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Struggling Between Aspirations to Innovate and the Tyranny of Reality

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Abstract

In this paper, I reflect on over twenty years of teaching interpreting, evolving from a “listen and interpret” teacher to an aspirant for innovation. There are discussions of how I broke out of the comfort zone of notions of “accuracy” and “correct interpretation,” but the focus of the paper is on how a broadened vision enabled me to formulate my own teaching philosophies and on how I am teaching interpreting in an evolved regime. I will also discuss the outcomes of the innovations. As will be shown, there are positive outcomes for the students, the innovator, and the university. But there are also disappointing outcomes, including emerging signs of the unsustainability of the innovations vis-à-vis the commercial reality of interpreter education programs in Australia. I concede that I have not been able to reconcile the innovative teaching of interpreting and the pressure of commercial forces. However, I would like to think that if discussions and debates can be generated, more ideas may emerge that will eventually make innovations more acceptable. This paper is intended to stimulate such discussions and debates.

Keywords: innovative teaching; plan-based teaching; leadership; justification; self-directed learning; listen and interpret

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Struggling Between Aspirations to Innovate and the Tyranny of Reality

1. Teaching “listen and interpret”

I pride myself on being an innovative teacher of interpreting, but I must concede that I have also been a frustrated innovator—the theme of the present paper. What prepared me for the innovation will be discussed in Section 2; how I taught innovatively will be discussed in Section 3. The innovative teaching is discussed further by means of three mini examples in Section 4. In Section 5, discussion focuses on how and why I have had to curtail my innovative aspirations vis-à-vis the commercial reality of delivering education programs in a tertiary context. In the present section, however, I would like to contextualize the discussion by reviewing, briefly, my history as a student, a practitioner, and a teacher of translation/interpreting.

I progressed along a seemingly typical career path, initially as a language major in a Guangzhou-based language institute; then, as a lecturer of translation and interpreting in the language institute at a Perth university, from which I graduated; then at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), where I have served to date. During this time, I have also worked as a freelance translator and conference interpreter.

For long periods of my rather typical career, I have subscribed to a typical discipline-wide conviction, which I was also committed to perpetuating. Central to the conviction are the imperatives of being a “truthful mouthpiece” and delivering the “correct” product. The designated textbook I studied exhorted students to be a “cog and wheel” for the Party (Zhong, 1980). My teachers told me—and in turn I told my own students—“yours is not to reason why, yours is but to interpret and be right.” So, no matter what complicated strategies are used to achieve fidelity and equivalence, my work, both in professional practice and classroom teaching, usually ended up as a simple and rather mechanical process of “listen and interpret,” a term inspired by Davis’ (2004) criticism of the “read and translate” approach.

I believe that my typicality as a conventional practitioner and teacher of interpreting must have contributed to enhancing my international marketability, enabling me to find teaching positions at programs for which “correct” interpreting/translation is of predominant importance. For example, my last two appointments were both made on the basis of an understanding that I was suitably qualified and experienced to develop and teach programs fit for accreditation by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). As the authority intended to safeguard a seemingly national standard of practitioners, NAATI is understandably obsessed with “correct” interpretation and translation. Accreditation by the organization involves its clearly spelled-out intervention for the programs regarding teaching content, method, hours, and assessment—all of which are intended to teach the skills to “interpret accurately by ensuring that the true meaning of words, concepts, statements, and bodily expressions is conveyed” (NAATI, 1990, p. 39). Accordingly, the two programs I worked for were very much teacher-centered, standard- and product-based, and also rather authoritarian and uninspiring. Clichés such as “fidelity,” “true meaning,” “correct translation,” “faithfulness,” “shadowing,” “equivalence,” and “objectivity” prevailed, leaving very little room for exploring other options and possibilities.

But a number of new developments disrupted the comfort zone. These included comments made to me, which appeared to be innocent, but nevertheless made me take a good look at what I had been doing. Some students, especially those with insight and knowledge acquired from outside translation/interpreting, could not understand

Teaching to innovate

the fuss about “correct” or “accurate” translation. A senior Spanish language teaching colleague of mine who observed how I engaged students in “systematic,” “structured” bodies of in-class and after-class drills designed to train accuracy called me a “slave driver” and “behavioural modeler.” A prospective professor refused to supervise my PhD thesis because, in her words, “translators and interpreters have no brains.” Additionally, I, myself, found the teaching very uninspiring and boring.

