and organise the trainees' participation as observers in interpreter-mediated interactions. Trainees must learn to observe, they should be told what to observe and what to note down for the discussion to be focused on specific aspects of the interaction. This author organised activities of this kind in legal settings and accompanied law and interpreting students to court hearings. They were invited to look at the interpreter's position and consider whether it facilitated or hindered the interpreter's work and communication between the participants; to take notes as to when the interpreter did or did not translate, to reflect on whether non-translation was justified or prevented one interlocutor to understand what was going on, etc.; to note down everything they regarded as significant or drew their attention. After the observation session, students were invited to write down what they had noticed and their reflections by filling in a questionnaire. Their answers were then collectively analysed and discussed. The interaction between law and interpreting students during the collective discussion proved very useful as it enabled them to learn a lot from each other (for the involvement of trainees/students of other professions, see 3.2.2). As an alternative option, videos of real or simulated interaction could be shown and used as a basis for a discussion of particularly important or challenging issues.[7]

3.2 PREPARATION OF A ROLE-PLAY

The activities described in section 3.1 are not just complementary to RPs, they do not just aim at raising awareness of real-life interpreting challenges and interaction dynamics; they also provide the basic notions needed to prepare RPs that are as close as possible to what happens in professional settings. RPs must take into account the languages spoken by the trainees and their knowledge level. Ozolins (2017, 51-53) presents an exhaustive description of trainee types identified on the basis of language knowledge. He identifies four groups, only three of which are relevant here. The first group consists of people whose languages are "also *major world or major European or Asian languages*". The group may include "immigrants (of any generation) plus people from the host country who have […] learnt these languages". The second group includes participants of "second or later generations" who have the host language as A language and "who have a background knowledge" of the language spoken by the immigrant community they belong to. The third group is made up of newly-arrived immigrants featuring "great variation in linguistic abilities". As Ozolins (2017, 52) says, "in the case of the *most recently arrived language groups*, all issues are compounded by the difficulties of trainees themselves still facing their own settlement issues and lacking familiarity with the local culture and institutions; […] their knowledge of the host language is also relatively weak".[8] Their interpreting skills should also be considered, for example whether they master interpreting modes such as consecutive interpretation with or without notes, chuchotage and sight translation, considering that developing competence in the different interpreting modes is not a training goal that can be reached through RPs.

When designing an RP, the trainer/facilitator must make decisions, based on the characteristics of the trainees, about a number of features – the type of RP, the identification of the primary interlocutors, the RP setup based on the dif-

7 On this point, see the ImPLI project home page: http://impli.sitlec.unibo.it/.

8 Emphasis in original.

ferent roles and the languages shared by the participants, the knowledge level required as to the area of institutional interaction and the choice of the didactic goal. These features will be discussed in the next sub-sections. The order chosen does not reflect the importance of the issues but their belonging to a higher- or lower-order level.

3.2.1 Type of role-play

First of all, the type of role-play must be chosen: either an RP designed and realised following a script ("structured RP", Cirillo and Radicioni 2017), or an improvised unscripted dramatisation based on cards (Bygate 1987, 69 in Wadensjö 2014) distributed to participants and containing information about the identity to be assumed, the goals to be reached, etc. If a script is used, the players/interlocutors must not read their turns word for word, but must be as spontaneous as possible and react promptly to the interpreter's words. As Ozolins (2017, 57) says, "the principle must be that the interlocutors follow what the interpreter says – whatever the interpreter says – rather than return to a prepared script regardless of how the interpreter has interpreted". This implies a thorough knowledge of the topic and a good connection and harmony between the people playing the primary interlocutors. Following what the interpreter says essentially means being ready and willing to modify the interaction, e.g. by answering an unexpected question deriving from a translation that does not correspond to the question asked by the interlocutor.

If cards are used, there is no monotonous reading of the script and the interlocutors are more likely to pay attention to the interpreter's words. The players, however, must be able to improvise on the basis of a solid knowledge of the topic. If this condition is not met, the RP may end up being very far from a real interpreted event or pretty banal.

