Theatrical training in interpreter education: a study of trainees' perception

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The present paper reports on the educational experience of two groups of trainee interpreters who took part in a public speaking workshop. The participants (n = 29) were asked to engage in exercises inspired by theatrical training and purposefully adjusted to interpreting education, with a special focus on the following aspects: physical and mental relaxation; paralanguage (oral expression); kinesics (corporeal expression); communicating in front of an audience. The workshop was structured into four sessions, including both theory and practice. It was delivered by a facilitator with experience in theatrical training and interpreter education under the supervision of an interpreter trainer who participated as observer. The study is based on retrospective feedback obtained from the participants both during the workshop (field notes and comments) and at the end of the workshop (a questionnaire was administered to assess the whole experience), as well as the trainer's observation. The analysis sheds light on the general profile of this population of interpreting students in terms of public speaking experience (quite scarce, mostly limited to extracurricular activities during school years); stress-related effects; most beneficial activities during the workshop. These elements can be useful to ascertain to what extent the theatrical activities proposed in the workshop met the participants' needs and to adjust them at best so that they can be successfully incorporated in the curriculum of would-be interpreters.

Keywords: nonverbal communication; theatrical training; public speaking; stress management; interpreter education

1. Introduction

Human communication consists of both verbal and nonverbal signs whose meaning largely depends on the context in which these signs are expressed. In fact, the same word may be used to express diverging messages, for example by altering the volume or the tone of one's voice, or by accompanying it with a gesture or a particular facial expression. As Poyatos (1997, 249) put it, communicative situations are made of "what we say, how we say it and how we move what we say" in a certain context. His theoretical model includes a verbal level (i.e. language itself) and a nonverbal level, which is made up of paralanguage (i.e. voice features) and kinesics (i.e. movements and

body language). Poyatos (2002a, 2002b) systematises the wide range of nonverbal items that can be grouped under the main headings of paralanguage and kinesics. Although such a detailed and "most sophisticated" (Pöchhacker 2004, 93) model might be difficult to apply in practical terms, it remains an enlightening reference and an efficient model for awareness raising, especially in interpreter training.

Nonverbal communication (NVC) plays a fundamental role in the interpreter's performance, both in decoding the source message and in delivering the target message (Miletich 2015; Setton and Dawrant 2016, 354). On the one hand, since the nonverbal signs produced by the source speaker enormously contribute to meaning-making, they must be correctly decoded by the interpreter (particular attention should be paid to understand whether the nonverbal signs are in line with or contradict the verbal meaning of the source message, as in the case of irony); on the other hand, mastering nonverbal resources is of paramount importance for the interpreter to best manage the situation s/he is mediating and the potential effects of stress and anxiety on the paraverbal and kinesic features of communication, such as intonation, volume, pauses, body language, and eye contact (Poyatos 2002a, 2002b).

Such a skill set is strictly linked to the parameters generally considered in interpreting quality, especially when it comes to users' perception. Collados Aís (1998) clearly demonstrated how different users' perception of an interpretation service can be depending on *how* the target message is delivered. Even the most accurate interpreter would be not trusted if s/he did not provide a smooth rendition in terms of NVC (e.g. without hesitations and filled pauses, trembling voice or low volume). This kind of requirement seems to be even more essential in media interpreting, in that "media interpreters are judged not for interpreting a speech correctly but convincingly well" (Straniero Sergio 2003, 172).

As suggested by Setton and Dawrant (2016, 179), public speaking skills development in consecutive interpreting training can be fostered by asking students to deliver the same target text a second time, without notes, with a special focus on fluency. In fact, fluency can be enhanced provided that students are made fully aware of the nonverbal systems they can resort to, and how they can exploit them effectively. In healthcare interpreting education, Miletich (2015) promotes the use of specific exercises such as role-plays and emotional charades to enhance students' knowledge and experience of NVC, focusing on body postures, facial expressions, gestures, and movements.

Regrettably, interpreting education programmes are generally short of time to enable students with little experience in public speaking to develop and improve NVC-related competences. Just like interpreting techniques, NVC skills need extensive and regular practice outside the classroom setting, but there can be different ways to incorporate them in the interpreting curriculum. One of the ways to provide for these competences can be found in theatrical training applied to interpreting training.

The present paper reports on an educational experience of two groups of trainees who took part in a public speaking workshop inspired by theatrical training. Their retrospective feedback was collected through a questionnaire at the end of the workshop and was analysed along with the field notes and observations made by the workshop facilitator and the organiser. The aim of this analysis is to understand to what extent the theatrical activities proposed in the workshop met the participants' needs and how they may be adjusted at best so that they can be successfully incorporated in the curriculum of would-be interpreters.

The next section presents an overview of the relevant literature about theatrical training applied to interpreting education. Then, section 3 describes the methodology, with a focus on the workshop (organization and content) and the questionnaire used to obtain students' feedback. The results are discussed in section 4 with details of the workshop participants' profile (in terms of NVC experience and interpreting performance-related stress) and evaluation of the workshop activities. Finally, the conclusions are provided in section 5.