Perhaps a more pressing development was NAATI accrediting other Sydney-based tertiary providers of interpreting training at the professional level. The University of New South Wales (UNSW) had previously been accredited at the para-professional level but lost it in mid-1990s, mainly because the teaching hours of its curricula were short of what was required by NAATI. For the sake of clarity for international readers, I must add that NAATI accreditation is not just an academic or professional issue but also a commercial exercise. Primarily, it is a very effective marketing tool responsible for attracting masses of prospective students and contributes to transforming Australian tertiary education into an export industry with revenues of AU\$14.2 billion in 2008 alone (including AU\$3.107 billion from China, AU\$574 million from Hong Kong, and AU\$239 million from Taiwan—the three target markets for English-Chinese interpreting and translation programs).² There will be more discussions below on the instrumentality of NAATI for student recruitment. Suffice it to say that UNSW, where I teach English-Chinese interpreting, is also recognized as a leading educational exporter.³ However, UNSW only managed to restructure its postgraduate translation/interpreting program and was re-accredited as a NAATI approved program in 2009. This meant that the university had to compete with two other Sydney-based universities with NAATI accreditation until 2008.

2. Visioning other possibilities

In order to modernize my teaching and to make the unaccredited UNSW program more competitive in the export-oriented educational market, I had to rethink the translation theories I grew up with and envision alternative theories and new theories. By doing this, I was able to break out of the cocoon in which I had grown and gradually came to realize that translation/interpreting is not just about producing a homogeneous, “correct” product. Instead, it should go beyond the product (Bell, 1991; Lee-Jahnke, 2005) to involve a paradigm of choices (Savory, 1957), a reconciliation of considerations of text types and functions (Reiss, 1989), a process of decision making (Levý, 2000), and a dynamic system of utilizing one’s own capacities (Gile, 2002).

Insights and inspirations from educators in neighbouring disciplines, such as teaching English as a second/foreign language (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1992; Haliday et al., 1964) were also instrumental in motivating me to reflect on my teaching. As a result, I became receptive to modern teaching approaches and philosophies, including most notably, student-centered teaching, communicative learning, cooperative learning, and self-directed learning. I went on to rewrite interpreting curricula, redesign teaching activities, combine teaching practice with research, and apply research findings to teaching. Through efforts made over the years, I came to form the following views in relation to the teaching of interpreting:

- Teaching is more effective and sustainable through self-directed learning, student-centered learning, and problem-based learning (Zhong, 1995, 2002, 2008).
- Rather than teaching the textbook, teachers should aspire to teach interpreters by treating students as individuals and real people (Zhong, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008).
- Teaching should be relevant to real-life personal experiences (Zhong, 1995), to real-world and industry practice, and to the aspirations for a better world/life for all.

² All export income data in this snapshot is sourced from the *Australian Bureau of Statistics’ publication International Trade in Services, by Country, by State and by Detailed Services Category, Financial Year, 2007-08* (ABS Catalogue no. 5368.0.55.003).

³ For example, UNSW was a winner of the 2004 *Australia’s 50 Most Beautiful Exports* awards. More information available at: http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/pad/articles/2004/aug/Beautiful_exports.html

- Teaching, including assessment of learning outcomes, should respect students as individuals with different learning histories, methodologies, goals, and aspirations (Zhong, 2005b, 2006).
- Rather than regurgitating existing knowledge and perpetuating boundaries, learning should be about exploring the unknown and generating new knowledge (Zhong, 1998, 2002).
- Learning should aim to build and expand capacities, including leadership qualities.

3. Teaching interpreting innovatively

Guided by the broadened visions discussed in Section 2, I was able to introduce a series of innovations to the Chinese-English interpreting programs at UNSW. In the limited space available in the present paper, I will discuss six of the major innovations. The discussions will be followed by three mini-examples of how the innovations work.

