

Teaching Translation and Interpreting Online: Assessment Strategies from Practical Experience

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Abstract

Higher education has undergone significant transformations, with learner needs and expectations changing and diversifying due to modern life demands and extensive use of technologies. Moreover, the global COVID-19 pandemic has led us to rethink and extend our knowledge of teaching practices, with increased focus on online education. As a result, teaching and learning in this remote environment now need to be researched probably more than ever. This study aims to provide an overview of assessment tools used in online translation and interpreting teaching and to propose strategies for effective assessment. It does so by examining a specific online translation and interpreting course offered as part of a certificate program in the United States. This case study offers a comprehensive analysis of assessment methods in the given course, examining the course materials in view of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, and the Community of Inquiry framework (social, cognitive, and teaching presence in assessment). Predicated on hands-on experience, the assessment practices outlined in this paper provide simple and practical assessment guidelines adaptable to different settings of translation and interpreting teaching.

Keywords: *assessment, online education, translator training, translation teaching, Community of Inquiry*

1. Assessment in online translation and interpreting teaching: an uncharted territory

The COVID-19 pandemic has had considerable effects on all aspects of our lives, including teaching and learning. With the global lockdown that started in March 2020, remote teaching was the only option for several months. The assertion is that online education is here to stay and will keep growing in a post-pandemic world, thus, calling for it to be researched probably more than ever. There was a handful of research papers on teaching translation and interpreting online before the pandemic, most of which were theoretical discussions (see for example Bartrina 2009; Duranton & Mason 2012; Ko 2012; Alshehab 2013; Medadian & Ketabi 2014; Hartono 2015; Leone 2015; Gavrilenko 2018; Gorozhanov et al. 2018; Lee & Huh 2018; Yılmaz-Gümüş 2018; Ismail et al. 2019; Bilić 2020).

Research on online translation and interpreting teaching then grew tremendously in 2021. Collective volumes (e.g. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, vol. 36b 2021; Seresi et al. 2021) were published, as well as a monograph by Mazzei & Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo (2022) fully dedicated to teaching translation and interpreting online. The majority of related papers published after the outbreak of the pandemic explored instructors' and/or students' perceptions of online teaching and learning experiences during the pandemic in a wide range of geographical settings (see for example Afolabi & Oyetoyan 2021;

Alwazna 2021; Almahasees & Qassem 2022 Bordet 2021; Kasperè & Motiejūnienė 2021; Libreros Cortez & Schrijver 2021; Su et al. 2021; Wu & Wei 2021).

Hubscher-Davidson & Devaux (2021: 187) noted that there is a difference between well-organized online courses and emergency ones offered in response to a crisis. Research on both types provides the opportunity to think about and enhance our knowledge of the remote education experience. The Online Certificate in Professional Translation & Interpreting (OCPTI) offered at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst, the setting of the present research, was launched in 2018, namely before the start of the pandemic.

Against this background, the present study focuses on a specific aspect of online translation and interpreting teaching: assessment. Assessment design is an essential part of both face-to-face and online teaching. Assessments need to be planned and implemented in such a way as to respond to the needs of all stakeholders, including learners, teachers, the institution, and the market. Adopting a non-empirical approach, this case study examines assessment practices in one of the courses within an online translation and interpreting program. The article provides an overview of these practices and explores how the course content aligns with Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model. Taking the course *LLC501 Translation and Interpreting Ethics and Standards* offered at OCPTI as a case study, our paper provides an overview of assessment practices used in online translation teaching. The objective of the paper is to show how the contents of the course align with Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model.

For the sake of transparency, the authors would like to define their respective roles in this study. Volga Yılmaz-Gümüş was an invited scholar during the 2022 academic year and observed *LLC501* during the spring 2022 semester, taught by Laurence Jay Rayon Ibrahim Aibo. Cristiano Mazzei is the Director of the Online Certificate in Professional Translation & Interpreting, where *LLC501* is taught.