2. Literature review

In interpreter training programmes, theatrical and drama activities have started being utilised to improve trainees' performance with positive effects on their NVC (Bendazzoli 2009; Bottan 2000; Cho and Roger 2010; Fernández García et al. 2009; Kadrić 2014, 2017; Miletich 2015) and to reduce the levels of anxiety perceived by students, especially in the early development stages of their interpreting skills (Arnaiz-Castro and Pérez-Luzardo 2016). In the literature, different scholars report on a variety of methods in which NVC-related activities are (or could be) made part of interpreting curricula, which tend to focus largely on interpreting practice due to time limitations. Generally, the main options include the following (see Bottan 2000 with reference to a survey of CIUTI schools):

- extracurricular activities in the form of stand-alone workshops involving

external facilitators (they can be scheduled at the beginning of training or later);

- extracurricular activities in the form of university theatre groups, managed by trainees themselves and/or trainers;
- curricular activities (a dedicated module for one or two terms).

Applying performance techniques to interpreter training and bringing them into the interpreter student curriculum are reported to have beneficial effects on interpreter trainees' performance. However intuitive this might seem, it is worth investigating in more detail what can be most effective for interpreting students. The limited range of studies conducted so far, including BA and MA students' final dissertations and research papers, have highlighted interesting issues with respect to timing, types of activity, and theatrical tradition used as inspiration. The main points raised in these works are reviewed below so as to outline a general framework and pinpoint the most interesting observations made so far.

Different approaches have been adopted to investigate to what extent interpreting students may benefit from theatrical training. For example, Bottan (2000) and Cho and Roger (2010) carried out a comparative analysis of trainee interpreters' public speaking performance, looking at students who had participated in a public speaking and drama workshop (i.e. an intervention group) and others who had not (i.e. a control group). In both studies, the facilitators were external experts with no previous exposure to interpreting education settings. They nonetheless realised it was necessary to make adjustments and adapt the proposed activities to better respond to interpreter trainees' needs (though no specific details of the kinds of adjustments are provided).

In the first study, Bottan (2000) investigated the performance skills in an intervention group before and after a 30 hour workshop, as well as in a control group after an equivalent period of interpreting practice alone. The students were asked to fulfil a consecutive interpretation task from their B language into Italian (their A language) and a list of negative features (grouped under three headings: voice, facial expression, posture), many of them common to the two groups, was reported in a self-assessment questionnaire. Between the first and the second testing session, both groups perceived a reduction of negative features, though this perceived reduction was considerably more pronounced in the intervention group (more than 71% vs. nearly 30% in the control group). Furthermore, in the second testing session no new negative features were recorded in the intervention group, whereas this was not the case in the

control group. The improvement in the performance of the intervention group was also confirmed by a group of external raters (interpreting trainers).

A similar approach was adopted by Cho and Roger (2010), though three assessment tasks instead of consecutive or simultaneous interpreting tasks were used at the beginning, mid-point and at the end of a weekly theatrical workshop lasting seven weeks. These tasks were based on specific drills used in the workshop, therefore this is likely to have favoured the students in the intervention group, as they obtained higher scores by the two external raters involved. In fact, the gap between the <u>intervention</u> and the control group scores became progressively narrower, which may be indicative of the fact that "even limited amounts of [theatrical] training can make a difference" (Cho and Roger 2010, 167) with major beneficial effects at the beginning of a training program, along with increased awareness of NVC (this was particularly evident with the students in the control group). In addition to the external raters' evaluation, this study also recorded students' feedback, who reported that "the 'internal' benefits continued to accrue as the training proceeded" (Cho and Roger 2010, 169) and that a longer training would have been far more beneficial. This work is particularly interesting in that it clearly highlights the value of transferable skills, such as "memory, concentration, problem solving, confidence and message delivery" (155) and shows how receptive interpreting trainees can be when they work on these skills through drama techniques. In fact, theatrical training appears to help students break the barrier of stage fright[1] and learn how to face anxiety.

The extended use of theatrical training (as an extracurricular activity) within a translation and interpreting (T&I) program at the University of Bologna in Italy was pioneered by Fernández García (2000) with the organization of university theatre groups in foreign languages. For more than two decades, T&I students in that educational setting have had the opportunity to prepare a theatrical performance during the course of the academic year and attend rehearsals with the supervision of volunteer educators and other experts, e.g. in voice coaching, movement, diction, improvisation and so on (see Fernández García et al. 2009). A multilingual university theatre festival is organized at the end of the academic year and every group puts on their show (some of these also include surtitles in the local language). Besides the positive effects mentioned thus far, Fernández García et al. (2012) also reported the beneficial impact

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[1] In this respect, Nolan (2005, 8) specifically refers to "rehearsal" as a typical activity among actors also relevant to interpreting trainees.

such a theatrical experience had on some students' final theses and early achievements after completing their university career.

