

## TED TALKS FOR INTERPRETERS' TRAINING: STUDENTS' OPINIONS

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### Abstract

The paper explores the TED talks didactic potential for university-based interpreters' training.

The article strives to map the research within contemporary vision of TED Talks and Interpreting Industry needs. The research explores academia and industry attitudes to TED Talks status in education and tries to check the preliminary hypothesis that there might be positive and questionable aspects of integrating Ted Talks technology into interpreter's training. The analysis aimed to explore the relevance of TED Talks integration into interpreters' training.

The research combined theoretical and empirical studies, included students experimental training with the resource under study inclusion in educational aids and students' survey on the resource usefulness for their learning. The analysis revealed the connection among such variables as students' academic progress, their origin and metropolitan/ local background. The cluster and discriminant types of analysis were implemented to shape the picture on TED Talks positive and questionable didactic aspects regarding interpreter training. The SPSS was used for data processing.

The findings have made it possible to underline the importance of thinking over reasons, conditions and techniques before integrating TED Talks into interpreters' training thus paying just a kind of tribute to a fashionable technological resource. The experimental training with use of TED Talks confirmed its didactic potential. The survey results revealed concrete pluses in terms of the source contents.

The research showed that TED Talks as a training tool can be of use for Interpreting Industry though students did not mention creativity and innovation as positive aspects of the resource under study.

**Keywords:** TED Talks, interpreter's training, didactics, higher education.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

TED is widely known across the world as a non-profit organization. It started in 1984 (TED 1984) as a conference that focused on Technology, Entertainment and Design with the goal to disseminate ideas in the form of short, powerful talks. Today the relevant events integrate diverse topics ranging from particular to global issues in over 100 languages. Although currently enthusiasm and skepticism about TED talks' social

values balance each other (Bratton, 2013).

Among the TED Talks cult and imposing chorus of positive opinions it is was mentioning M. Robbins' point of view who argues that TED Talks are just a kind of performance that is professionally staged under a thought over scenario: they are "designed to make people feel good about themselves; to flatter them and make them feel clever and knowledgeable; to give them the impression that they're part of an elite group making the world a better place" (Robins 2017).

Nonetheless, there are publications across the world that support TED Talks role in fostering creativity in modern society development (Clegg et al, 2016).

On the other hand, the last decade faces increasing interest to the interpreters' role in society, their training to meet industry requirements and societal needs in contemporary ever growing multilingual world community (Diriker 2004, Schäffner, Kreden, Fowler 2013, Takeda, Baigorri-Jalón 2016).

The mentioned state of affairs laid grounds to shape the goal of the research that aimed to explore the relevance of TED Talks integration into interpreters' training.

The above goal required a number of tasks to be performed, including the analysis of relevant literature, the study of current curriculum for interpreters' training, students' opinion on the technology under study.

The research preliminary hypothesis argued that there might be positive and questionable aspects of integrating TED Talks technology into interpreter's training.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research integrated theoretical and empirical studies.

First, the analysis took into account findings of scholars who focus on TED Talks relevance for language studies and learning.

The most features papers regarding Ted Talks for CLIL and Interpreters' training were explored to build up the conceptual background for further studies.

The literature review results laid grounds to empirical studies that focused on students' opinions regarding the inclusion of TED Talks into the university-based interpreters' training.

The target audience was selected due the fact that modern students in mass are to the latest technologies, moreover they view them from a pragmatic perspective, i.e. students use most those tools that can help them improve their educational and quasi professional activities in a chosen domain of studies (McDermid 2006).

The empirical studies focused on the comparative analysis of interpreters' training process. The experiment lasted for an academic year. Three learning groups of the first year master students of translator and interpreter degree course engaged in the experiment. The first group was offered specially recorded videos with interviews of prominent politicians and public figures and other TV materials of this kind, the second group kept the consistent balance of the above mentioned materials and TED Talks resources. And the third group used only TED Talks resources. At the end of the course students were invited to take part in the survey and fill in an open ended questionnaire regarding their experience of learning through TED Talks resources.

The questionnaire included the following points:

- Did you think the topics were useful? (yes/no, why)
- Did you think the speakers performed well? (yes/no, why)
- Did you think the talks added to your knowledge of the world? (yes/no, why)
- Did you like a course on interpreting skills built up only on Ted Talks? (yes/no, why)
- Did you face any difficulties while working with TED Talks? (yes/no, why)
- Did you like any particular things regarding the work with TED Talks? (yes/no, why)

Students were of the same age (21-24 years old), the groups balance gender distribution. However, students came from various regions of Russia with varied socio-cultural backgrounds (small towns, regional cities, metropolitan area), and a varied level of foreign language and interpreting skills. The above parameters were used as variables. Students' academic progress results at the end of the schooling year

were also taken as a variable. Totally 51 students took part in the survey.

