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INTEGRATING DESIGN THINKING ELEMENTS INTO INTERPRETER TRAINING: A PILOT STUDY

Abstract. The article advocates the implementation of Design Thinking, a problem-solving methodology, in conference interpreter training. It presents a follow-up study to the introduction of "the Simultaneous Interpreting Portfolio", a self-regulatory tool that encourages self-reflection in novice interpreters both during training and after graduation, aligning with the socio-constructivist approach to education. The pilot study involved integrating Design Thinking elements into "the SI Portfolio" as part of a simultaneous interpreting course (between Polish and English) for third-year BA students in English Studies at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. The findings suggest that implementing Design Thinking elements, even at the earliest stages of interpreter training, can foster the development of not only problem-solving skills but also self-reflection, the ability to provide and receive feedback, and collaborative learning, helping trainees to become self-directed learners.

Keywords: design thinking; interpreter training; self-regulation; self-reflection; Simultaneous Interpreting Portfolio

INTEGRACJA ELEMENTÓW DESIGN THINKING W KSZTAŁCENIU TŁUMACZY KONFERENCYJNYCH. BADANIE PILOTAŻOWE

Abstrakt. Artykuł wspiera integrację metodologii *design thinking* (myślenia projektowego) w kształceniu tłumaczy konferencyjnych. W artykule przedstawiono badanie będące kontynuacją projektu polegającego na wdrożeniu „Portfolio tłumaczeniowego", narzędzia samoregulacji wspierającego autorefleksję u początkujących tłumaczy konferencyjnych – zarówno w trakcie edukacji formalnej, jak i po ukończeniu studiów, co wpisuje się w koncepcję konstruktywizmu społecznego. Opisane badanie pilotażowe polegało na integracji elementów *design thinking* w „Portfolio tłumaczeniowym" w ramach kursu tłumaczenia symultanicznego (w kombinacji językowej polski-angielski) dla studentów III roku studiów I stopnia filologii angielskiej na Katolickim Uniwersytecie Lubelskim Jana Pawła II. Wyniki wskazują, że wykorzystanie elementów *design thinking*, nawet na najwcześniejszych etapach kształcenia tłumaczy konferencyjnych, może okazać się korzystne dla

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rozwoju nie tylko umiejętności rozwiązywania zadań problemowych, ale także autorefleksji, udzielania i otrzymywania informacji zwrotnej oraz uczenia się od siebie nawzajem, co może pomóc studentom osiągnąć autonomię w dalszym rozwoju zawodowym.

Słowa kluczowe: design thinking; kształcenie tłumaczy konferencyjnych; samoregulacja; autorefleksja; portfolio tłumaczeniowe

INTRODUCTION

Among the top in-demand skills of the 2020s, as listed by the World Economic Forum (2020; 2023), are creative thinking, analytical thinking, complex problem-solving, active learning and learning strategies, motivation and self-awareness, curiosity, and lifelong learning. Therefore, educational systems should provide students with opportunities to develop these skills. One of the most effective ways to foster these skills in education and beyond is design thinking (DT), which characterises the cognitive processes employed to "frame, explore and re-frame ill-structured problems to derive design solutions" (Koh et al., 2015, p. v). The primary function of DT is to adopt "a creative approach to problem-solving" (Grocholiński et al., 2021, p. 92). The core values of this methodology encompass creativity, collaboration, and experimentation by transforming ideas into effective solutions (ibid.).

While it has been gradually recognised that this methodology can be more successful than methodical problem-solving techniques in tackling complex problems across multiple professional contexts, including business and engineering, the integration of DT into educational environments has been slower (Koh et al., 2015, p. v; Gallagher & Thordason, 2020, p. 11). This discrepancy highlights the necessity for more extensive research in this area (ibid.).

The following article presents the results of a pilot study that involved integrating DT into the simultaneous interpreting (SI) course for university students. Specifically, this article aims to explore the effectiveness of integrating DT elements into the SI Portfolio, designed as a self-regulatory tool for interpreting trainees (Mirek, 2020), with a particular emphasis on their impact on promoting key tenets of a socio-constructivist educational approach, such as self-reflection, collaborative learning, as well as providing and receiving feedback (Fernández-Prieto & Sempere-Linares, 2010; Kiraly, 2000).