A more targeted use of theatre studies in the interpreting classroom is illustrated by Kadrić (2014, 2017) with reference to the so-called *Theatre of the Oppressed* by Augusto Boal. This form of theatre encompasses a range of activities primarily based on active participation and interaction between actors and the audience in "presenting the problems on stage and those affected by them finding solutions to them" (Kadrić 2014, 453). Kadrić resorts in particular to the so-called forum theatre, where actors-audience interaction is funnelled to exploring alternative courses of action. Two examples are provided, where students are involved in simulated situations arising in business interpreting and court interpreting settings. The whole classroom participates as a kind of forum and the situation is repeated multiple times so that alternative solutions can be found through interaction (especially resulting from the oppressed part). Repetition also allows students to develop their characters further (be they the oppressors or the oppressed) and to experience a growing emotional involvement. The final result of this creative process is that students become more aware of their active (and not invisible) role as interpreters (see also Miletich 2015) and of the possibility of generating multiple solutions to the same situation. This is very much in line with lateral thinking and the ability to respond quickly with problem-solving skills (Bendazzoli 2009).

In addition to the scholarly works presented above, a growing number of studies have also been conducted by BA and MA students in T&I programs. Although these are limited to unpublished dissertations and will not be looked at in detail in this paper, it is nonetheless worth referring to some of them and pinpointing the areas of interest they have touched upon. In her Master's thesis, Aden (2016) analyses the effects of improvisation workshops on the stress linked to specific sub-competences that are present in both interpreting and acting on stage. The aim of the work was to design, conduct and empirically evaluate an improvisation theatrical workshop for interpreting students in order to determine whether it makes sense to use improvisation workshops in interpreting didactics (also see the tentative proposal by Cecco and Masiero 2019). The State and Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) was administered to the participants twice, i.e. before the first workshop unit started and after the last workshop unit was completed. The participants' state of anxiety was measured retrospectively as they were asked to indicate how they felt right before an interpreting task. The reduction in state anxiety suggests that interpreting students were less anxious to attend interpreting

classes after the workshop than before the workshop. The author suggests that participating in an improvisation workshop can help interpreting students be less fearful of interpreting and make interpreting less stressful (Aden 2016, 49-50). Maseda (2016) explores the connections between Chekhov's acting method (focusing on the correlation between emotions and the body, feelings and mental images) and conference interpreter education. She comes up with a pedagogical proposal in the form of an extracurricular workshop, though the link between the exercises and the pedagogical aims targeting interpreting students is not always made explicit. Finally, Velázquez (2018), an interpreting student also involved in professional drama education, provides a general overview of fundamental concepts in theatre and contrasts them to basic concepts in interpreting studies, with a view to highlighting the commonalities between these two areas. In particular, a common basis is found concerning the notions of active listening, visualization and concentration. Other concepts are also present in both theatre and interpreting, but are simply referred to with different terminology. The resulting picture is that there exist many points of contact between theatrical and interpreting training, including fundamental concepts underpinning some of the major pedagogical traditions.

In the present study, the perception of students is taken into account to ascertain what kind of activities in theatrical training can be most beneficial. It is important to specify that the proposed activities had already been adjusted to some extent to interpreter training and had been specifically selected to meet interpreter trainees' needs. Although no assessment of interpreting skills was carried out, the students' feedback can be a valuable source of information to understand how to best integrate theatrical training into the interpreting curriculum.

3. Method

The present study is based on retrospective feedback obtained from the students who took part in a public speaking workshop informed by theatrical and interpreter training. Their feedback was obtained both through field observation during and after the workshop, and trough a questionnaire-based survey at the end of the workshop itself. In the next subsections we provide information about how the workshop was organized, its main activities and how data were collected.

3.1 The workshop

3.1.1 General organization

The workshop was structured into four consecutive sessions in the same week, for a total duration of 10 hours (2.5 hours each day). It was held at the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain) and funded by the university with resources specifically allotted to extracurricular education and add-on courses for graduate and post-graduate students. Students could sign up on a voluntary basis and free of charge. The workshop-related information was posted on the faculty's webpage and was open in particular to graduate students at the beginning of their specialization in conference interpreting. It was also advertised in class by the professors teaching in the interpreting programme who warmly invited students to participate. The two workshops were held in two different years but they were delivered under the same conditions and with no particular changes.

The theoretical parts of the workshop were delivered in a standard classroom (with fixed rows of desks and chairs), whereas the practical sessions were held in an open-space hall normally used as a gym, which is part of the facilities of the university campus of humanities.

