

Developing and supporting the curriculum

Using Digital Pen Technology to Enhance the Development of Note-Taking Among Chinese Conference Interpreters

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2	Name author(s), and contact details: Mr Kester Newill
3	How does your project contribute to a research-informed and professionally relevant curriculum? Interpreting textbooks contain advice for students on how to take notes. Yet, interpreting teachers have been criticized for adopting claims uncritically, without evidence from observational data. The lack of work surrounding the acquisition of note-taking skills is an example of this phenomenon. One of the reasons for this lack of research into note-taking skills is the difficulty in capturing a record of the note-taking process. Digital pens offer a solution to this problem, as they enable the capture and storage of both audio data (source speeches and interpreting production) and visual data (a film of the notes being written in-sync with the audio) simultaneously in one convenient PDF pencast file. [INNOVATION]. Able to review pencasts of their interpreting activities, students are thus able to develop deeper insights into their note-taking techniques, and to share their notes with peers and teachers. Being able to view student pencasts can assist teachers to better facilitate the development of their students' note-taking skills: the files both shed greater light on students' self-reflections, and also inform follow-up questions to guide students in their investigations. [IMPACT]. This project has investigated whether or not digital pens can enhance the existing curriculum requirements to produce a learning log by facilitating an action-research approach to developing note-taking skills among student interpreters. [RELEVANCE].
4	How does your project support an international and multi-disciplinary curriculum? Interpreting courses are inherently international in their outlook. Students of various nationalities, working in various language combinations, attend the interpreting course at HWU. The course encourages the development of communication skills, which differ from culture to culture. Likewise, note-taking preferences, strategies and techniques can be influenced by students' background and language. The project could potentially be replicated by students and teachers using different language combinations in order to develop a greater understanding into differences in the note-taking of students of different backgrounds. [INNOVATION]. In addition, this project involved Chinese students working from Chinese into English. This is a combination that has been under-researched, and does not feature prominently in interpreting textbooks that cover skills such as note-taking. As such, projects that lead to a greater understanding of Chinese students' interpreting skills development are in demand, and could inform specific curriculum interventions in future years. [RELEVANCE]. [IMPACT].

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5	How does your project support student-centred approaches that promote student engagement and leadership? The MSc interpreting curriculum requires students on this course to submit a learning log detailing the development of a variety of interpreting skills, for assessment at the end of Semester 1. So, this project can be regarded as a pilot for the introduction of a new tool to support deeper self-reflection. In addition, the project adopted a discussion-board format, in which participants shared their reflections and pencasts, and received personalised, timely teacher support. [RELEVANCE]. [IMPACT]. The project required students to engage in an action-research cycle; and to communicate their progress to co-participants through an online discussion board. Students posted their reflections, and attached the relevant pencasts to their posts. Co-participants were able to reply to these posts and engage each other in discussion. This public format encouraged transparency, ownership of one's work, and opportunities for personalised peer and teacher support. [RELEVANCE].
6	How does your project help to reshape the learning environment? Please refer (where relevant to): • Technological mediation The project required students to engage in an action-research cycle; and to communicate their progress to co-participants through a closed-group 'Blackboard' discussion board, operated through Vision (the HWU Virtual Learning Environment). Students posted their reflections, and attached the relevant pencasts to their posts. Co-participants were able to reply to these posts and engage each other in discussion. This was the first time I had made such extensive use of the discussion board tool, and I found it an engaging way to support student self-reflection activities. Similarly, the students responded well to this format, and hopefully benefited from timely, personalised feedback. [INNOVATION]. • The distribution of learning across global locations The digital nature of the project lends itself to distance learning. It could have been run remotely almost without any significant adaptation. (There was a face-to-face training session at the beginning of the project, which could easily have been run via Skype). [INNOVATION].