2. Theoretical framework

Course designers and instructors can address the challenges of assessment in online teaching by designing and using a variety of assessment tools and strategies that align with the learning objectives and promote higher-order thinking skills (Bloom's taxonomy), and by reinforcing the social and the instructor presence (CoI model). Assessment is an ongoing process that happens before (diagnostic), during (formative), and after (summative) the learning. In this respect, Bloom's taxonomy chart provides a framework for aligning various types of assessments with learning objectives. The scheme, developed by Bloom and his colleagues in 1956, is a classification of the different objectives and skills that course designers and instructors set for their learners. The classification has been revised many times over the years, and the level categories in the currently used version of the taxonomy were defined by Anderson & Krathwohl in 2001 (for an overview of the revision, see Krathwohl 2002). The six levels and action verbs used to define cognitive processes are as follows: remembering (recall, recognize, identify), understanding (summarize, compare, explain, interpret, classify), applying (apply, use, implement), analysing (analyse, differentiate, organize), evaluating (evaluate, check, assess), and creating (create, generate, produce, design). As learning objectives move from lower to higher-order skills, the assessments also develop accordingly. For example, if a learning objective is to enable learners to identify or list basic facts about the subject matter, then a multiple-choice quiz is appropriate. However, if a learning objective is

to enable learners to analyse the subject matter in depth and to support the analysis, then presentations, projects, and essays are more appropriate. Ideally, instructors should provide learners with a variety of assessment methods that allow them to demonstrate their mastery of new skills and knowledge. Considering that assessment activities need to be aligned with learning objectives, this study takes Bloom's taxonomy as a reference to demonstrate how such coordination has been achieved in the course being studied.

The CoI model, first developed by Garrison et al. (2000), is another point of reference for reviewing assessment procedures in online teaching. The CoI, defined as "a process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience through the development of three interdependent elements" (Garrison 2011: 22), provides a comprehensive and well-organized framework for designing online courses and a useful theoretical basis for researching online learning. The three key elements that need to interact for a successful higher education experience are cognitive presence, defined as "the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication", social presence, defined as "the ability of participants in the Community of Inquiry to project their personal characteristics into the community, thereby presenting themselves to the other participants as "real people", and teaching presence, related with the design of educational experience and facilitation, the former being the teachers' instructors' responsibility of "the selection, organization, and primary presentation of course content, as well as the design and development of learning activities and assessment", and the latter being a shared responsibility of the teacher/instructor and learners (Garrison et al. 2000: 88–90). This study seeks to understand how these types of presences are used particularly in assessment practices in online translation and interpreting teaching.

3. Research setting and method

The OCPTI is a short undergraduate program that is multilingual, i.e., not language-specific. Applicants must provide evidence of high proficiency in English and at least one spoken Language Other Than English (LOTE). To apply for the program, they need to provide detailed information regarding their language proficiency and educational background. Students are required to take at least 15 credits (5 courses or more) and must pass with a minimum grade of C to complete the program successfully and earn the certificate. Following the guidelines of US universities, students are expected to dedicate approximately ten hours per week to each 3-credit course. The classes are asynchronous, but not self-paced, which means that students are required to meet weekly assignment deadlines. Readings, discussions, papers, presentations, quizzes, and other course-related content are in English. Students do translation and interpreting assignments in their language pairs. Some of those assignments are sent out to language reviewers (professional translators and/or interpreters) who work in the same language pair as the student.

LLC501 Translation and Interpreting Ethics and Standards is a 3-credit course, which was selected as our case study to examine how assessment is conducted in online translation and interpreting teaching. Although it represents only one component of the OCPTI curriculum, the course was considered particularly suitable for the purpose of this paper because it brings together multiple dimensions of the field, including translation and interpreting practice, theoretical frameworks, technologies, and the profession. As a core course taken by students from different language pairs, it also reflects several pedagogical and

assessment practices used in the program, which offers a range of courses covering various aspects of translation and interpreting.

With the goal of recommending effective assessment tools and practices for online teaching based on data collected from the course offered in the OCPTI in spring 2022 and in the context of the framework presented in Section 2, our paper aims to address the following questions:

- At which levels of Bloom's taxonomy does the course assess learner performance?
- Do the course assessments call upon cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence?

This paper reports on the results of document-analysis-based qualitative research that examined course materials used in the class. Course syllabus, as well as assessment descriptions and rubrics, were the sources that provided data for these analyses. Blackboard was the learning management system (LMS) used in this course, and all documents were available to students on the LMS.

Document analysis, the research procedure adopted in this study, is "a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents" that "have been recorded without a researcher's intervention" (Bowen 2009: 27). As noted by Schensul (2008: 232), documents are the basis for most qualitative research. This paper first presents which diagnostic, formative and assessment tools were used, and then looks for the alignment of assessment tools or activities with the course objectives (see Section 4.1). Secondly, examples of assessment tools are provided to show which levels of Bloom's taxonomy were aimed at in the online course (Section 4.2). The CoI framework is then used to explore cognitive, social, and teaching presence in online assessment (Section 4.3).