1. DESIGN THINKING IN EDUCATION

Despite the fact that descriptions of the DT methodology often vary in terms of the number of its stages, depending on the adopted approach, the fundamental elements that all DT processes have in common include (a) developing a thorough understanding of users and their needs; (b) exploring various inspiration sources by divergent thinking; (c) learning through prototyping, collecting feedback, and adjusting; and (d) testing solutions in small groups to ensure the identified needs have been successfully addressed, followed by expanding the testing scale (Ertel & Solomon, 2014).

Owing to the very nature of the process, DT has been applied most frequently in business, technology, and social sciences, where practical solutions must be generated, prototyped, and tested. Nevertheless, Gallagher & Thordason (2020, p. 12f.) claim that adopting DT can be successful at all educational levels. In the context of the Polish educational system, Grocholiński et al. (2021) and Gołębiowska et al. (2022) present successful examples of the DT methodology implementation across a variety of educational settings, ranging from early school education to academia, particularly in university-level courses in social sciences (economics, psychology, pedagogy, political sciences, sociology, journalism, management, law) (ibid.). In such classes, students are tasked with designing solutions to field-specific problems. For instance, in the "Job Market" course, sociology students design solutions to help the unemployed upgrade their credentials to secure employment (Gołębiowska et al., 2022, p. 23).

The DT methodology may be considered an activating approach in higher education, as the learning process is founded on questioning and creative problem-solving (unlike the traditional transmissionist model) (Gołębiowska et al., 2022, p. 19f.). In addition to solving problems, students reinforce their problem-solving skills and prepare for upcoming challenges (Gallagher & Thordason, 2020, p. 7), equipping them to meet professional demands. This seems to be in full accord with the socio-constructivist approach to translator education, whereby (future) translators should be able to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the labour market (see e.g., Kiraly, 2000; Klimkowski, 2015; Pietrzak, 2018).

In the context of translation didactics, it is certainly worth noting a proposal put forward by Klimkowski and Klimkowska (2021) to integrate DT into the translation classroom in the form of practising communicative strategies in essential aspects of the profession, such as interactions between translators and clients. However, the application of this methodology in interpreting training remains largely unexplored, offering a valuable opportunity for the author to investigate this avenue.

2. THE SI PORTFOLIO

As previously indicated, it has been increasingly acknowledged that preparing students, including interpreting trainees, for 'lifelong learning', is indispensable to help them adapt to the ever-changing labour market requirements. Against this backdrop, a constructivist (non-transmissionist) educational approach appears particularly relevant, as it promotes the significance of students taking charge of their own learning and further growth (Pietrzak, 2019; 2018, p. 820). Kiraly (2000, p. 18) highlights that in this approach, "instead of filling them [students] with knowledge, teachers should serve as guides, consultants and assistants who can help set the stage for learning events". Furthermore, Klimkowski (2019) points out that trainers can facilitate the transition of learners from dependence to autonomy, including the transition from an assessment performed solely by the trainer to "an autonomous self-assessment" (ibid.). As trainees are expected to become autonomous learners, creating "individually tailored tools that will allow every student to function within the language mediation community upon graduation" (Kiraly, 2000, p. 49) seems pertinent.

Designed as a process-oriented self-regulatory tool[1] tailored to the individual needs of trainee interpreters, the SI Portfolio allows students to "reflect upon and document their progress, evaluate themselves, and develop effective strategies leading to their goals" (Mirek, 2020, p. 153), within which they can plan SI activities and visualise their achievements. By integrating various feedback providers (trainer, peers, and the student in question), the SI Portfolio implements the notion of *multiple voices* (González Davies, 2004).

The SI Portfolio comprises worksheets, including tasks and both open- and closed-ended questions, which students complete individually each time based on their recorded outputs, under the trainer's ongoing mentorship. The original SI Portfolio (see Mirek, 2020) entails the following elements:

(a) "Introductory sheets": Students freely describe their experiences, challenges, and emotions accompanying their initial attempts at SI.