3.1 Teaching interpreters through self-directed, student-centered learning

Many of the innovations to be discussed, including plan-based, justification-based, and leadership-style interpreting, would not have been possible without a shift of attention from the teaching of *interpreting* to the teaching of *interpreters*, or without the introduction of student-centered, self-directed learning. The teaching of interpreting implicates as the subject matter, a set of skills, often quite structured and mechanical. The teaching of interpreters, on the other hand, is about recognizing individual differences, conditions, and aspirations, and about enabling different individuals to pursue different goals, including becoming an interpreter or becoming anything other than a professional interpreter. As the present paper is not intended to be a dedicated description of the concepts, I would like to direct interested readers to Zhong (2008) for discussions of teaching translators (comparable to interpreters) and to Knowles (1975), Grow (1991), and Thomson (2000) for discussions of self-directed learning.

3.2 Plan-based teaching and assessment to facilitate individualized learning

Generally speaking, a conventional “listen and interpret” class engages students in the drills intended to bring out the same standard but “elusive” outcome—a practice which I have metaphorically described with the Chinese idiom of “cutting the feet to fit the size of the shoe” (Zhong, 2005b). By contrast, I have formulated plan-based interpreting and assessment as a teaching methodology that aims to extend and diversify various learning processes and outcomes and that is intended to expand different capacities, develop different methods, and achieve different learning goals within one student cohort. More detailed explanations of this “plan-based teaching/assessment” can be found in Zhong (2005b, 2006). To put it simply, this pedagogical approach involves having students formulate their own action plans for an interpreting task, stating anticipatory objectives, problems, strategies, outcomes, and learning rationale. They must then endeavour to accomplish individually customized action plans. Their performance is assessed on the basis of, not only the result of their work, but also their accomplishment (or otherwise) of the action plans. Instead of being required to merely “listen and interpret,” students are encouraged to think “outside the text” and to learn to manage the infinite dynamics in relation to task requirements, industry expectations, clients’/audiences’ needs, and their own capacities. Thus, plan-based learning of interpreting is very much self-directed and prepares students for further continuing education after leaving the university.

Teaching to innovate

3.3 Justification-based interpreting to facilitate conscious, interactive, and peer learning

While a conventional interpreting course is often designed for students “not to reason why, but to interpret and be right,” I have renovated my teaching to realign it with reflective learning. Learning is thus stretched beyond “listen and interpret” to an extended process of justification. Students are expected to be able and ready to justify potentially every conscious choice adopted throughout the process, including planning, implementation, the actual performance, and outcome vis-à-vis their original plans. Hence, a typical lesson becomes an open stage where all kinds of thoughts, theories, perspectives, procedures, and evidences meet and interact. Delivering the correct interpretation is no longer that important. What counts now is the ability to make intelligent decisions, to perform purposefully in a conscious manner, to justify the decisions, and to articulate one’s performance and learning in a reflective manner. An additional benefit of doing this is that learning becomes much more intellectual, interactive, empowering, and mutually inspiring/enlightening than in a “listen and interpret” mode.

3.4 Leadership-style interpreting to facilitate leadership aspirations and pursuits

I reserve my harshest criticism for that aspect of conventional “listen and interpret” teaching which stresses the invisibility of interpreters as “shadows” and as mere objective mouthpieces of other speakers. In teaching, I take pains to highlight the leadership role as has been assumed by real-life interpreters and translators time and again in history. While famous role models (e.g., Chinese translators responsible for introducing western science and Marxism into China) are plentiful, I have been keen to share with students more recent and relevant case studies, including that of Yuan Tianpeng,⁴ the Chinese translator and disseminator of *Robert’s Rules of Order*. Students are motivated to learn from the leadership role models and explore how they can interpret to generate desirable social change, rather than being content as mere verbatim interpreters of real-time messages and utterances of other people. In a recent real-life learning activity, in which several students worked in the field in a Beijing-based, non-government organization (NGO) for blind people—known as Hong Dandan⁵, the students studied existing literature in the area of sign language and compiled the first known protocol for interpreting for blind people—more on this in an upcoming mini-example.