In total, 29 students (16 in the first year and 13 in the next year) signed up for the workshop, which was the recommended maximum number of participants (in addition to the presence of the facilitator and an observer). The facilitator was a professional conference interpreter with a background in interpreting education and research, along with a variety of theatrical experiences, ranging from amateur drama groups to university theatre, from public speaking and improvisation courses to ad hoc workshops held by experts (e.g. professional actors, voice coaches, directors) and organized by the Centre for Theatre Studies of the University of Bologna at Forlì. The observer was also a professional conference interpreter with long experience in interpreting education and research.

The title of the workshop was "Decir, Hacer, Comunicar" (i.e. to say, to do, to communicate) to mirror the basic structure of communication described by Poyatos (2002a, 2002b) and it consisted of verbal communication (linguistic level) and nonverbal communication (paralinguistic level and kinesic level).

Considering the practical and physical character of the workshop, the participants were advised to wear a comfortable outfit suitable for moving around and

lying on the ground. They were also asked to select a text (any genre and language) and to bring an ordinary object with them.

3.1.2 Workshop activities

The workshop sessions combined theory with practice in order to substantiate all the proposed exercises and make students more aware of the links between the workshop activities and their interpreting skills/training. As mentioned above, the sessions were based on the theoretical tripartite model of communication illustrated by Poyatos (2002a, 2002b), with a special focus on nonverbal communication, and were informed by theatrical training, thus including warmup exercises at the beginning of each session.

The workshop is the result of a targeted selection and, to some extent, an adaptation of various exercises the facilitator could learn from his theatrical experience in combination with his interpreting education (both received and delivered). Over the years, the workshop has been held in different universities around the world and has been adjusted on the basis of the time and the facilities made available. In fact, some of the practical activities did not undergo major changes with respect to what is normally done in drama workshops, e.g. warmup and relaxation strategies, breathing techniques or articulation exercises. However, the rationale behind each activity and the overall theoretical framework were constantly referred to interpreter training, as is the case with "the cabaret of stress" and the exercises to better manage one's posture and eye contact (see below for a detailed description). Table 1 shows the general outline that was designed to cover all the relevant areas in the four days of the workshop edition under consideration. It also highlights the theoretical and practical nature of the activities proposed in the two settings (i.e. a standard classroom and a gym).

[insert Table 1 here]
Table 1. Layout of workshop activities (theory; practice; **theory and practice**).

A general distinction between activities carried out in class and activities carried out in the gym can be made. Classroom presentations of theoretical content were delivered by the facilitator with the aid of power point slides and were mostly conducted in a monologic, frontal fashion. After the initial workshop introduction, with the description of the agenda for each session, the students were invited to present themselves in front of the class stating their name, place of origin, university program and motivation for

participating in the workshop. This (almost) unexpected public speaking activity took a few students aback as they did not imagine they would be asked to stand in front of the class since the very beginning. This was done on purpose, to help them reflect on the effects of stress linked to speaking in front of an audience. The facilitator took pictures and recorded videos of each student while presenting themselves and a selection of these pictures and videos were analysed on the third day of the workshop.

In the theoretical presentations, the facilitator illustrated each component of NVC in detail, provided examples of paralinguistic and kinesic features in interpreter-mediated settings, and explained the rationale behind the exercises that would be proposed in the practical sessions in the gym. While in class, the students were also invited to read some texts or to produce some specific sequences of phonemes when focusing on paralinguistic features. For instance, they were asked to read the following sentence exploiting as many paralinguistic resources as possible to obtain different meanings: "I don't understand why this is here and not there". On the basis of this verbal material, it is possible, for instance, to add pauses to different locations and modulate the volume so as to obtain completely opposite meanings compared to standard enunciation (as in "I don't understand… why?... this is here and NOT there!). The specific sequences of phonemes, on the other hand, were spoken aloud by adding vowel sounds (e.g. with plosives, pa-pe-pi-po-pu) and articulating the mouth movements with maximum intensity. This exercise was performed after a warmup session of face muscles, which involved deep mouth movements and forced yawning.

3.1.2.1 Warmup. After each theoretical presentation and in-class activity, more practical exercises were conducted in a more suitable space, i.e. the gym floor. The participants were asked to take their shoes off and to walk around using the entire space and changing direction several times. The first time they were not given further instructions, but after a short break they were told to keep their back straight, open their shoulders, look at the point they were heading to and walk with self-confidence. This change of style can be useful to make students realize that the way they move and keep their body under control can have a general positive impact on how confident they feel while they move around. For the next exercise the students were asked to work in pairs: student A standing with their eyes closed and student B guiding student A holding them by the shoulders or hips. Again, they had to move around with confidence and changing direction as much as possible. In this case, the student keeping their eyes shut need to

fight against resistance naturally emerging from self-protection and greater sensitivity of the sense of touch. Little by little, students A manage to gain confidence, trust students B and focus on the resources they put in place to detect, control and eliminate the sense of stress caused by the blind walk. Other warmup exercises involve shaking the body, gently hitting the arms and the legs with one's own fist, performing head movements and shoulder rotations. These more physical exercises are also useful as relaxation techniques, along with massaging one's feet and hands.