4. Assessment strategies for online translation and interpreting teaching

4.1. Types of assessment in the course

Assessment is not only a way of evaluating student performance and learning but also an integral part of knowledge construction. A variety of assessments are used in online courses to allow students to demonstrate what they have learned in the courses and what they can do in professional settings. Table 1 provides the distribution of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments and grade breakdown in the course being investigated.

Short syllabus quizzes are given to help both instructor and learners save time by reducing further email correspondence and to set course expectations in terms of content, time commitment, materials, course work, etc. These are lower-stake tools that help students engage with the syllabus closely before the learning process starts through questions on learning objectives, types of assignments, grade breakdown, deadlines, or digital literacy.

In the OCPTI, a wide array of formative assessment activities and tools have been used to evaluate learners' performance. Written, audio, or video discussions are an essential part of online learning, and different modes of media used for discussions respond to the needs of different types of learners. Other formative assessments include translation and interpreting assignments, quizzes, essays/reaction papers/analytic papers, and reflections on translation and interpreting.

Table 1: Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments

Diagnostic assessments	Formative assessments	Summative assessments
Short syllabus quiz	VoiceThread discussions on Blackboard 30%	Final project presentation 30%
Short quiz on “Introduction and Overview”	Assignments (quizzes, translation assignments, interpreting assignments) 20%	
	Reflections 20% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 short reaction paper - 1 recorded presentation 	

The summative assessment in *LLC501* was based on a final project that required both individual and collaborative work. Learners were asked to create a podcast episode where they identified and discussed complex dilemmas pertaining to translation or interpreting. They had the flexibility to express their knowledge and skill mastery creatively in this podcast. In line with course objectives, they had the chance to show research, problem-solving and collaboration skills they were expected to acquire in the class. A detailed assignment description provided course participants with information on the various steps of the project and its timeline, illustrations of complex dilemmas, lower-stake dilemmas and non-dilemmas, recommendations about the importance of communication and negotiation with group members, specific guidelines about what they were expected to do in this project, and deliverables to be submitted to the LMS. Furthermore, a detailed rubric was given as a checklist for students to self-evaluate their work before submitting and presenting their team podcast in a live presentation session. The assignment was designed in a way to provide the opportunity for learners to show synthesized skills and explore broader concepts.

4.2. Bloom’s taxonomy in assessment

The learning objectives defined for *LLC501*, examples of formative and summative assessments designed to achieve these objectives, and how they are aligned with Bloom’s taxonomy levels are presented in Table 2.

As indicated in the table, various assessments were designed to address each learning objective of the course. Written, audio, or video discussions enable learners to show their understanding of specific course components, including course readings (Understand). Assignments such as translating or creating a project require them to use the knowledge and skills they acquire in the course for a specific purpose (Apply). Reflection assignments that are very common in the OCPTI courses encourage learners to think particularly about their translation and interpreting decisions and justify their decisions by drawing upon what they have already learned in the course (Analyse and Evaluate). The Final Podcast project enabled them to showcase what they have learned throughout the course in a project they created collaboratively (Create).

Table 2: Bloom's taxonomy levels in assessment

Learning objectives	Formative assessments (examples)	Summative assessments (examples)	Bloom's taxonomy (formative/summative)
1. Discuss professional ethics as it applies to the work of translators and interpreters	VoiceThread discussion: Go to Course Materials and watch Cuban movie <i>Un Traductor</i> (English subtitles are provided) and read Fricklin and Jones's article, titled "Deciphering 'Voice' from 'Words': Interpreting Translation Practices in the Field." Comment on the reading based on the prompts given.	Final Podcast project in groups Reflection	Understand/ Create
2. Describe professional interpreting and translation codes of ethics and standards of practice	Essay quiz: - Read Julie McDonough-Dolmaya's article thoroughly and annotate it. - Answer each question in 4 to 5 full sentences. - Use your own words and do not use quotes from the article. The purpose of this essay quiz is to showcase your critical thinking skills.	Final Podcast project in groups Reflection	Understand, Analyse/ Create
3. Explain accountability as it relates to the work of translators and interpreters	Translation: Translate into your LOTE a church pamphlet about firearms and reflect on the impact of this translation on the target audience and culture. Translation assignment + reflection	Final Podcast project in groups Reflection	Understand, Apply, Analyse/ Create
4. Identify ethical issues in case studies	Reaction paper: Select a dilemma from one of our readings or from another source (newspaper article or real-life dilemma). Discuss the dilemma referring to specific tenets of specific codes of ethics and standards of practice.	Final Podcast project in groups Reflection	Apply, Analyse/ Create
5. Discuss strategies to address ethical dilemmas	Interpreting assignment: Interpret into your LOTE the white nationalist speech by Richard Spencer. You will share a reflection in a separate VoiceThread discussion this time, so as to discuss ethical implications with your peers. Interpreting assignment + reflection	Final Podcast project in groups Reflection	Understand, Apply, Analyse/ Create