3.5 Research studies to make learning more intellectual and rewarding

I provide an overview of research studies to make learning more relevant to students with aspirations that cannot be met by a “listen and interpret” regime. There are two considerations for doing this: a) most professional interpreters do much more than interpret verbatim and use many more skills than required for verbatim interpreting, and b) not every one of those studying interpreting actually intends to be a dedicated interpreter. To address the first consideration, in addition to conventional drills, I incorporate such learning activities as public speaking, précis interpretation, concept/theme-based interpreting, and super-charged presentation in the coursework.⁶ To address the second consideration, I invite interested students to co-research with me, in order for

⁴ As a disseminator, Yuan used a smart variety of interpreting techniques (e.g., purposeful but selective use of tones, body language, interpersonal communication skills, and props) and interpretational techniques (e.g., purposeful but selective use of content adaptation and localization) to effectively spread Robert’s wisdom in China. I am in the process of writing up a paper to discuss the use of translation/interpreting to advance social changes and Yuan Tianpeng will feature in a case study. In the meantime, more information about Yuan can be found in a Chinese feature story “罗伯特议事规则”的南塘试验——让村民们学习罗伯特议事规则，学会民主辩论与表决，《南方周末》(*Robert’s Rules of Order* Trialled in Nantang – Helping villagers study ‘Robert’s Rules of Order’ and learn to debate and vote democratically), authored by Zhai Minglei and published in *Nanfang Weekend*, 2 April, 2009. A copy of the feature article is also available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.xici.net/b366543/d88249922.htm>.

⁵ Web page of Hong Dandan: <http://hongdandan.nppcn.com/>

⁶ The names of some of these activities are my own inventions. Précis interpretation involves hearing/listening of a lengthy text and then producing a minimal-length presentation of the central message. Concept/theme-based interpreting requires that students undertake literature review on the basis of a given concept or theme and then make a concise

them to acquire research literacy and academic writing skills. We have completed a series of impact studies and have published a good number of papers since 2004, including Zhong and Lin (2007), Xi and Zhong (2008), Wang et al. (2009).

3.6 Capacity building to support the innovations

Innovations in teaching approaches and methods cannot get very far without the support of new resources, especially with regard to corresponding content. Over the years, I painstakingly developed a new and alternative repertoire of content. I compiled textbooks, designed Web pages, made sound files, and created artwork. The centerpiece of the new learning resources has been audio-visual productions. These productions serve a range of purposes required for UNSW's reinvented Chinese-English interpreting curricula, including:

- Promoting preferred teaching methodologies (i.e., self-directed learning and problem-based learning) and the best teaching practice at renowned international universities, as in the case of *French Way of Learning*
- Bridging learning and the real world by bringing industry and real-life professional practice to students, as in the case of *SA Confidential*
- Articulating interpreting as a dynamic process of communication and providing students with study guides/samples, as in the case of *Caged Animal* and *Trying a Foreign Woman*
- Re-theorizing interpreting/translation in jargons other than “accuracy” and providing students with study guides/samples, as in the case of *Adding Value* and *Live Translation*
- Providing students with study guides/samples and showing the scope of different possibilities, as in the case of *The Power of Speaking*
- Inspiring students to be leaders and to work towards a better and more fair society, as in the case of *Seeing with Ears*

The programs listed above are available for viewing on YouTube.⁷

4. Three mini-examples of how interpreting is taught innovatively

Shortly, I will discuss the tension between the above-mentioned innovations and commercial pressure, which is the intended subject matter of the present paper. I have discussed the innovations, but only in a quite abstract manner, and I am not able to delve into them in adequate detail. I have plans to revisit them separately in future publications for the purpose of sharing and dissemination. For the time being, I am happy to present three mini-examples of how the innovations work in a practical interpreting class setting.

4.1 How plan-based, justification-based teaching of interpreting works

In the first mini-example, I will discuss how I manage an interpreting drill in an ordinary setting. I usually start by briefing students on an interpreting task, for example, who is speaking about what subject and what mode is to be used for the interpretation. Next, I ask each student to write down a number of keywords, which are meant to be an action plan, stating what style (e.g., minimalist, foreignized, domesticated, literal, or free) of interpreting he/she would use in order to achieve a specific anticipated outcome. Students can also indicate if they will use any

presentation in the target language discussing the concept/theme. Super-charged presentations are expansions of the former two and require that the presentations entail artistic/performative practices (e.g., dramas, drawings and body language) and/or independent multimedia productions (e.g., video and flash).