(b) "The Wheel of Progress": Adapted from "the Balance Wheel", a popular coaching practice (see Rogers, 2008, p. 129 ff.), this tool serves as a self-diagnostic instrument of the student's learning situation. Trainees are supposed to visually

[1] Self-regulation is delineated by Moser-Mercer (2008, p. 14 f.) as follows: "[…] It refers to the learners' ability to make adjustments in their own learning processes in response to their perception of feedback regarding their current status of learning […] Learners thus regulate their own learning by observing what they are able to do, then comparing what they have observed to a standard they have been offered […], and making judgements about the quality of their performance, in order to finally make plans regarding what to do next".

mark their satisfaction levels (1=highly dissatisfactory, 10=highly satisfactory) in eight SI skills on a Wheel at the beginning and the end of the semester.

(c) "Setting SMART goals": Students identify one key area in "the Wheel of Progress" and formulate their goals concerning improving SI performance following the SMART principles[2].

(d) "Brainstorming": Trainees list various activities that lead to their previously specified goals.

(e) "My Progress": Students compare their two "Wheels of Progress" and reflect on which skills have improved and which still require further development.

(f) "Self-review" and "Peer review": Trainees assess their SI performance using sheets that include SI criteria rated on a Likert-type scale (1=highly ineffective, 5=highly effective), as well as an open-ended section for comments.

(g) "Tracking sheets": Structured as monthly calendars, these sheets help students monitor their out-of-class activities (as listed in "Brainstorming") by adding comments regarding the time and duration of their practice.

As can be inferred, the SI Portfolio provides a framework for self-reflection on the students' SI performance, which is made possible by listening to the output recordings. In class, students are asked to record their SI performance on their own devices and subsequently listen to these recordings to complete the SI Portfolio. During on-site sessions, the trainer can access the recordings via classroom equipment. Thus, both the trainer and students can easily access the respective recordings. Furthermore, students receive continuous feedback and mentoring from the trainer throughout the course (ibid.).

By inspiring reflection on progress made and strengthening the strategies of professional interpreters, the SI Portfolio supports trainees' further development both inside and outside academia, ultimately preparing them to become "self-directed, life-long learners" (Grow, 1991, p. 127).

3. PILOT STUDY: INTEGRATING DESIGN THINKING INTO THE SI CLASSROOM

In this study, the original SI Portfolio was expanded with selected DT elements[3]. For example, DT tools such as "I like… I wish… What if…?" and "Rose, Thorn,

[2] SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. See e.g., Doran (1981) for more details.

[3] It should be noted that the SI Porfolio in the following pilot study encompassed a larger number of elements, including DT techniques. However, as the scope of this paper does not allow

Bud" provide opportunities for students to develop self-reflection, collaborative learning, creative problem-solving, and the ability to provide valuable feedback, which are key in the socio-constructivist educational approach advocated in this article. The following study adopts a highly selective approach to DT, incorporating only those DT elements that are feasible within the context of SI training to enrich the SI Portfolio.

Conducted between October 2020 and January 2021, the pilot study involved part-time third-year BA students in English Studies at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, whose curriculum included nine 90-minute sessions of introductory SI training between Polish and English (as part of their Practical English course). As this period was marked by the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all classes were held synchronously online[4]. Consequently, the students were asked to complete the editable versions of the SI Portfolio and attach scanned graphic elements. Furthermore, as the university-based interpreting classroom was inaccessible, the trainer listened to each student's performance in separate *breakout rooms* (see Mirek, 2022; 2021) and collected the recordings from the students after each class. This ensured that all the recordings were easily accessible for future reference. The DT tools and activities integrated into the upgraded version of the SI Portfolio are described in detail below.