3.2.2 Playing the primary interlocutors

In RPs used for interpreter training, the interpreter's role is always played by a trainee. The idea is to expose them to difficulties and challenges at translational and interactional level. The primary interlocutors' roles (doctor/patient, prosecutor/defendant, immigration officer/asylum seeker, etc.) may be played by trainers, trainees or experts in the field. The setup may vary:

- trainers only (e.g. doctor-patient)
- trainees only (e.g. doctor-patient)
- one trainer (e.g. doctor or patient) and one trainee (patient or doctor)
- one expert or trainee of other professions (e.g. doctor) and one trainer (patient)
- one expert or trainee of other professions (e.g. doctor) and one trainee (patient)

The setup choice depends on the resources and time available. Whatever the choice, though, preparing an RP is time-consuming for all. If experts or trainees of other professions are available (Ozolins 2017, 56), the end result is closer to what happens in the real world, but the difficulties of designing and conducting the RP remain. As regards trainee interpreters, when they are called upon to prepare an RP and play a primary interlocutor's role, they should make sure the interaction is consistent with its specific goal. They also have to make use of institutional scripts and topic-related frames (see 3.2.4) and express themselves using their working languages. The assessment of an RP where trainees play the primary interlocutors may be rather complex as it is not enough to assess the interpreter's turns (see section 4). Other features should be considered such as lack of coherence or cohesion by the primary interlocutors, ambiguous or inadequate utterances due to insufficient preparation or knowledge of the topic, read-out or too-fast turns, etc. However, shortcomings provide an excellent opportunity to discuss several aspects of the interaction, the topic, the interlocutors' way of speaking and its impact on the trainee interpreter's work. In other words, moving from a reflection prompted by a low-quality RP during the debriefing/assessment stage, the trainer may lead trainees to design an RP that is closer to reality, ask them to review what has been done and invite them to run the revisited RP in a second training session. Knowing how to *do* interaction also means knowing how to *interpret* and *coordinate* the interaction.

3.2.3 Different setups based on different roles and languages shared by trainer(s) and trainees

Languages shared by trainer(s) and trainees are crucial for the roles played by the participants (see 3.2.2) and shape the very structure of the RP. Three different setups will now be presented where the interpreter's role is always played by trainees.

i) A standard situation: trainer(s) and trainees share two working languages (with the expert, if present, sharing one language)

Irrespective of whether the primary interlocutors are played by trainers, trainees or experts, those playing, for example, the doctor (or, in general, the healthcare provider – midwife, nurse, etc.) and the patient must pretend they do not understand the other's language and totally depend on the interpreter's words. When a trainer/trainee plays the patient and an expert plays the doctor, the latter may actually be unable to understand the patient's language, which would make the whole thing more realistic. In a real situation, though, in particular when the language spoken by the foreign interlocutor is a vehicular language, participants may occasionally understand each other. In such a situation, instances of code-switching are rather frequent and may be a challenge for the interpreter (Anderson 2012). Should a similar situation be reproduced, the trainee interpreter would have to interpret while at the same time checking if and what the two interlocutors actually understand.

ii) A first non-standard situation: trainer(s) and trainees (and the expert, if present) only share one language

This is the typical case in which trainer and trainees only share the local language. The situation is common in non-formal learning settings,[9] where migrant trainees are trained to meet communication needs in their communities. It may also be found in formal-learning settings, though, as described by Felberg and Skaaden (this volume). In such cases the RP may only be run in the language shared by the participants. The RP is thus considerably different from what happens in the real world where language diversity is the norm. What might seem to undermine the quality and results of the RP, however, could be a good opportunity to deal with other aspects, partially neglecting the translation dimension and concentrating on intra-linguistic reformulation. Once again, the personal experience of working with trainees belonging to different language groups has made it possible to appreciate the importance of paying attention to the interpreter's comprehension and his/her ability to (re-)produce content in the host language. The opportunity may be seized to work intra-lingually on the topic and to assess the trainees' proficiency in the host language, without losing sight of the interactional dynamics.

iii) A second non-standard situation: trainer(s) and trainees (and the expert, if present) only share one language, but at least three trainees share the same foreign language

This setup is very similar to the one described under (ii). The three trainees sharing the same language (language X) should be involved as follows: one trainee prepares the RP with a trainer or trainee who does not share the same language; another trainee (sharing the same language with the first trainee who plays one of the primary interlocutors) plays the interpreter; the third trainee serves as an observer and monitors what the interpreter says and how, while also monitoring the interaction as a whole.