⁷ To look at some of these titles, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/> then search for titles.

Teaching to innovate

additional strategies (e.g., tone, body language and movements), noting what special purposes/effects they intend to achieve or what added value they hope to provide to a specific speaker/audience. There is also that other thing—which I never fail to do before actual drilling begins—I emphasize again that, rather than simply “listening and interpreting” and “interpreting correctly,” each student is expected to accomplish his/her own plan, albeit he/she may have to make necessary adjustments. Then, when drilling finishes, I engage students in one of several forms of performance evaluation (e.g., self-evaluation, peer evaluation, or teacher evaluation). There are two overwhelming concerns in this evaluation process. One is whether the action plan is justifiable, whether any additional strategies used are warranted and how a student actually justifies his/her plan. The other is whether a student has accomplished his/her action plan. In my experiences, this process of justification often stimulates intellectually and critically informed discussions, and many students learn more from these discussions than from the drills.

4.2 Procedures for teaching researchers, leaders, and activists

In the second mini-example, I will discuss how I manage a learning activity designed to teach research, activism, and leadership skills in conjunction with interpreting. I usually start by inspiring students to see how interpreting is meant, not only to facilitate cross-language and interpersonal communications, but also to improve the life of real individual people, especially the underprivileged. There is a great deal of literature that can be used for this purpose, including the use of sign language in the courts and hospitals, both in Australia and internationally. I have also been using classic films (e.g., *Amelie* and *Cinema Paradiso*) and real-life examples (e.g., Hong Dandan) to suggest that there may be an opportunity for developing a new mode/style of interpreting to be used, for example, in improving the life quality of the blind. In that instance, I enlist interested students to form a project group with a mission to author a manual for interpreting for the blind. Next, I engage the group in a literature review. The group members will then undertake fieldwork, including visiting various professionals and users, people with visual difficulties, and the NGO. On the basis of literature and fieldwork, the group produces a manual for interpreting for the blind. The manual must be empirically tested, that is, used for real people in real-life situations. At the end of the project, the group will give a presentation to the class, demonstrating how the procedures work, as described in the manual.

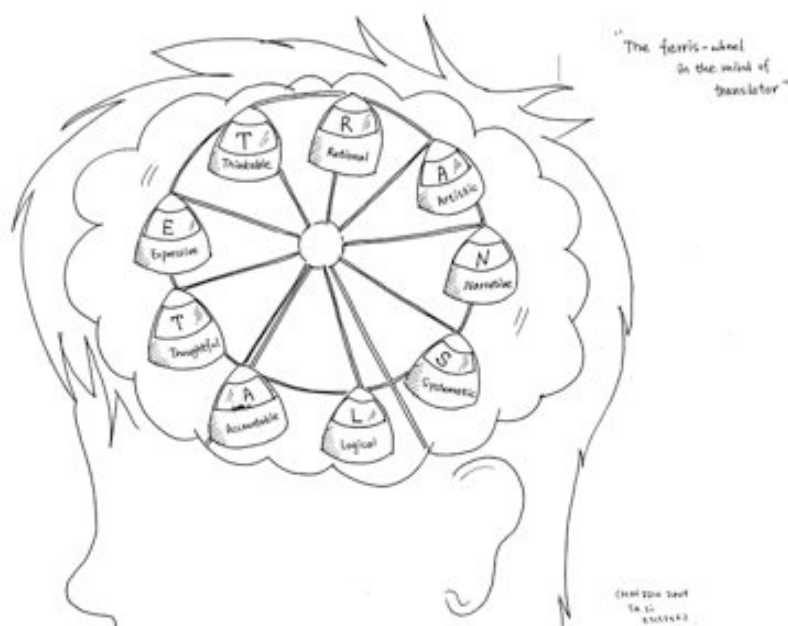
4.3 Cartoons, an alternative style of critical review

The third mini-example involves an optional, and very unorthodox, learning project used in the UNSW interpreting courses, that of drawing cartoons; it warrants some initial justification of its rationale and use. Its inclusion is inspired by the career success of several earlier graduates in the visual arts and multimedia corporations. It is also conceived of as an answer to the lack of critical thinking in many students accustomed to rote learning and as an enhancer to the mechanical-looking procedures involved in language learning. There is an added benefit of the project, which became apparent to me as I engaged in reflective discussions of innovative teaching. The aspiration to submit a cartoon that is maximally ironic, reflective, and visually punchy often motivates students to tirelessly revisit the same question, to go into ever-greater depth, to consult the teacher and/or their peers and, most important, to try to address a real, pressing issue of the discipline/industry.