4.3. CoI in assessment

The CoI is used here as a framework to seek evidence for teaching, social, and cognitive presence in online assessment in the OCPTI. In this scheme, teaching presence consists of the following dimensions: Design and organization, facilitation, and direct instruction. Social presence is associated with affective expression, open communication, and group cohesion. Finally, cognitive presence comprises the subdimensions of triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution. What is written in a syllabus or any material available does not always warrant actual learning. However, they certainly provide evidence for an instructor's intention to promote learning, perception of best practices, and willingness to communicate with students. The content of relevant documents, therefore, offers some essential data to examine the three CoI elements in a learning environment.

4.3.1. Teaching presence

The focus on design and organization translates as clear communication of course topics, goals, and important time frames, and specification of how to participate in learning activities. Explaining these aspects very clearly at the very beginning of the course is more important in online teaching, given that students may not have the chance to receive instant clarification from their instructor. Furthermore, individual requests for clarification certainly and unnecessarily increase instructors' workloads.

The backbone of an online course is a detailed syllabus that explicitly communicates what the instructor expects from students and what students should expect from the course. The course syllabus provides a brief introduction to the course and course objectives. Then, a week-by-week description of the course clearly indicates topics, readings, and assessments that students should expect to cover each week (see Table 3).

Furthermore, schedules and important dates (e.g. assignment due dates) are announced at the beginning of the semester on the LMS. The grading policy and breakdown of grades are communicated clearly in the syllabus.

Table 3: Weekly course description from the syllabus

Week #	Dates	Topics, Readings, and Assignments
WEEK 5	Feb 23–March 1	What to read and watch:
Professional Codes and Standards		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch 12 min documentary <i>Justice in Translation</i>, published in the <i>New York Times</i> • Hale, Sandra. "Analyzing the Interpreter's Code of Ethics." In <i>Community Interpreting</i>. 2007.
		Assignment: Reaction Paper: Select a dilemma from one of our readings or from another source (newspaper article or real-life dilemma). Using the code of ethics and standards, write about ways of addressing the dilemma.

The second subdimension of teaching presence is facilitation. Facilitation is mainly associated with keeping learners informed, engaged, and motivated. In *LLC501*, the instructor uses a wide range of tools for course facilitation. A syllabus quiz and synchronous introductory meeting in Week 1 allow learners to get more familiar with the essentials of the course and discuss and clarify course requirements with the instructor. Videos uploaded by the instructor and occasional synchronous meetings with the instructor not only keep learners engaged but also reinforce the presence of the instructor. It is essential to highlight that, as all the OCPTI courses are asynchronous, synchronous meetings are fully optional, recorded and made available to learners who are not able to attend. The instructor further motivates learners to get engaged in productive dialogue by starting and adding comments to online VoiceThread discussions. Detailed assignment descriptions are provided to enable learners to complete their assignments easily. As seen in Table 4, for a reaction paper assignment, the instructor starts with providing resources that learners are expected to use to complete the assignment. She explains what learners are expected to do for this assignment (points 1 and 2), informs learners about formatting and style requirements (point 3), provides a link to the assignment rubric (point 3), offers an online resource for students needing help with academic writing and reminds academic honesty principles (point 4), and finally defines how to name and submit their assignment files.

Table 4: Assignment description

Week 5

Reaction Paper 1

Attached Files:

- [ATA Code of ethics With Commentary.pdf](#)
- [NAJITCodeofEthicsFINAL.pdf](#)
- [NCIHC National Code of Ethics.pdf](#)

For this first reaction paper, you will write a **3–4 p. essay** on dilemmas.

1. Select a dilemma from one of our readings or from another source (newspaper article or real-life dilemma).

Here is a list of sample case studies for dilemmas: [List of dilemmas.pptx](#)

You may also refer to the “Ethics in the News” folder to get started and find ideas.

Your dilemma should be complex. Easy-to-solve dilemmas do not provide sufficient ground to ponder over.

2. Referring to the various different codes of ethics and standards covered in our course, write about ways of addressing the dilemma you have selected.

What you need to do is a back-and-forth movement (like a bee!) between specific ethical principles (i.e. accuracy, impartiality, advocacy, etc.) in specified/clearly identified codes (you may work with more than one Code to add depth to your reflection; Dolmaya’s article you worked on last week is a great source of additional Codes of Ethics) and your dilemma. You may point out the limitations of what said principles offer in terms of guidance, or conflicts between different principles.