3.1.2.2 Relaxation techniques. Moving to mind relaxation, the participants were asked to lay on the floor and breath slowly, counting one to five while breathing in, pausing, and breathing out. Then, they were invited to sense with greater awareness the contact between their body and the floor, focusing on those body parts that felt supported on the ground. Finally, they were guided through the whole body and asked to visualize specific body parts from the top of their head down to their toes. Different texts can be used to this end. The ones selected for the workshop refer to a) the image of a beach and a blue air bubble entering the nose and colouring the whole body as it travels through it, b) a seaweed receiving the tide water and slowly getting back to float in the water.

In order to better manage the stress students may feel during interpreting assignments, they can recall the imaginary scenarios experienced in these exercises along with the resulting sense of delight.

3.1.2.3 The cabaret of stress. This activity was proposed on the third day. The participants had to choose three verbs of movement or concrete actions relating to stress-induced effects and represent them physically with body movements. Then, they were divided into groups and asked to prepare a showcase of stress-induced effects in the style of a cabaret show, so as to represent stress and make fun of it. All the groups put on very creative performances and were amused while making fun of themselves as they know how anxious they can feel during an interpreting assignment.

3.1.2.4 Breathing techniques. Breathing involves spontaneous muscle movements to make room for the incoming airflow and push the air out through the lungs. Oftentimes people shift from abdominal breathing to clavicular breathing, which is more taxing for the vocal cords and sound production in general. The workshop participants had the chance to try and rediscover abdominal breathing, first laying on the ground and

perceiving the movements of the abdomen by placing their hands on their belly. Then, they were invited to stand and cough and laugh, while keeping their hands on their belly, so as to perceive the abdominal area and the relevant movements more clearly. The next step was to breath in, trying to store the air making room with the correct movement, and release the air producing a strong vowel sound (they were asked to visualize a kind of bullet that they had to fire to the person standing opposite to them). Again, keeping their hands on their abdomen was a requirement to increase their awareness of the muscles involved. Finally, vowel sounds were produced after breathing in and trying to maintain the sound production as long as possible. This exercise was first carried out collectively and then individually.

3.1.2.5 Movement exercises, balance, posture. A big issue for the students when it comes to speaking in front of an audience (e.g. when delivering a consecutive interpretation) concerns their body posture. Almost all the participants kept an unbalanced position when presenting themselves on the first day. They tended to place all the weight of their body on one leg, or to cross their legs even while standing. In addition, uncontrolled hand movements were a recurrent feature of their presentations.

During the workshop, the participants went through a warmup session stimulating the sole of their feet with a massage. This helped activate blood circulation and increase the general perception levels of that part of their body. They were then invited to make some movements with their feet while standing, raising their heels without moving the rest of their body. Finally, they were asked to walk around and a signal was given to make them stop. The first time the signal was given, most participants could not stand still, nearly lost their balance or felt they had to continue to take some more steps before reaching a full stop. They were introduced to the notion of grounding and practised how to position their feet well on ground with a secure and self-confident body posture. One way to achieve this was to ask the students to imagine they were a tree with strong roots growing out of their feet. While keeping their eyes closed, they were guided through a visual journey in which the roots kept growing out of their feet as they breathed out. Similarly, the branches of the tree would grow out of their hands. The tree would keep growing and become strong enough to stand a storm (a sound effect of a big storm approaching was played in the background). By practising this kind of exercise the students can master the process and, most importantly, recall it in a public speaking or interpreting situation. The power of imagination and

visualization can be exploited to immediately have both feet well grounded when taking position in front of an audience, making sure that the body position is well balanced between the two feet and legs.

Other body movement-related exercises were carried out on the basis of music tracks, involving a wide range of rhythms, with one student selected as the leader and all the others having to follow his or her choice of movements and patterns. This exercise is also useful to break stress barriers and release a lot of energy as a group.

Posture was also addressed in a seating position, as in the case of simultaneous interpreting or consecutive/dialogue interpreting that involves sitting at a table. The students were shown pictures of appropriate and inappropriate positions and were asked to sit down on a chair in front of the class trying to perform grounding correctly as well as seeking full contact with the seat and the back of the chair.

3.1.2.6 Eye contact. Eye contact is particularly significant in consecutive interpreting, especially when participants engage in dialogic interaction and gaze may account for "dynamics of engagement and disengagement" (Davitti 2003, 170). Many interpreter trainees find it hard to keep a good level of eye contact. In fact, they do what is known as 'scanning', i.e. they look at the audience in a random fashion, running the risk of generating anxiety for themselves. This part was addressed in the standard classroom, where two students were invited to read a text they had selected. The rest of the class was given instructions to ignore the students reading the text; the first student did not realize that the class was totally distracted. Then the same experiment was repeated with another student, while the first student was observing the whole scene. At this stage, it was clear that there was an issue with the level of eye contact, and that even when there was some, it was limited to a minor portion of the audience. The students were invited to follow a specific sequence when looking at the audience: from left to centre to right, and then back to centre and left and so on. They were also invited to look at the audience while delivering complete segments of text, i.e. following the syntactical structure of the text and taking advantage of advanced reading.