3.1. I LIKE… I WISH… WHAT IF…?

Created to gather feedback swiftly and easily, this DT tool promotes perspective sharing and transforms adverse remarks into helpful, constructive input (*The best 5 design thinking activities & tools*, 2020). Integrated into the SI Portfolio, it allows students to organise their thoughts into three categories that enable them to share: (i) positive aspects of their SI performance first ("I like"), followed by (ii) constructive criticism expressed in a positive way ("I wish"), and (iii) suggestions for improvement in future performances ("What if") (see Gallagher & Thordarson, 2020, p. 125). The final prompt is an "open-ended and generative" question that encourages trainees to freely express ideas for improving future performance (ibid.), which serves as an introduction to subsequent sections of the SI Portfolio.

In this study, this tool was presented as a three-column table: "I like…", "I wish…", and "What if…?". It was implemented to collect the trainees' initial

for providing a detailed description of the entire study, a separate publication is planned to report on the remaining outcomes of the project.

[4] For details regarding the organisation of the pandemic-forced online SI courses, see e.g. Mirek, 2021; 2022.

reflections – following an analysis of their outputs – helping them identify and name both positive and problematic areas (framed positively) and consider future strategies. Consequently, this activity corresponds to the first stage of DT, "inspiration", which Brown (2009, p. 16) defines as "the problem or opportunity that motivates the search for solutions".

Based on the trainer's teaching experience, it was anticipated that the students listening to their output for the first time might experience emotional reactions. Therefore, the activity was designed as an in-class self-review, rather than a peer-review, to maximise their comfort and create a safe space for open reflection. Afterwards, the trainees could consult with the trainer and discuss ideas for improvement.

The students' illustrative comments are discussed and presented below:

(a) *I like…*: The students appreciated their perseverance, efforts to maintain fluency, and follow the speaker ("I liked the fact that I persevered until the end and I did not give up despite the pauses"; "I was able to interpret the speech fluently and understand everything"). Moreover, the trainees referred to aspects specific to SI, such as maintaining an optimal delay, using appropriate terminology, and conveying the speaker's tone and message ("I liked my EVS[5] and that I managed to deal with the terminology"; "I think I managed to convey the speaker's emotions and that the content was rather accurate").

(b) *I wish…*: Some trainees used this column to vent frustration rather than frame negative aspects positively. Nevertheless, they were encouraged to share their experiences openly and reformulate them positively ("I wish my pronunciation was better. I wish not to make grammatical errors" reformulated as "I wish I had better pronunciation skills and could use proper grammar"). Furthermore, the trainees focused on aspects inherent in SI, such as displaying greater confidence and improving intonation, pronunciation, and multitasking skills ("I wish I had better pronunciation skills, a more appropriate intonation, and my voice was less shaky "; "I wish I could listen and speak at the same time").

(c) *What if…?*: The students emphasised aspects crucial in SI assessment, such as completing sentences, coping strategies ("What if I focused only on essential information? My speech clarity would be better."), effective text processing, and reformulating under time constraints ("What if I could find ways to render the word I have just forgotten and find a similar one?"; "What if I managed to interpret quickly? I would be less stressed when interpreting.").

[5] Ear-Voice Span (EVS) in SI is the time span (delay) between the reception of the input (the speaker's source text in the source language) and the production of the output (the interpreter's target text in the target language) (Setton, 1999).

Other comments pertained to stress resilience and the avoidance of disfluencies ("What if I were less stressed and used fewer fillers?"), as well as ideas to conduct prior research and improve voice emission.

Together with the "Introductory sheets" aimed at introducing self-reflection at the initial stages of SI training (Mirek, 2020, p. 145f.), this activity was designed to precede the "Wheel of Progress" (ibid.), which serves as a self-diagnosis tool by visualising the student's self-assessment of their SI skills (ibid.). By applying the "I like… I wish… What if…?" template before the "Wheel of Progress", the trainees are better equipped to perform their first self-assessment, having already identified their performance strengths as well as initial ideas for future improvement.

3.2. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is defined by Gogus (2012, p. 484) as a method of "generating ideas and solving problems" that enables students not only to engage in educational activities but also to assume accountability for their learning process and to link concepts through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (ibid.). Crucial brainstorming guidelines include encouraging participants to be visual, to think outside the box, and to refrain from criticism or passing judgement: listing all possible ideas, including "worst ideas", can prove liberating and inspire students to discover the most interesting opportunities (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2020, p. 93; Gołębiowska et al., 2022, p. 98). The graphic representation involved in brainstorming encourages visual thinking, which is a visual approach to problem solving that facilitates a deeper understanding of the problem's nature and the generation of fresh solutions by legibly illustrating words and cognitive processes (Grocholiński et al., 2021, p. 78f.).