3. Formatting, style, and rubric:

- Here is the grading rubric for all written papers.
- Please note that all your papers should be written following a basic essay structure (introduction, thesis, analysis with examples, and conclusion). They should be written in 12-point font and double-spaced lines. Give a title to all your papers (example: “Reaction1_FirstName_LastName”).
- Include a list of works cited at the end, in addition to making the appropriate citations. Copying and pasting from the Internet constitutes a form of plagiarism. Make sure you cite your sources at all times. Include page numbers and use the MLA formatting style.

4. Help with writing and academic honesty:

- Our university offers a great online resource for those who need help with their writing skills: (...)
- Reminder: Academic honesty is required of all students at the university. For more information about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see the Dean of Students’ website: (...)

5. Name your reaction paper according to the Course Syllabus guidelines and submit it here as a **Word.doc** file here.

Make sure your paper is somewhere between 3 and 4 pages.

Well-argued and well-supported three-page papers are preferable to longer papers with a weaker structure.

Direct instruction, the third subdimension of teaching presence, mainly relates to instructor involvement in discussions and to instructors’ feedback. As mentioned earlier, the instructor takes an active part in discussions by starting them and commenting on learners’ posts. The instructor provides general feedback that may be helpful to all learners in the course, as well as individual feedback for each assignment.

In the OCPTI courses, external language reviewers are asked to provide language-specific feedback because the courses are multilingual and instructors do not speak all the languages used by learners in their translation or interpretation assignments. Receiving direct feedback from LOTE expert reviewers may be considered a factor that fosters teaching presence in the courses. Grading being reserved for course instructors, external reviewers are asked to encourage learners to find solutions themselves by doing particularly the following (Mazzei & Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo 2022: 78):

- Point out similar subject-matter materials written in their target language, including relevant URLs and highlighting a relevant expression or passage, explain why the resource is a reliable one, and encourage the student to identify similarly reliable resources in their next assignment.
- Point out interferences within their language pair.
- Identify extra-linguistic references to help them solve a problem.
- Refer them to a more reliable or more specialized dictionary in their target language.
- Encourage them to use a spellchecker or editing software and suggest one (if available in their target language).
- Encourage them to take higher-level writing classes in their target language.

To sum up, indicators of teaching presence in the course include providing a learner-oriented course design, a detailed syllabus with weekly descriptions of course content and deadlines with detailed assignment descriptions, playing an active role in discussions, and providing general and individual feedback, both from the course instructor and language reviewers (for translations and interpretations into their LOTE). In another study (Yılmaz-Gümüş & Mazzei 2024), the authors used the CoI survey, as well as several open-ended questions, to examine learners' perceptions of their online learning and assessment experiences in the OCPTI. The findings further corroborated the effectiveness of the teaching-presence practices described above (Yılmaz-Gümüş & Mazzei 2024: 18):

Well-designed syllabi and assignment descriptions helped the adult learners plan the time they allocated to the OCPTI tasks and guided them to complete the assignments properly. Active instructor roles in the discussions and the synchronous Zoom meetings were the course components that fostered learner engagement by increasing their interaction with the instructor. Furthermore, the instructor's active participation in written or video discussions made the learners feel comfortable in joining discussions. Finally, feedback from the course instructor and language reviewers played a significant role in evaluating and improving learner performance.

4.3.2. *Social presence*

As education is built upon a sense of community, it is of particular importance to establish a strong social presence in educational settings. The subdimensions of social presence are affective expression, open communication, and group cohesion. The primary questions are thus how instructors and learners present themselves as humans, as real people, how they open themselves up to learning together, or how they connect with each other in online settings. In online courses of the OCPTI, affective communication generally starts with an introduction video on VoiceThread from the instructor, followed by course participants' video introductions posted on a dedicated VoiceThread space to start a dialogue among learners. Another practice for facilitating connection is the inclusion of personal information about instructors in the syllabus.

Table 5: Information about the instructor on the LMS

A little more about me as a human being

I fell in love with languages and cultures in middle school in my home town in Northeastern France, and more specifically at age 13 during my first exchange program in Germany, (...). (...) I now have over 30 years of cumulative experience as a translation and interpreting practitioner and instructor in the Americas, Europe, and East Africa. My experience living in an African country with four working languages and highly different social and economic statuses, and establishing a multicultural family are central to who I am and how I approach communicating with different audiences, something I greatly enjoy sharing with my students and clients.