3.2 Data collection

At the end of the workshop, the students were asked to fill in an evaluation form, which is a mandatory assessment of extracurricular activities organised by the university. This

is common practice for the local university administration in order to monitor how well their resources are invested. The questions included in the form concern the following areas of interest: the degree of interest and relevance of the extra training offered in the workshop (questions 1 and 2); the participants' general satisfaction level (question 3); the methodology used to deliver the workshop (question 4); the duration of the workshop (question 5); whether further similar workshops are recommended or not (question 6). The two final questions (7 and 8) in this standard form are directed to the kind of interest there may be in other subjects to be addressed in future events. All this information is eventually used by the governing bodies of the university to recommend or reject future proposals for extracurricular activities and add-on courses.

Given that the participants were required to fill in this standard assessment form, the facilitator and the observer decided to add some questions to collect more specific information about the participants themselves (background information), their previous experience in theatrical training (question 9) and in public speaking (question 10) before starting their interpreter training. Question 11 invited the respondents to reflect upon the possible physical and cognitive manifestations of how they feel when speaking in front of an audience. Question 12 investigated the respondents' personal perception of the importance of theatrical training for interpreters, and the last question (question 13) asked the participants to report on the most and the least interesting and effective activities carried out during the workshop. The data collected in the questionnaires are complemented with the field observations by the workshop facilitator and the observer (interpreter trainer), who was also directly involved in some of the activities in the practical sessions and could monitor some of the students during the following weeks.

4. Results and discussion

In the next subsections we present the results of the questionnaire-based survey, focusing on the workshop participants' profile, stress manifestations, and feedback on the workshop experience, along with the authors' field observations. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the workshop; the trainer and the observer exchanged their views and contrasted their notes after the end of each session and also a few weeks after the workshop itself. The data obtained from each of the two workshops were collated as the results are similar to a large extent.

4.1 Participants' profile and public speaking experience

All the 29 participants filled in the final assessment form along with the survey questionnaire designed by the two authors (i.e. the facilitator and the observer). More specifically, the respondents were first (n=1), second (n=1), third (n=14), fourth (n=10), and fifth-year (n=3) students.[2] Most of them were Spanish native speakers (n=26), and 23 of the 29 students were women. As regards age, about 80% of the students were under 24 years old. All the subjects were skilled at least at two foreign languages: 27 claimed to have English as an active language, while German, French or Italian were listed as passive languages.

The majority of the respondents (22) had no previous theatrical experience whatsoever. In fact, those who did have some experience in this respect made reference to isolated cases (e.g. theatrical representations during their childhood) or to musical interpretation, where they acquired some breathing and relaxation techniques. The most surprising result concerns the respondents' previous experience in public speaking. The reported experience is far from being what one would expect of interpreting students who aim to obtain a degree in translation and interpreting. Only four students had 'often' or 'many times' the chance to speak in public; most participants only had this chance 'sometimes' or 'seldom', and two of them reported they had never spoken in front of an audience before.

Different settings and sources of public speaking were mentioned in the descriptions provided by the few students with previous experience. These range from school activities (such as presentations in class, presentations in L2, debates in exam situations) to work tasks (in hotels and at the airport information service, including announcements using the microphone), hobbies (e.g. drama groups, music and singing performances) and a radio program.

To sum up, the students involved in the two workshops were at the early stages of their interpreting education, had little or very little experience in public speaking and, with few exceptions, had no experience in theatre performance activities. Obviously, the small group of trainees under consideration is only a sub-set of the interpreting student population and it is far from being representative. Notwithstanding this clear limitation, the students involved had decided voluntarily to participate in this particular kind of

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[2] For these students, the BA program lasts four years and includes interpreting classes in the third and fourth years. Then they may enrol in a master's program in interpreting and intercultural mediation (fifth year).

training experience as they felt the need to address the expressive difficulties and stress experienced after engaging in interpreting education. It could be speculated that other students did not feel the need to participate as they were already self-confident and uninhibited in their interpreting classes.

4.2 Participants' stress manifestations

Question 11 asked workshop participants to recall and describe how public speaking-related anxiety manifests itself both in physical terms and in cognitive terms. They were specifically invited to think about how they feel during their interpreting classes and how they felt when they had to introduce themselves in front of the class at the beginning of the workshop.

As regards the physical effects caused by stress and anxiety as a result of having to speak in public, the following items were mentioned:

- lack of movement control (constantly playing with objects, e.g. a pen, trembling hands, or stiffness);
- increased heart rate;
- headache;
- dizziness;
- stomach-ache;
- general uneasiness;
- sweating;
- crying;
- trembling voice;
- low voice volume and/or lack of pace control (increased stuttering, slips of the tongue);
- decreased eye contact.