In (ii) and (iii), if all trainees share a language the trainer does not know – it could even be a sub-group of (ii) and (iii) – a language expert who knows the language shared by the trainees may be involved.[10] When a language expert is present, standard RPs may be run, with the interpreting trainer speaking language X, the language expert speaking language Y, and the trainee interpreter interpreting out of and into X and Y. Interpretation quality may be assessed thanks to the language expert who may also contribute to language enhancement by proposing alternative and improved translation choices. The trainer will concentrate on

9 https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/formal-non-formal-and-informal-learning

10 Language experts may be involved in setup (i) as well. Dialogue Interpreting courses (BA and MA) at the University of Trieste are taught by interpreter trainers supported by language experts who help trainers in preparing the RPs and play roles.

utterances in his/her own language and on interaction. Needless to say, all this requires a close cooperation between trainers and language experts. Ideally the latter should also have some translation competence (see Skaaden and Felberg, this volume).

All setups require all parties involved to work hard. Both time and patience are needed to design and conduct an RP. The results may be very good, though, as trainees designing an RP must necessarily draw on what they have learned while involved in the activities described under 2.1 or constructively, although not explicitly, analyse their personal experience.

3.2.4 Knowledge about institutional interaction

To prepare a role-play training session, one must know what is to be reproduced. Such knowledge may derive from a formal or non-formal learning process (e.g. training in Conversation Analysis), or from an informal learning process (direct experience in the field).

For example, when preparing an RP in an institutional setting (education, healthcare, courts, social services, etc.), one should know that the interaction is

- face-to-face
- between specific participants
- who are oriented towards a goal, perform specific tasks and assume a precise identity (or a set of identities), conventionally associated with the institution in question.

In a doctor-patient interaction, for example, one should be aware of the stages that characterise it and may be described as follows (Tebble 1999: 185, 2014, 422)[11]:

- Greetings
- Introductions
- (Contract)
- Stating/Eliciting the problem
- Ascertaining the facts
- (Diagnosing the facts)
- Stating the Resolution/Exposition
- (Decision by patient)

11 See also Meyer (2002, 161).

- Clarifying any Residual Matters
- Conclusion
- Farewells

Similarly, one should be familiar with the typical interaction structure in other institutional settings, e.g. involving immigration officer and asylum seeker, social service worker and immigrant, prosecutor and defendant, etc.

3.2.5 Choosing the didactic goal

It is crucial to choose the didactic goal to be achieved. A distinction should be made here between the translational and the interactional levels, although it is not always easy to distinguish between the two (Wadensjö 1998) and it is easy to see how the two influence each other. If, for didactic reasons, a distinction is made, when dealing with the translational aspect (the reformulation into language Y of a turn in language X and vice versa), the RP design will focus on the way in which interlocutors express themselves. Thus, for example, longer turns will be formulated featuring dense information and/or a complex or "incomplete" structure from a syntactic or semantic point of view, i.e. where what is said is not immediately clear to those who are not familiar with the topic, the context, etc. ("cryptic turns", Baraldi and Gavioli 2019).

When attention is paid to interaction and interactional dynamics, the RP may include complex turn-taking issues with overlaps, competition for turn-taking, side sequences (a primary interlocutor or the interpreter asking for clarifications, details and so on), etc. Situations may also be included where the institutional interlocutor (e.g. the doctor) and the client (e.g. the patient) can understand each other when using their own languages, or try to use the other's language thus limiting the scope of the trainee interpreter's role or changing it (the interpreter is implicitly asked not to interpret whole turns, but just to come up with or translate individual words, or clarify a concept expressed by one interlocutor in the other's language). It might also be interesting to simulate situations where the institutional interlocutor corrects the interpreter (rightly so or otherwise) – it is a not-uncommon case when the interlocutor has some knowledge of the foreign language being used.