Some self-disclosure is likely to foster a sense of belonging – an element that becomes more important in an online learning environment. Sharing a personal story may encourage learners “to model that self-examination and go deeper in their learning” as a result of which “learning becomes relevant, has value beyond the classroom, and new meaning is constructed in the process” (Brantmeier 2013: 97). Thus, a personal story that follows background

information on education and professional experience may humanize the instructor and encourage learners to ponder what they can bring to and take away from the course (see Table 5).

The backbone of social presence is communication. This mostly starts with instructors' announcements about preferred communication methods/channels, availability, and response time. This is particularly important in online teaching settings where in-person communication with the instructor is limited.

LMS announcements (for example about office hours, weekly wrap-up, general feedback on assignments) from the instructors constitute unidirectional types of communication. Instructors or learners (individually or sometimes as a group) may sometimes need one-on-one communication via email, LMS messaging or Zoom meetings. In addition to unidirectional and one-on-one communication, instructors and learners get engaged in collective communication via written or video discussion forums.

The use of inclusive and welcoming language in the syllabus is a way of ensuring that learners feel comfortable participating in online discussions and interacting with the instructor and peers. It is important that learners feel comfortable contributing to discussion forums so that they can develop critical thinking building upon others' ideas, get engaged in a stimulating dialogue that keeps their attention and furthers their learning, and get to know each other as real people. Thus, it is of particular importance to mention explicitly that open communication is encouraged and that each and every idea is valuable.

While in online education environments, syllabi, assignment descriptions and rubrics are formal written (or sometimes video) tools for describing what is expected from students for assessment purposes in a course, they may include informal notes that imitate the instructor's more casual face-to-face voice to connect unostentatiously with learners and make expectations more explicit. An excerpt from the final project description below includes advice and tips about how learners can communicate, distribute roles, and solve problems in the group (see Table 6).

Table 6: Informal notes in the assignment description

PROCESS

1. Start VERY EARLY (wait, did I mention that before?).
 2. Communicate, communicate, communicate! You can use Google Docs, email, chat, WhatsApp or text messages to discuss. Exchanging phone numbers might be a good idea. Sometimes phone conversations or audio messages are a lot more efficient or adequate than emails sent back and forth. Make it SIMPLE FOR ALL. Tech nerds should refrain from suggesting new tools that require a learning curve. Simplicity and frequent communication are key.
 3. Set a realistic, concrete schedule with your partners at the beginning of the project so that you can stay on top of it and deliver on time with the least amount of stress. I expect you to work independently and solve issues within your team. However, please email me if you have concerns before they become problems!
 4. Be realistic about your own strengths. If you think you're good at something specific, then offer to do that in your team. If you think you're good at managing the whole process, offer some of that help as well. If you think you are research-oriented, then you might want to be the person researching the case study/dilemma, etc.
-

Group cohesion, the third subdimension of social presence, is generally embedded in collaborative learning activities. As a part of the assessment, learners are encouraged to comment on their peers' posts on discussion boards, which is an effective way to promote interactions among learners. Furthermore, peer feedback on assignments is encouraged. Final projects are group projects in which learners are required to pick roles and complete an authentic project as a team. Reflections on teamwork, as an integral part of the final project, allow students to evaluate their collaborative learning experience.

All these considered, the indicators of social presence in the course include the use of introduction videos and/or a synchronous first session, the inclusion of personal information in the syllabus about the instructor(s), self-disclosure when required, a clear indication of communication channels, the use of an inclusive and welcoming language, and promoting collaborative learning.

4.3.3. Cognitive presence

Boston et al. (2009: 5) provide a brief and clear definition of cognitive presence and its subdimensions:

Cognitive presence is the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through reflection and discourse and is defined as a four stage process of practical inquiry. First is a triggering event, where an issue or problem is identified for further inquiry. Next is exploration, where students explore the issue both individually and as a community, through reflection and discourse. The third stage is integration, where learners construct meaning from ideas developed during exploration. Finally, the process culminates in resolution, where learners apply the new knowledge.

As the majority of learners in the OCPTI are career-focused, it is relevant to design authentic tasks, i.e., assignments that “assess the student’s ability to efficiently and effectively use a repertoire of knowledge and skill to negotiate a complex task”, and “allow appropriate opportunities to rehearse, practice, consult resources”, and “get feedback on and refine performances and products” (Wiggins 1998: 24). For the final project of the course, students must collaborate to identify and resolve an ethical dilemma in translation or interpreting practice. The instructor explains in a detailed way the issue (in this case, an ethical dilemma) that learners need to identify and solve in this assignment. The issue to be solved must be a complex one that professionals will likely encounter in their work lives (see Table 7).