Brainstorming in the SI Portfolio has been designed as a follow-up activity to the "Wheel of Progress", which helps trainees perform a diagnosis of their SI skills and specify their main goal in SI training according to the SMART principles (Mirek, 2020, p. 146f.). This corresponds to the "ideation" stage of DT, "the process of generating, developing, and testing ideas" (Brown, 2009, p. 16), or "the ideate phase" (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2020, p. 15), which involves brainstorming and allows for the generation of "moon shot" concepts through divergent thinking and creativity (ibid.).

In this study, the original "Brainstorming" sheet was slightly modified. Rather than listing activities in bullet points, the trainees were encouraged to use a template with a central bubble and branching ideas: the previously identified SI skill was placed in the middle, whereas supporting daily activities were

noted around it. The students could graphically modify the template to match their cognitive processes and foster visual thinking. As previously mentioned, it is crucial to note that brainstorming is meant to unlock the trainees' potential: they should be free to think about any activities without judgement. Consequently, the students were encouraged to think of enjoyable and individually tailored SI activities, such as shadowing their favourite speaker. Hence, in this study, the students were encouraged to list further activities by three follow-up prompts in the worksheet ("Any other activities?", "Anything to add?", "Is that all?").

Samples of SI skills and ideas listed by the students are presented below:

(a) *Clarity of speech*: reading aloud, practising tongue twisters, shadowing[6] native speakers, breathing and enunciation exercises, recording and analysing speech clarity, revising phonetics, practising the pronunciation of the terminology for SI classes;

(b) *Confident delivery*: practising pronunciation and intonation when speaking English, improving fluency in English (flashcards, shadowing); immersing in English during leisure time (listening to favourite podcasts, etc.); selecting interesting *TED Talks* in English and practising shadowing and SI; recording and listening to the output; asking for feedback; re-recording to track progress;

(c) *Multitasking in SI*: Shadowing; shadowing intertwined with SI; code-switching (partly in Polish, partly in English) when speaking spontaneously; shadowing/SI plus doing crosswords, drawing, or playing games at the same time; silent/loud SI whenever and wherever possible (e.g., while driving).

It is crucial to note that the trainees were also encouraged to consult their ideas with both the trainer and each other, supporting the principles of collaborative learning and *multiple voices* (see González Davies, 2004; Fernández-Prieto & Sempere-Linares, 2010). Furthermore, the students were required to apply convergent thinking to ultimately narrow down their choice to two key SMART-based ideas and implement them in their daily out-of-class practice, which they could then include in the "Tracking sheets".

3.3. ROSE, THORN, BUD

This analysis tool can be used to identify strengths (*roses*), weaknesses (*thorns*), and opportunities or potential areas for growth (*buds*) (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2020, p. 42), foster reflection, and help generate constructive adjustments (*The best 5 design thinking activities & tools*, 2020).

[6] Shadowing is defined by Lambert (1992) as the "parrot-style" word-for-word repetition of the source text in the source language with the use of headphones.

In the study, peer feedback on student output was categorised into the following columns within a table: (i) *rose*: effective SI aspects, (ii) *thorn*: ineffective SI aspects, and (iii) *bud*: skills the interpreter can easily develop to enhance performance. This activity corresponds to the final stage of DT, "implementation", described by Brown (2009, p. 16) as "the path that leads from the project stage into people's lives", or "testing" (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2020, p. 16), as it involves applying previously defined solutions in practice and receiving feedback on their effectiveness (ibid.). As iteration is an inherent part of DT, this phase may require revisiting earlier stages of the process (ibid.), which fosters self-regulation. In the SI Portfolio, this could involve redefining SMART-based goals or identifying a key SI skill that needs to be practised more.