The statistics was used to check the students' progress and opinions regarding the training process and materials used.

The TED Talks integration into the learning process required preparation and didactic processing of the resources (teachers prepares pre-listening two-way vocabulary and memory drills). The selection of materials aimed to gather materials on general and socially critical topics.

The cluster and discriminant types of analysis were implemented to shape the picture on TED Talks positive and questionable didactic aspects regarding interpreter training. The SPSS was used for data processing.

### **3. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Literature Review**

First, the analysis took into account findings of scholars who focus on TED Talks relevance for language studies.

As TED Talks focus on domain specific issues the research conceptual framework referred to CLIL methodology ( content and language integrated learning) that had made a string move forward starting as a technique to teach school subjects in a foreign language and moving towards an international model to run degree courses and train professionals for in foreign language use for specific professional domains (Brinton, Snow, Wescher, 1989).

The research background also took into account the idea that was shaped by D.Coyle (Coyle 2007). The scholar strongly promoted a connected research agenda for CLIL pedagogy, underlining the interdisciplinary paradigm of research that would integrate language theory, foreign language teaching didactics, psychology, education theory, etc.

The literature analysis draw attention to the latest developments in methodology of academic education. Special emphasis was laid on the content-based instruction for foreign language learners. Scholars have confirmed positive prospective of integrating language and content through their persuading findings (Grabe, Stoller, 1997).

Next, light was shed on those publications that provided results of empirical studies regarding TED Talks potential for CLIL practice. In this regard researchers explored the didactic potential of TED talks and confirm positive aspects of technology integration into teaching/ learning contexts due to the opportunity it provides in terms of learning in up-to-date real life contexts (Carducci 2017, Suginaga 2013).

Further the analysis of featured publications aimed to explore the latest developments regarding the move in methodology for interpreters training.

It seems critical to bear in mind that scholars argue for move from methodology of instruction to collaborative construction regarding interpreters' training (the phrase by D. Kiraly -Kiraly 2003).

The new Millennium publications in the field of Interpreters' training pedagogy lay particular emphasis on revisited approaches to interpreters' training (Tennent 2005), draw attention to the relevance of situated training (Kainz, Prunč, Schögler, 2011). Due to the above general trends desk studies further tried to identify current examples of using TED Talks for interpreters' training. Inspiring TED Talks lectures on translation and interpretation were found. Moreover, TED Talks are mentioned as a useful resource for interpreters' trainers to use for lessons and tutorials (Setton, Dawrant 2016). However, no concrete examples of using TED Talks for interpreters' practical training were identified across respective research papers.

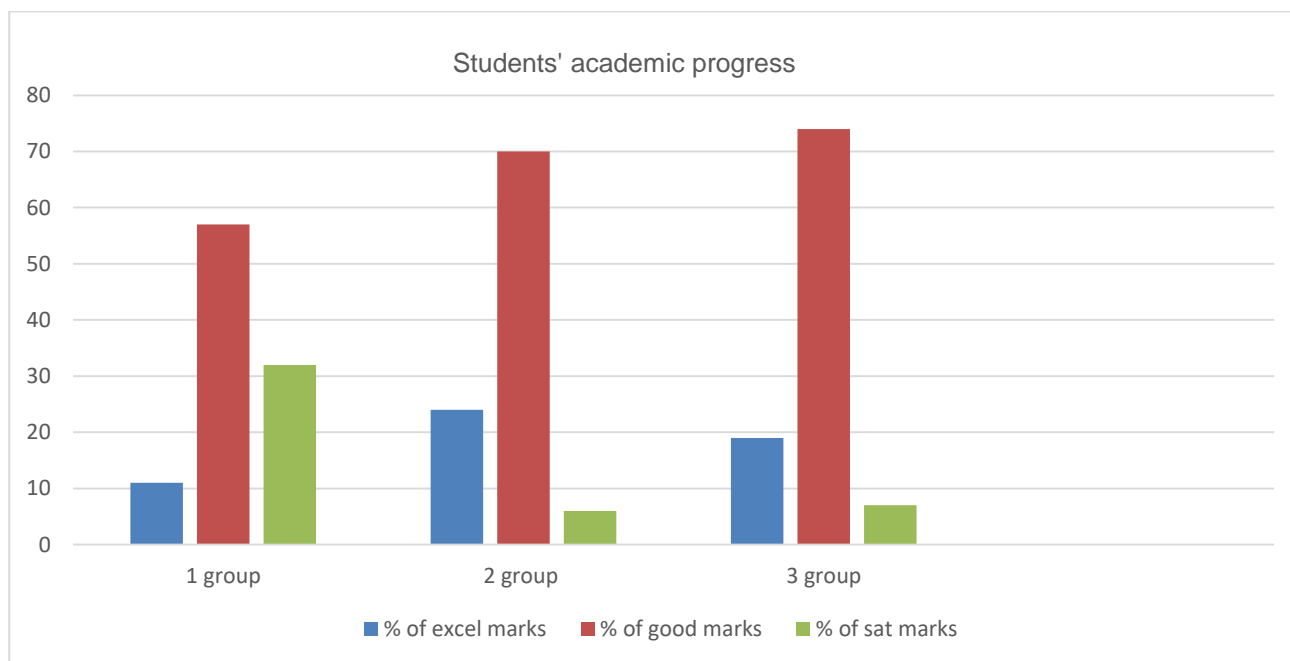
The above analysis results confirmed the need for empirical studies regarding reasons, conditions and techniques to integrate TED Talks into interpreters' training.