Table 7: Assignment description: Triggering event

STEP 1: Decide on roles in your team

- Start early! Start early! Start early! Start early! (This is not a formatting issue.)
- For instance, one role could be researching the case study/dilemma. Another role could be identifying the various codes of ethics to refer to (think outside the box, look at different codes from around the world, in different languages). A third role could be creating the script for recording the podcast, etc.
- Team communication and negotiation skills are a must during this process.

STEP 2: Identify the dilemma/case study you will discuss

Your case studies need to illustrate:

- Hard-to-solve dilemmas
 - Complex issues
-

Below is an example of an easy-to-solve case from Week 5 PowerPoint list of dilemmas, which would NOT be appropriate for your final project:

“A child is scheduled for surgery, and you are interpreting for them (as in him/her/they). You have interpreted for that child and their parent before and you know that the child has a heart condition. The parents, however, forgot to disclose it to the healthcare staff.”

Your case studies need to provide ground for:

- Elaborate discussions
- Subtle pros and cons

Your case studies need to be supported by:

- Important concepts from our course readings

What your case study cannot be:

- A case study already analyzed in one of the course readings
 - A case study already analyzed in one of Week 5 reaction papers
-

Learners are required to explore the issue as a group, using helpful resources – in this case, a selection of international codes of ethics (see Table 8). They need to work individually and as a group to brainstorm and find relevant information to deal with the issue.

Table 8: Assignment description: Exploration

STEP 3: Identify the codes of ethics you will refer to

- Make a list of the codes of ethics you have selected.
 - Identify the principles you will refer to.
 - Contrast potentially differing principles across these codes
-

The third stage, integration, is a process where learners are required to combine information they acquire as a further step to resolve the issue. They apply the code of ethics and standards to the ethical dilemma they identified to construct solutions. To complete this stage of the assignment, learners need to discuss the ethical dilemma with group members, using fundamental course content and new information they get for the purpose of this assignment.

In this specific example of assessment, in the final stage (namely resolution), learners are required to create a 10-minute podcast episode (a scripted audio discussion between team members) in which they “do a critical analysis of a case study presenting an ethical dilemma”, showcasing their synthesis skills. A time-constrained podcast episode is an opportunity to show how learners can synthesize and transfer knowledge acquired in the course to real-life issues.

This is an example of an authentic task, fulfilling the key criteria defined by Wiggins (1998: 22–24) for authentic assessment: to be realistic (finding a hard-to-solve dilemma that professionals are likely to encounter in real life), to apply judgment and innovation, asking students to “pick” the subject (identifying a real-life case), to replicate or simulate the contexts in which adults are “tested” in the workplace (using a variety of sources to deal with a highly complex real-life issue). In turn, the instructor assesses the students’ abilities to tap into a repertoire of knowledge and skills to negotiate a complex task (identifying principles that apply to the case and working as a group to delineate the ethical issue), allowing them to get feedback on and refine performances and products (creating a podcast episode as an end product of group work, research, and problem-solving).

Reflective practice is another essential component of online learning to foster cognitive presence. Learners are also encouraged to reflect on the process of translating with specific reference to problems and challenges so that they develop a deeper understanding of translating: “Encouraging students to reflect on their process of tackling translation and interpreting challenges, applying research strategies, identifying and using terminology tools, etc. lends itself very well to multilingual online course [...]” (Mazzei & Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo 2022: 34). By doing so, learners have solid evidence of what they have learned from the experience.

The course instructor also provides a rubric for written translation reflection or self-assessment. This rubric is a guideline for learners to reflect on the translation process (e.g. Which strategy did you use to solve a translation unit/challenge?), the product (e.g. Did you proofread your target text after you finished?), and performance (Were you satisfied with the result?) (see Table 9).

Table 9: Rubric for written translation reflection/self-assessment

Translation process:

- How did you find the translation for the most difficult word/term/phrase?
- How do you know your translation of the most difficult word/term/phrase is correct?
- Did you think about the audience as you were translating?

Translation tools and resources:

- Which tools did you use to help you in your translations (dictionaries, glossaries, online searches)? Please be specific and name your sources.
- Did you ask someone/expert for help? Please be specific.
- Did you post a question to a translators’ forum or group on FB or listservs?

Translation unit/challenge:

- Which word or term was the most difficult word/term/phrase (took you the longest) to translate? Why? Is it technical? Be specific and please provide a back translation into English if focusing on a LOTE term.
- Is the word/term/phrase culturally specific?

Translation strategies:

- Which strategy did you use to solve a translation unit/challenge? Reformulation? Explication? Reduction? Footnote? Cultural Substitution? Etc.