Based on an in-class SI recording, the students were asked to provide peer feedback as part of their homework. It is important to note that at this stage of SI training, they had already acquired sufficient experience to do so.

The trainees' illustrative remarks are presented below:

(a) *Rose*: Proper grammar, terminology (based on prior research), fluency, intonation, enunciation, stamina, content accuracy ("Good grasp of the source text in terms of terminology and context"; "The entire speech was covered, you didn't give up"), aspects inherent to SI, such as maintaining an optimal delay, completing sentences, and multitasking ("Good coordination of listening and speaking");

(b) *Thorn*: Lack of confidence, inappropriate intonation, disfluencies such as prolonged pauses and filler or distracting sounds ("Filler sounds, your delivery wasn't confident"; "Too long pauses, too many filler sounds, too many slips of the tongue, taking breaths and smacking"), errors related to style, pronunciation and fidelity ("Stylistic errors, mispronunciation of some words"; "At least one sentence makes no sense and there was no repair");

(c) *Bud*: Expanding terminology through prior research; improving stress management, focus, and active listening; enhancing enunciation and pronunciation skills; avoiding disfluencies; maintaining fluency and an optimal delay ("Make pauses in the right places, work on a pace of speech"; "Try to keep the same pace at all times, and speak confidently without repeating the same words").

In this way, each student acted both as a feedback recipient (in the role of interpreter) and as a feedback provider to their peers. They were also encouraged to respond to the feedback (e.g., by asking for further clarification), which supported the principles of collaborative learning and *multiple voices* (see González Davies, 2004; Fernández-Prieto & Sempere-Linares, 2010). Therefore, the trainees were not only provided with feedback on their output and suggestions

for improving their SI skills, but were also asked to provide constructive feedback positively.

Furthermore, throughout the course, the students received ongoing mentoring and feedback from the trainer, to which they were free to respond (e.g., by asking follow-up questions). This approach enabled the trainees to develop "internal feedback" (Moser-Mercer, 2008, p. 15) or the "self-feedback" ability (Klimkowski, 2015, p. 213), which in turn facilitated the development of "realistic self-assessment", indispensable for "self-regulated interpreting performance" (ibid.).

4. FINDINGS

Upon completion of the course, the trainees were asked to complete an anonymous online questionnaire and share their experiences of using the SI Portfolio with DT elements. A total of 22 students assessed its effectiveness. In the first question, they were asked to evaluate the usefulness of this tool in the SI course by selecting from options that indicated a positive or negative assessment, or no clear opinion. The response was overwhelmingly positive: 20 trainees (91%) found the SI Portfolio useful, with the remaining two students unable to express an opinion. The second question concerned the trainees' willingness to continue using this tool in the future, offering options that ranged from definite willingness, through conditional agreement, to reluctance or lack of opinion. Similarly to the first question, as many as 20 trainees declared their willingness to continue using the entire SI Portfolio in the future, with one student voicing a reservation that she would like to continue using only selected elements rather than the entire SI Portfolio. Another student stated he might consider using this tool in the future, whereas only one trainee claimed that, as she found this tool too time-consuming, she would prefer not to continue using it.

The open-ended section of this question provided an opportunity for them to express their views. Examples of the students' remarks are presented in brackets. Overall, the students claimed that the SI Portfolio allowed them to have tangible evidence of the progress made throughout the entire semester ("Upon finishing the course, I have visible results of my progress and feedback about the kind of problems I once had"), reflect on their SI performance, formulate and pursue their goals ("I was able to write down my goals and pursue them. If I had to analyse my performance in my mind, it would be very difficult, as I would not know what to focus on and what to work on"). Furthermore, the SI Portfolio provided a framework for both self- and peer-assessment ("I knew

what to focus on, I could notice what I did wrong and what was satisfactory"; "It helped me assess my SI performance, which is not that easy") and encouraged consistency in practising interpreting activities ("At the beginning, it was not easy for me to practice every day, but thanks to the Portfolio, it has become a habit"; "It motivates me to practice all kinds of activities and provides a framework for my self-practice").