D'Hayer (2013, 329) gives a rather exhaustive list of the challenges and difficulties that may make an RP as close as possible to real interpreter-mediated interactions and where the translational and interactional levels are intertwined:

> "This approach requires thorough preparation and detailed materials, such as scripts of role plays that integrate challenges (some anticipated, others unexpected) at various levels, taking into account the following:

[…]

2. communication challenges (e.g. misunderstanding, lying),
3. emotions (e.g. guilt, confusion),
4. professional challenge (e.g. the client is asking the interpreter for advice),
5. cultural issues (the service provider asks a Muslim mum with two children if she is married),
6. language challenges (e.g. specific reference to legal acts or procedures that are different or do not exist in one of the countries involved, description of emotions),
7. interpreting challenges (e.g. speed of delivery as someone is upset, idiomatic phrases or dealing with numbers) […]"

Other features making RP interaction more complex and closer to real interactions have to do with the interlocutor's attitude. In a doctor-patient interaction, for example, the doctor may show varying degrees of empathy and the patient may exhibit varying degrees of vulnerability or aggressiveness. The interaction itself may be more or less emotionally charged/demanding (e.g. in a medical consultation: terminal disease, invasive exam, etc.).

4 HOW TO INVOLVE THE CLASS

RPs may be beneficial only to those who are directly involved while the rest of the class remain passive. To avoid this risk, specific tasks should be assigned to those who are not playing roles in the RP.

As an example, an assessment procedure will now be described which is based on some fundamental points to be defined before the RP and is carried out through specific steps after the RP.

Particularly significant here are the distinction between "as-text" and "as social (inter)activity" (Wadensjö 1998, 44), the constant interaction between the two approaches, and the analysis grid with the rendition categories.[12]

Before the RP. Before the RP, the whole class is invited to observe and take notes about facts previously agreed upon with the trainer, bearing in mind that the overarching goal of a simulated interaction is equal access by all participants in the interaction to what is going on. To this end, attention must be paid to turn

12 For the description of the categories see Wadensjö (1998, 197-07); for a further discussion about the concept of close and divergent renditions see Dal Fovo and Falbo (2020).

distribution and management, coordinating tasks and content comparison between the turns of the interpreter and those of the other participants throughout the interaction. Missing or added contents have to be checked not only at the micro-level (i.e. turn of interlocutor 1 or 2 and corresponding interpreter's turn), but at the level of sequences or of the whole interaction: information not immediately translated could be conveyed later. In this respect it is important to note whether the interpreter is able to recover and convey at a later stage information that had been left out. It is also important to see whether this has any effect, for example on the relationship between doctor and patient.

As an alternative, the class may be divided into focus groups, where each group pretends to understand only the language of a specific participant, e.g. group A pretends to understand only the doctor's language, group B pretends to understand only the patient's language, group C focuses on the interpreter's interpretation and coordination tasks.

It is essential to audio- or video-record the RP, because recording is a prerequisite for a fact-based assessment. Trainees will more readily agree to be recorded if they are informed about the purpose of the recording.

After the RP. The assessment procedure may be divided into three steps.

STEP 1. The trainer gives the floor to the trainee(s) who took an active part in the role-play and engage them in a guided discussion of their performance.

Possible discussion triggers.

Questions for the interpreter role-player:

- Did you feel in control of the interaction / on top of the coordinating task?
- Did the participants give you enough space for your translation turns?
- Did you feel your presence was un/necessary for the interlocutors to interact?
- Did you feel bypassed by the primary speakers?

What was the most difficult thing you had to do?

- Switching from one language to the other;
- Remembering everything a speaker said;
- Taking the floor;
- Managing the participants' emotional reactions;
- Adapting your rendition to each participant.

Questions to the interlocutors if trainees were playing them (see 3.2.3, setups (ii) and (iii)):

- Did you manage to focus only on what the interpreter was telling you when translating the other interlocutor's turn?
- Were you satisfied with the interpreter's work?
- Did you have the impression that communication was difficult? At which moment in the interaction and why?

STEP 2. The trainer elicits feedback from the class. If specific tasks have been assigned to the audience, the trainer should ask trainees to report on them.

Possible discussion triggers.