Translation quality:

- Did you proofread your target text after you finished?
- Did you use Spell Check in Office Word or another spelling tool?

Time spent on translation:

- How long did it take you to translate this text?
 - Do you feel your linguistic skills in the source and target languages played a role in how long it took?
-

Translation discovery:

- What new thing did you learn while you were working on this translation?
- How did you feel when you were done?
- Were you satisfied with the result?

Improvement plans:

- Do you need to take more high-level classes in LOTE or English to improve your linguistic performance?
 - Do you need to take high-level writing courses?
 - Should you improve your general knowledge?
-

Generally designed for instructor assessment of student assignments, rubrics may serve as a checklist for learners to evaluate their assignment and, hence, performance. Thus, well-designed rubrics now hold a legitimate place in online teaching for instructor assessment and self-assessment. Rubrics are made available to course participants right after they receive the final project description. Just like reflective practice, rubrics may be useful tools for fostering cognitive presence as they “encourage students to think critically about their own learning and motivate them to continue practicing and learning” (Mazzei & Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo 2022: 89).

To sum it up, indicators of cognitive presence include designing assignments that require exploration, research and problem-solving skills, authentic tasks, reflective practice, and questions guiding learners for self-assessment, and rubrics for self-assessment.

5. Conclusion: recommendations for assessment in teaching translation and interpreting online

Educators will increasingly need new research and tools to deliver the best experience possible to learners as online education continues to expand. This article hopes to fill a gap in online translation and interpreting teaching by presenting practicable assessment strategies based on the analysis of course materials in a specific online class. Even though the recommendations emerge from a specific course with distinct characteristics, including the fact that it is taught to multilingual students, instructors might benefit from incorporating some of the general frameworks below into their assessment practices. A later survey conducted in the same program (Yılmaz-Gümüş & Mazzei 2024) provided empirical support for many of these recommendations from the learners’ perspective:

- Design of assessment activities should be aligned with learning objectives, as defined by Bloom’s taxonomy;
- Different learner needs should be addressed through constant communication, collaboration, and flexibility;
- A wide array of assessment activities (especially formative assessments scaffolded from low- to high-stake) should be designed, using various media that provide learners with the opportunity to demonstrate learning (e.g. multiple-choice questions, essays, videos, or podcast episodes);

- A detailed syllabus with clear information about assessment (e.g. assignments, submission dates, grading policy, and breakdown) should be provided at the very beginning of the course, discussing information in the syllabus with learners to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings;
- Courses should include detailed assignment descriptions, presenting information about what learners are required to do, resources they can use, formatting and style requirements, assessment criteria (rubric), academic honesty, and how to submit the assignment;
- Rubrics and exemplars of good work (e.g. a sample reflection on translation; examples of excellent, good, fair, and incomplete comments in a discussion thread) should be provided as self-assessment tools;
- Reflective practice should be used especially in translation assignments to encourage learners to justify translation decisions with specific reference to problems and challenges so that they develop a deeper understanding of translating;
- Summative assessments should include authentic tasks simulating real-life work conditions of translators and interpreters (e.g. carrying out a translation and interpreting project as a team, using a CAT/CAI tool);
- Activities that promote collaborative learning should be designed (e.g. translation and interpreting projects where each member assumes a different role);
- Software that allows flexibility for learners (e.g. written, video and audio options in VoiceThread) should be used and learners should be informed about available technical support;
- Timely and constructive feedback should be given, and learners should be invited to give peer feedback;
- In some cases, personal anecdotes can be included in feedback to encourage interaction, such as examples from the instructor's experience in improving specific translation and interpreting skills;
- Instructor presence in the virtual class should be fostered to promote learners' online engagement in assessment activities (e.g. by starting dialogues and commenting on learners' input in discussion boards);
- Learning and assessment experience should be humanized by adding a personal touch to course materials and designing activities that allow learners to feel that they interact with their instructor and peers;
- Inclusive and welcoming language should be used in the syllabus and other communications with learners so that they feel comfortable participating in online discussions, which is a part of assessment, and working with peers in group projects.

Translation scholars will continue to research teaching translation and interpreting online and look for best practices of teaching and assessment practices for different educational and cultural settings. Empirical and evidence-based studies will improve the quality of online translator and interpreter training and the status of the translation and interpreting profession at the national and global levels. Considering the increasing demand for online translation and interpreting programs for bilingual adult learners and the need for further research on teaching translation and interpreting online, the authors of this paper believe that the proposed list of practices presented herein can serve as a point of departure for evaluating existing curricula and launching new programs in translation and interpreting.

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