The subsequent question specifically concerned the effectiveness of the DT elements in the SI Portfolio. This closed-ended question involved the following options on the Likert-type scale: 1=highly ineffective, 2=ineffective, 3=no opinion, 4=effective, and 5=highly effective. The results revealed that the most effective DT tool for the trainees proved to be "Rose, Thorn, Bud" (assessed as effective or highly effective by 86%, with 14% of the respondents unable to express an opinion), followed by "Brainstorming" (effective or highly effective for 73% of the trainees, with 27% unable to express an opinion), whereas "I like… I wish… What if…?" was evaluated as the least effective DT tool in the SI Portfolio (for 63% it was an effective or highly effective tool, while 5% regarded it ineffective and 32% had no opinion).

The last question was an open-ended one, providing an opportunity for the trainees to share their remarks regarding DT elements in the SI Portfolio. Furthermore, to reduce the students' workload inherent in the pandemic-forced online education, the trainees were also free to share any additional comments during the discussion in the last class. Samples of the students' replies are provided in brackets. The trainees shared their positive experiences of "Brainstorming", which unlocked their potential to think outside the box to generate diverse ideas for skill development („Brainstorming forced me to come up with many interesting ideas on how to develop my interpreting skills"). Furthermore, the trainees were enthusiastic about "Rose, Thorn, Bud" because of its structure and metaphoric representation of visual elements that triggered positive associations and displayed areas in need of improvement ("It helped me see what I should work on"; "It's my favorite part, because of the visual elements. I like the idea that strengths are compared to a rose and weaknesses to a thorn. Even though I listed my weaknesses there, too, it is the positive aspects that I recall the most, mainly because of these colourful pictures. I have only positive memories of it."). The latter comment points to the importance of visual thinking. During the in-class discussion, more students joined in and added that it was exciting to listen to each other's output recordings and provide feedback, so that the teacher was no longer the sole person responsible for assessing their SI performance. This offered an interesting alternative to the traditional (transmissionist) approach,

supporting the principles of collaborative learning and *multiple voices* (see González Davies, 2004; Fernández-Prieto & Sempere-Linares, 2010). Rather interestingly, only one student referred to the tool "I like… I wish… What if…?" as a written comment in the questionnaire, appreciating its goal-setting potential ("It was my favourite element of the entire Portfolio because it helped me see what level I want to reach in SI"). However, during the in-class discussion, the trainees reported that this tool forced them to focus on positive aspects rather than complain about their first attempts at SI, which they found to be encouraging.

As can be inferred, the students responded positively to the SI Portfolio with integrated DT elements, which proved to support self-reflection, collaborative learning, and feedback exchange. Hence, the findings suggest that incorporating DT tools can improve the quality of interpreter training.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The integration of DT elements into the SI Portfolio has demonstrated pedagogical value that extends beyond SI skill development by promoting a reflective and collaborative learning environment that supports visual thinking and creative problem-solving. These are crucial from a lifelong learning perspective. In the constructivist approach, advocated in this article, trainees are active stakeholders in the learning process: they are both feedback recipients and providers, learning to frame their remarks constructively and positively, to share their ideas, to remain open to new ones (*multiple voices*), and to learn from each other (collaborative learning). This approach also fosters the trainees' control over their learning process as they are not only expected to perform SI and await the trainer's assessment, but also to provide feedback themselves and respond to the feedback they receive, which enhances their feedback literacy (Pietrzak, 2016, p. 58) and allows them to develop self-assessment skills (Klimkowski, 2015, p. 213). Furthermore, the trainees were encouraged to focus on positive aspects of their SI performance, reframe negative remarks as positive statements, and seek creative solutions to implement in their daily practice to improve their SI skills. In conclusion, the SI Portfolio enriched with DT elements can be regarded as an "individually tailored tool" (Kiraly, 2000, p. 49) that helps students become self-directed learners by developing self-regulatory skills and equipping them to guide and monitor their future professional paths to meet job market demands upon graduation.

It should be noted that the scope of this study needs to be expanded to include a larger number of trainee interpreters to enhance both the representativeness and reliability of the findings. Nevertheless, the DT-based activities presented in this article show pedagogical value for SI trainers and language educators alike.

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