In the initial stage of the projects, students selecting this option are emphatically told of the expectation for them to go to the depths of a contemporary concept/issue of interpreting and translation and discover the irony in it. They then start conceiving and drafting ideas through individual reflections and discussions with the teacher, other students, and friends. Several times during the session, they are given opportunities to present their oeuvres in class to receive critiques and challenges from others, which provides a valuable opportunity for the teacher to clarify, elaborate, and comment on relevant issues in the practice of interpreting. Such interactions enable students to revise, redevelop, and finalize the oeuvres that they eventually submit to the teacher for assessment. Where there is ample time, I may even incorporate a peer evaluation in the assessment, which involves each student being given a vote to cast for what he/she sees as the most ironic, thought-provoking, and artistic work. I present two cartoons selected as the best by students of my 2009 undergraduate interpreting course.



The making of a successful classroom translator, cartoon by Lindan Huang (2009)



The ferris-wheel in the mind of a translator, cartoon by Yihang Li (2009)

Teaching to innovate

5. Outcomes of the innovation

Being the person responsible for the innovation, my review of the outcomes of this new approach must be subjective and biased. But I am happy to be able to cite some objective data to substantiate the positive benefits of the innovations for the students, for the innovator, and for the UNSW program. For many students, learning interpreting became an inspiring, capacity-challenging, and intellectually rewarding experience. In blind evaluations of teacher performance from 2000 to 2008, between 90% and 100% of the students enrolled in the two interpreting courses (one undergraduate and one postgraduate) agreed with the statement: “Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this lecturer’s teaching.” The Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) awarded me a national citation in 2009 for “playing a leadership role in innovating interpreting curricula and for tirelessly developing resources to facilitate the innovations.”⁸ UNSW also awarded me a Faculty of Arts Dean’s award for best contribution to the scholarship of learning and teaching. For UNSW, the innovations have contributed to the sustainable development of its Chinese-English interpreting programs. In terms of enrolment, the undergraduate stream has always had to cap the class size due to significant student demand, and the postgraduate stream grew steadily to an enrollment of between 35 and 45 students, even without the NAATI accreditation.

But there is a twist in the tail in regard to the innovations, the subject matter of this section. Innovative teaching alone is not enough, especially in a market environment where a program’s success is predominantly measured by its number of enrollments. Industry accreditation may be a much more effective marketing tool than anything else. Two other Sydney-based universities that are accredited by NAATI to give their graduates the title of “professional translator” and “professional interpreter” have been enrolling between 100 to 200 students annually in their postgraduate Chinese-English translation/interpreting programs. When UNSW gained NAATI accreditation in 2009, enrollments immediately surged to about 70 in that year and were projected to reach the 100-student mark in 2010. Simultaneously, however, signs emerged indicating that we started losing students who were not interested in NAATI accreditation. More troubling to me as an ALTC-citation award winner, the innovative teaching is becoming less sustainable because of a number of conditions, some of which I will discuss now.

Condition Number 1 involves the tyranny of existing market expectations and needs, especially where education operates as a top export industry of a country. I wrote in Section 1 that tertiary education is an AU\$14-billion export industry in Australia enrolling close to half a million international full-fee paying students, including over 200,000 from greater China. With regard to fee-paying students in languages or translation and interpreting programs of study, gaining industry accreditation and the subsequent priority access to a migration visa are a very effective marketing tool. By comparison, innovative teaching really seems like a rather elusive concept to prospective international students and their parents looking toward an education in an Australian university, although it undoubtedly enhances learning experiences for students already enrolled. People may wonder if the NAATI style of teaching and innovative teaching can be combined, or reconciled, to deliver a more balanced and satisfactory outcome. The answer, to be further discussed next, is negative.