The students were also asked to report on frequent cognitive effects owing to the stress linked to public speaking. These included:

- memory loss;
- going blank;
- lower concentration levels;
- desire to end quickly or desire to leave.

These two combined kinds of effects were reported to cause a loss of control over speech production and articulation, for instance when some words are hard to access in expressing a specific idea, or when making unusual grammar mistakes. The worst case scenario was mentioned in situations where the mind goes totally blank and the students cannot continue with their delivery of the target message. In all these situations, the students' attention is entirely focused on what they are saying and not on *how* they are going to say it.

4.3 Participants' feedback on the workshop experience

Question 12 in the post-workshop survey asked the participants to rate how important they think theatrical training is in interpreter training. No negative answers were provided in this respect: for 11 respondents theatrical training is 'quite important' while for the rest (18 respondents) it is 'very important'.

While this result is encouraging, some critical issues about the organization of the workshop were also voiced by the students in the last question (question 13). As commented by one student, "I found the relaxation techniques very useful. We had too little time to exercise the kinesic communication, but there was not enough time". Another workshop participant commented "I would love this workshop to be repeated more times during the course". Indeed, one third of the participants stated that the duration of the workshop was too short, and one third would have appreciated a longer duration. It is clear that it would be most beneficial to keep training public speaking skills specifically in the medium to long term, though some students were satisfied with the proposed length. As reported in section 2, NVC-related training options in existing interpreting curricula range from stand-alone workshops (short duration) to extracurricular activities such as university theatre (throughout the whole academic year) and curricular activities (dedicated modules in one or two terms). Each option comes with both advantages and drawbacks in terms of time management. Curricular activities may be seen as most beneficial as they are fully integrated in an educational programme for an extended period of time, though trainees may also complain that such an extensive time commitment limits their opportunities to practice interpreting skills. On the other hand, university theatre is a volunteer activity students may be engaged in on top of their curricular commitments (Fernández García et al. 2009). Finally, although specific workshops such as the one considered in the present paper might be too short

for some trainees, there is evidence that they can nonetheless trigger positive improvements in NVC skills (e.g. Bottan 2000; Cho and Roger 2010). Moreover, stand-alone workshops can be offered both at the beginning and at more advanced stages of interpreting education without an excessively negative impact on the overall time students have for interpreting practice.

Another interesting critical remark was made by one respondent who complained that s/he did not feel sufficiently motivated (or even forced) by the facilitator to participate in some of the activities. As could be observed in other editions of the same workshop, the students seem to prefer not to be invited to volunteer in public speaking drills, as this occasionally may even take some time and generate the feeling of wasting time. On the contrary, the participants would appreciate more the facilitator to select right away who is going to do what, as most trainee interpreters are not accustomed to express themselves in public and in front of their peers in a classroom setting.

In fact, peer motivation was mentioned as one of the factors encouraging workshop participants to come to terms with their public speaking anxiety: "I loved the practical part in the gym. We have an innate fear of ridicule. We had to learn to scream, jump, dance and run freely. If your peers succeed, why not me?". Interestingly, some respondents also mentioned that they appreciated the active participation of the interpreter trainer in the practical sessions, possibly as they felt less intimidated after sharing this educational experience. This kind of peer learning effect seems to be particularly valuable and mirrors similar collaborative processes generating from drama-based simulations and role plays, especially in dialogue interpreting training (Fernández García 2000; Kadrić 2014, 2017; Miletich 2015).

Considering the observations gathered about the workshop activities, the participants appreciated the combination of theory and practice in each session. Below we briefly review the students' comments on the best rated exercises.

The improvisation and creativity drills were very well received. Some students highlighted that the exercises promoting creativity are especially useful to achieve a progressive loss of embarrassment and anxiety. In particular, they refer to the so-called *cabaret of stress* where the students could make fun of their tics while improvising an interpreting task or an interpreting class situation. As two workshop participants put it:

> The cabaret of stress was most useful to me as it helped me change the way I see my fears, i.e. now I know that I should not overestimate them.

> Making fun of the kind of fear I feel when I am about to interpret in front of an audience was really effective to me, both in terms of shifting my focus on the pressure I feel and in terms of recognising the types of sensation I perceive when I am exposed to an audience.

Contrary to the facilitator's expectations (based on field observation), the relaxation techniques were also among the preferred activities, especially visualization and breathing techniques. Many students realised that the power of recalling certain images (e.g. the ones used in the relaxations techniques, see section 3.1.2) can be quite useful to reduce public speaking anxiety.