- Was there a specific problematic moment in which communication did not work for either of the interlocutors? What caused it?
- Were the role-players credible/plausible/engaged patient or doctor?
- Was the interpreter able to make the doctor's voice or the patient's voice heard?
- Were the patient's concerns made clear to the doctor?
- Was the doctor's empathic attitude successfully conveyed?
- Did the doctor know what kind of patient s/he was facing – compliant, emotional, unresponsive, etc.?
- Did the patient understand the seriousness of his/her situation and the importance of the proposed treatment/procedures/examinations? Did the patient understand the risks?
- Did the doctor impinge upon the interpreter's role/ethics? How?
- Did the interpreter go beyond what s/he is expected to do? What is your opinion based on? Are you addressing a specific code of conduct?

Note that STEP 1 and STEP 2 are interchangeable depending on the classroom environment and/or the trainer's preference/ideas.

STEP 3. The trainer plays the recording of the simulation and links his/her comments to what emerged in STEP 1 and STEP 2, either confirming or disclaiming / correcting / adjusting trainees' impressions and self-assessments.

If the trainer is working with a language expert, s/he must remember to focus on his/her feedback as well.

The assessment of the contents conveyed or not conveyed by the interpreter (as-text approach) and the reasons thereof could be based on Wadensjö's rendition categories (1998, 197-107) and their modifications (Dal Fovo and Falbo 2020). Personal experience has shown that listening to the recording could be important as a training tool not just for those who actively participated in the RP (interpreter's role and other participants' role), but for the whole class. When listening to the recorded interaction, turn after turn, the trainer (and the language expert) may ask a trainee who did not participate in the RP to interpret a turn. Or else, particularly in the early stages of training, trainees may be asked questions about what is expressed in a turn (How many ideas? What ideas? How are they connected?). It is a simple exercise enabling the trainer to correct what was said by the RP participants and dwell on the analysis and memorization process required to interpret a turn, taking into account that difficulties in interpreting a turn are often due not to inadequate language proficiency, but rather to inadequate understanding of what has been said.

As regards interpreting modes, any difficulties caused by an inadequate technique should also be addressed.

5 ACTIVITIES

Design an RP going through the different points made in the previous sections. On the basis of the languages shared by trainer(s) and trainees (Section 3.2.3), design your RP session sticking to the following points.

Before the class:

- choose your primary interlocutor role-player(s) (Section 3.2.2);
- identify your didactic goal (Section 3.2.5) and share it with the primary interlocutor role-player(s) who will write a short RP to be analysed and discussed with a view to preparing for possible re-orienting renditions or unforeseen questions.

During the class:

- identify your trainee interpreter;
- assign specific tasks to the class;
- ask the primary interlocutor role-player(s) to play the scripted RP as spontaneously as possible;
- do not forget to (video-)record the RP for the assessment phase.

After the RP:

- choose your assessment steps (Section 4.)

By changing the type of primary interlocutor role-players, the didactic goal, the use of a scripted or improvised RP, and the tasks for the class, you can design different role-plays and so constantly change your activity.

6 FURTHER READING

A bibliographic research will enable readers to find introductory handbooks in their own languages. For initial reading in English:

Hutchby, Ian, and Robin Wooffitt. 2008. *Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

A good introduction to Conversation Analysis.

Antaki, Charles. 2011. *Applied Conversation Analysis: Intervention and Change in Institutional Talk*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

An online tutorial in Conversation Analysis is also available. Accessed August 1, 2020.

http://ca-tutorials.lboro.ac.uk/intro1.htm Some basic notions of Conversation Analysis are required.

Corsellis, Anne. 2008. *Public Service Interpreting. The First Steps*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. The monograph is a good introduction to public service interpreting.

Hale, Sandra. 2007. *Community Interpreting*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Another monograph to get a general idea about Public Service Interpreting/ Community Interpreting.

Niemants, Natacha, and Elizabeth Stokoe. 2017. "Using Conversation Analytic Role-play Method in healthcare interpreter education." In *Teaching Dialogue Interpreting*, edited by Natacha Niemants and Letizia Cirillo, 293–321. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

This chapter provides guidance to training trainees in the analysis of interpreter-mediated interactions.

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