Condition Number 2 involves the incompatibility of innovative teaching and the NAATI style of teaching. NAATI strictly defines and prescribes the content and end product of an accredited program. As a result, NAATI accredited programs are invariably centered on the acquisition of certain knowledge, language competence, and translation techniques required for answering a set of ethical questions and for interpreting certain texts (usually sourced or adapted from print media or artificial dialogues/speeches). Perhaps limited innovations can be made to improve the delivery of these required competencies. But ultimately the courses are mandated to prepare students for the NAATI tests, in which nothing matters other than accurate and adequate interpretation of jargon, syntax, grammar, and the supply of correct answers to ethics questions. I have not been able to figure out how to reconcile innovative teaching of content (e.g., leadership and research) and teaching methods (e.g., self-directed learning, problem-based learning, and capacity expansion) within a NAATI test-focused course structure.

⁸ I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues (Professor Jon Kowallis, Professor Eileen Bauldry and Dr. Helen Dalton) for their selfless support and mentoring, which were crucial to my winning of the citation. More information about the award and ALTC is available at: <http://www.altc.edu.au/july2009-citation-winners-announced/>

Condition Number 3 involves potential discomfort for some international students who, having been accustomed to strict rote-learning, expect to be taught a structured body of knowledge and skills. While some of the enrolled students readily acclimatize, and may even flourish, in an innovative learning environment, some others are unwilling to, or fail to adjust. Some may also have difficulty adjusting even if they are willing to, because of the constraints on the length of a course (i.e., two to three hours per week, for a total of 12 weeks) and unfavourable teacher-student ratio (1 to about 30). The quick acceptance by some students of the innovative teaching may even be a cause of discomfort to those other students having difficulty adapting. Understandably, as far as assessment is concerned, the latter might receive more competitive marks in a traditional teaching environment.

Condition Number 4 involves the sustainability of innovative teaching of interpreting. Innovation is only meaningful if it can spread, generating systemic changes in wider scopes and being replicated across whole sectors. Otherwise, it would always be a novelty, an abnormality, or even a deviation and would discontinue if the individual teacher responsible for the innovation were to go on leave, or retire, or if he/she was simply overwhelmed by the status quo. Another important pressure to recognize is that student numbers and revenue have become one of the priorities in education in the recent Australian experience. In addition, encouraging and implementing innovative teaching is not easy. I have made massive efforts to disseminate innovative teaching through research articles, external lectures, and conference presentations, but I have yet to have a clear idea of any impact. Internally, there is little incentive to train teaching aids and tutors because few of them know how long they will stay in tertiary education where teaching manpower has been largely casualized. In this context, I recall a dialogue between Ms. Gruwell and Ms. Campbell, the head teacher, in a Hollywood movie titled "Freedom Writers Diary." Challenging the innovative teaching undertaken by Ms. Gruwell, the head teacher raised the following questions in front of the educational authorities:

What about new students that come in next year? Can she repeat this process every year? Her methods are impossible to implement with regularity. What if every teacher performed in this way? We have millions of children to get through the education system in this country and we need a means of accomplishing that, which allows as many students to benefit as possible, not just special cases.

Turning to Ms. Gruwell, she asked: Do you honestly think you can create this family in every classroom, for every grade, for every student you teach?

What did Ms. Gruwell say? "I don't know," was her answer.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have taken stock of my experiences in teaching translation and interpreting over recent years, focusing on the continuous struggles to reconcile the aspirations to innovate and the reality of the marketplace for education. I briefly visited some of the new theories, especially self-directed learning, on the basis of which I had been able to formulate my own teaching philosophies and methods, including plan-based interpreting and justification-based interpreting. Due to space constraints, I was able to give only three examples of how I teach interpreting innovatively. I will seek to delineate the innovations separately in a dedicated paper.

I have also discussed the outcome of the innovations, including the benefits for students, for the university, and for me, the innovator. At the same time, I conceded that I was not able to reconcile the innovative teaching of interpreting with the pressure of commercial pressure. As a result, some of my innovations proved to be short lived. However, I would like to think that by discussing the tension between innovations and reality, I may be able to stimulate discussions and debates that would generate new ideas and solutions.

Teaching to innovate

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