Frequent comments were also made by the students in relation to specific public speaking techniques, e.g. grounding for a balanced and stable posture, and how to manage eye contact. As regards posture, during the theoretical presentations in class, the students were shown different pictures of other trainees involved in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting tasks to highlight specific features of (un)balanced positions while standing or sitting in an interpreting situation. The workshop participants also had the chance to analyse the video of their self-presentations (recorded on day one), to increase their awareness of the kinesic implications. After engaging in the practical exercises, on day four the students were asked to read aloud in front of the class, so as to apply all the skills and knowledge acquired in the previous sessions. As one participant commented: "The final reading exercise in the 'communicate' session to practise eye contact and grounding was particularly useful to me, as I could notice a change between the first and the last day of the workshop". In line with this comment, a few more students stated that the workshop activities helped them gain more self-confidence.

Finally, among the general remarks of appreciation of the educational experience presented in this paper, we would like to highlight the following ones:

> In this workshop we had to make facial expressions, to speak aloud, to speak in front of all the others, to do relaxation exercises and many more things I would have been embarrassed to do in other contexts […]. I now feel more able to face my fears in a very positive way.

Working on the breathing and intonation techniques has been important since the body and the mind are interdependent when interpreting.

We find these comments particularly interesting, as the first one can be evidence of the beneficial effects of theatrical training even in a short educational experience. Similarly, the second student highlights the interrelation and interdependence between the mind and the body in interpreting, while linking breathing techniques to intonation, thus showing greater awareness of the relevance of non-verbal communication.

5. Concluding remarks

This study has focused on a fundamental set of skills for both trainee and professional interpreters, i.e. being able to speak in front of an audience fully aware of nonverbal communication signs. These play a two-fold role in interpreter-mediated communication: on the one hand, they strongly contribute to meaning-making of the source message; on the other hand, they can be exploited by the interpreter to both deliver the target message at best and manage interaction. An effective method to develop NVC skills and awareness in interpreter education is through theatrical training, which is applied to interpreter education in different ways. In this paper, we have analysed the retrospective feedback of a group of interpreting students who took part in a four-day workshop organised as an extracurricular activity. The workshop activities were inspired by theatrical training and were partially adjusted to make them more relevant to an interpreting training setting. The activities under examination concern physical and mental relaxation techniques (stress management), breathing and articulation (voice coaching), posture and eye contact (body language). Most participants had no or very limited experience in public speaking, which is quite surprising for future interpreters. Yet, by participating in the workshop they decided to come to terms with their stage fright and they confirmed that theatrical training can play a fundamental role in their education. Among the highest rated activities, they indicated relaxation techniques, which mirrors their need to manage the stress and anxiety they feel when interpreting in class, improvisation and creativity, along with specific public speaking techniques to control one's posture, balance, and eye contact. Probably, the playful nature of theatrical training helped them venture outside their comfort zone as never before, making fun of the effects of stress and becoming more aware of how

nonverbal signs can be produced effectively. Although practice and rehearsal in the medium to long term would be necessary to fully acquire and hone NVC skills, even a short workshop like the one presented in this paper can trigger beneficial effects and help trainees become professional communicators.

Although the present paper is the result of a joint effort, Claudio Bendazzoli can be identified as the author of sections 1, 2, 3.1.2; Jessica Pérez-Luzardo can be identified as the author of sections 3.1.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2. Section 4.3 and the concluding remarks were jointly drafted.

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	Classroom		Gym	
	Activities	**Goals**	**Activities**	**Goals**
Day 1	General overview of the workshop	Introducing main topics and relevant areas of interest	Warm-up activities	Increasing self-confidence and team building
	Students' self-presentations	Video recording public speaking experience for subsequent analysis	Relaxation exercises	stress and anxiety management techniques
	Presentation of the triple structure of communication according to Poyatos	Explaining the theoretical framework of reference		
Day 2	Presentation of paralinguistic features	NCV theory (Poyatos)	Warm-up activities and relaxation	
	Mapping sounds and the human body **Specific vowel and consonant sounds**	**Increasing students' awareness of paralinguistic features**	Breathing techniques Voice coaching	Exploring the potential of paralinguistic features
	Expressing the same words playing with paralinguistic features	Increasing expressiveness	Articulation exercises (individual phonemes and tongue twisters)	
Day 3	Presentation of kinetic features	NVC theory (Poyatos)	Warm-up activities and relaxation	
	Analysis of day 1 self-presentations **Analysis of kinetic features in interpreting**	**Increasing students' awareness of kinetic features** **Strengths and weaknesses analysis**	Posture, balance, eye-contact Improvisation exercises	Exploring the potential of kinetic features Stimulating creativity in NVC
			The cabaret of stress (simulation of interpreting practice session)	Making fun of one's own stress factors
Day 4	Round-up on all the workshop activities	Fixing main points		
	Relaxation and breathing techniques, voice coaching Reading aloud in front of an audience	Improving posture and eye contact		
	Presentation of university theatre activities in other universities Participants' feedback	Highlighting the link between theatrical and interpreter training		