#### **3.2 Experiment on integrating TED Talks into the Interpreters' Training**

The empirical studies revealed a number of interesting points regarding the relevance of TED Talks resources integration into interpreters' training.

First, it turned out that the students who engaged in the group with TED Talks resources use showed more solid academic progress at the end of the schooling year as table 1 shows.

Table 1. The distribution of marks on the interpreting course regarding the students' progress.



The figures speak for themselves. The groups that used TED Talks resources were more successful in their training.

Further, students were offered to fill in the questionnaire. The results of the survey allowed for mapping clusters that characterize positive and questionable aspects of TED Talks integration into the interpreter training course.

Table 2. Positive and questionable aspects of TED Talks integration into the interpreter training course.

Cluster and its positive (+)/negative(-) evaluation by respondents	% of the respondents who mentioned the item
The resource allows for up-to date topics and themes (+)	100%
The resource provides the opportunity to listen to very diverse speakers (+)	96%
The resource provides real-world professional challenges to interpreter (+)	88%
The technology allows for students' self-check after interpreting assignment performance (+)	76%
The resource brings human emotions into the classroom (+)	43%
The Talks topics do not bring much of new knowledge important info (-)	47%
The talks sometimes include speech that is not well structured or polished in terms of vocabulary, it can lead to mistakes capture by learners (-)	41%
Some topics are introduced in a vary subjective manner that contradicts the interpreter's view and add to challenges (-)	27%

The discriminant analysis identified as statistically significant students' level of language and interpreting skills ( $\lambda = 0,241$ ,  $\chi^2 = 4,011$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ) and students' origin in terms of their coming from small towns/regional cities/ metropolitan area ( $\lambda = 0,323$ ,  $\chi^2 = 3,211$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ).

The students who got satisfactory marks at the end of the course built the overwhelming majority of those who shaped the pool of negative items regarding the technology under study. On the other hand, students from regional cities/ metropolitan area turned out to be more critical to the resource use, their population dominated among the respondents who identified questionable aspects of the resource into the curriculum materials. Such state of affairs lead to critical thinking approach while using TED Talks in interpreters' training. No one agreed to be trained only through used of TED Talks.

The above clusters allow us to agree with those scholars who underline pluses of TED Talks didactic use. The present research confirmed that students strongly appreciate the resource in terms of its topics in being in line with the latest developments in society. It turned out that this factor is important even for future interpreters who value not only the language material as such, but its relevance in terms of society profile.

Second, the resource diversity in terms of speakers helps the trainer to draw students' attention to specific professional contextual requirements.

The empirical data confirms the importance of task-based instruction and the new technology integration in interpreters' training. Students' replies show that they do value the training that responds to the modern language industry needs. Previously this point was mentioned by scholars (Koby, Baer 2003). Present research has confirmed the statement within new didactic and technological framework.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The research results confirmed the preliminary hypothesis on positive and questionable aspects regarding Ted Talks use in interpreter's training.

The findings have made it possible to underline the importance of thinking over reasons, conditions and techniques before integrating TED Talks into interpreters' training thus paying just a kind of tribute to a fashionable technological resource.

The TED Talks relevance for interpreter's training Moreover, the empirical studies made it possible to identify pluses and minuses of integrating TED Talks into interpreters' training. The research findings have revealed that the use of resource under study requires a very careful approach in terms of material selection.

Trainers should consider topic and information relevance for the group members, possible socio-cultural bias, quality of speech, quality of language style. Students do not want to be limited to one particular resource in their course of studies. Nonetheless the resource under study can help interpreters' trainers build the TED Talks- based course on grounds of learner's needs analysis.

The research outcomes can be useful to draft further recommendations for teachers and administrators in regard to interpreter's training course design. The research showed that TED Talks as a training tool can be of use for Interpreting Industry though students did not mention creativity and innovation as positive aspects of the resource under study.

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