The Impact of Integrating Drama Techniques and Public Speaking Skills on Students' Confidence and Performance Quality: Consecutive Interpreting in Focus

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the effect of integrating drama techniques and public speaking skills on undergraduate students' confidence, on the one hand, and the quality of their performance in consecutive whole speech interpreting, on the other hand, through a quasi-experimental design. The participants are 50 third-year undergraduate students of English translation and interpretation in two different universities in Iran. A consecutive interpreting test and a Personal Report of Confidence as a Speaker (PRCS) test were administered to both the experimental and control groups as pre-tests. The experimental group then received a twelve-week treatment that included drama techniques and public speaking skills integrated into interpreting teaching. Post-tests were administered to both groups after a three-month interval. The t-test for independent samples was conducted to analyse the data obtained. The results reveal that the participants in the experimental group show improvement in both the consecutive interpreting test and in the confidence as a speaker report.

KEYWORDS: consecutive interpreting, drama techniques, interpreting, personal report of confidence as a speaker, public speaking skills

1. Introduction

Art activities are often suggested to support learning in the classroom, and it has been argued that engagement in art activities can be transferred to achieve improvements in other areas (Deasy, 2002). In Piaget's words (as cited in Wagner 2002:6), "to engage in role-taking is to 'decenter' or move away from a predominantly egocentric stage of development". Growth in cognition is

dependent on growth in role-taking. Visual aids and drama activities have long formed an essential part of foreign language instruction (Mueller, 1980). According to Davies (1990:96), "drama strengthens the bond between thought and expression in language, and offers good listening practice". Ludke (2016) argues that reasons for using visual art and drama activities in language learning contexts include the development of listening and verbal interaction skills, literacy skills, focused attention and concentration, balancing emotion and cognition (including lower anxiety and increased motivation to learn). Striker (1992) also suggested a natural link between art and language, arguing that artistic expression and imagination precede and form the basis of language development. This link to the communicative approach to language learning is echoed in the words of the famous improvisational theatre practitioner Spolin (1999:14) that "the techniques of theatre are the techniques of communicating".

The idea of improving the performance of trainee interpreters through theatre training originated with Bendazzoli (2007), who pioneered the study of the potential of theatre training as a tool to improve the motivation and non-verbal communication skills of trainee interpreters. He worked with drama and interpreting students at the University of Bologna and found that some of the critical components of theatre training can support interpreter training. His program included stress management techniques involving relaxation, breathing, posture, and areas such as voice training, articulation, and improvisation. It should be noted that the notion of improvisation discussed in the present study is different from the notion of improvisation in interpreter training. Improvisation in the current context, according to Luccarelli (2018), corresponds to speaking extemporaneously, to telling a story, to start an immediate speech. Improvisation in interpreting is, as Makarová (1994) claims, preparation for unpredictable vocabulary or associations of the known vocabulary or information and helps the interpreter to reproduce at least partial information in a given unit of text.

With respect to public speaking in interpreting, Nolan (2005) asserts that public speakers have usually acquired some mastery of the art of persuasion, and interpreters must be able to mirror this skill. Herbert (1952) emphasised the skill of public speaking as an indispensable requirement for professional interpreters and consecutive interpreters. To test the effectiveness of public speaking exercises in interpreter training, Bottan (2000, as cited in Pöchhacker, 2004) conducted

an experimental study comparing the skill development of students who had attended a thirty-hour public speaking course with that of a control group. She focused on common presentation errors and found clear evidence that specific public speaking (including breathing, voice control, and eye contact) increased students' awareness of their delivery and improved their presentation in CI. Since interpreting often takes place in front of a large audience of people, shyness and fear of the audience directly affect the act of interpreting, no matter how skilled an interpreter is at his or her job. Reading different texts aloud, controlling emotions by reading texts with high emotional content or with very controversial topics could improve the quality of public speaking.

Regarding public speaking skills in interpreting courses in the Iranian context, Shafiei (2019) reported that 70% of the interviewed interpreter trainers admitted to the problems they face in CI classes in academic settings in Iran, that students are reluctant to speak and act in the presence of other students and that their communicative skills are weak. In contrast, the literature confirms that the interpreter should know the interaction and speaking rules to ensure a successful production in CI. Meaning is assumed to be situated, and listeners infer the speaker's meaning based on their knowledge of the context, contextualisation cues such as prosodic and para-linguistic features, facial expressions and pauses, expectations about the thematic course of the interaction, and recourse to cultural presuppositions (Schiffrin, 1996). According to Chakhachiro (2016), from a pedagogical perspective, appreciating conversational strategies and prosodic features and framing and conveying meaning can help improve the cognitive competence needed by trainee interpreters to process and retain information and help with note-taking and delivery.

The theoretical discussions of interpreting training in the present study are mostly based on Gile's (1997) effort model for consecutive interpreting (CI). This is based on the concept of the human mind's limited processing capacity and explains many of the problems encountered regularly by students and practitioners while interpreting. It helps understand and assess the strategies and tactics suggested by teachers to deal with these difficulties. The development of the model originated in two intuitive ideas based on observation and introspection:

(1) Interpreting requires some sort of 'mental energy' that is only available in limited supply.

(2) Interpreting takes up almost all of this mental energy, and sometimes requires more than is available, at which times performance deteriorates.

Gile's (1997) model for CI consists of two phases: a listening or reception phase and then, a reconstruction or reformulation/production phase. From these two phases, the first one is paced by the speaker, whereas in the second one, the interpreter has the freedom to perform the three efforts at his own pace. In the first phase of CI, listening and analysis, short-term memory, note-taking, and coordination of ideas are important. In the second phase, which is the reformulation or reconstruction or production phase, recalling from memory and notes, reading notes and production are important. This model assumes that each of these efforts requires attentional resources and that these requirements add up to a level close to saturation of the interpreters' total available resources.

In 1990 the B.A. program in translation and interpretation was established in Iran. In 2017, the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology revised this program and added some new courses such as public speaking to the curriculum. The limited number of courses for interpreter education, i.e., three courses equivalent to 6 credits, compared to written translation courses, i.e., 34 at B.A. level, and some other problems related to understanding the actual objectives of such courses have led to a chaotic situation in the Iranian academic context. Moreover, the lack of a systematic approach in teaching interpreting-specific techniques and the prevalence of the traditional teacher-centred approach in the delivery of translation and interpreting courses (see Shafiei et al. 2019) have led to trainees' inhibition and reluctance towards interpreting and consequently poor performance in interpreting courses (Shafiei, 2019).

Therefore, the present study investigates the usefulness of integrating drama and public speaking techniques in interpreting teaching through a learner-centred approach. The main objective of the present account is to determine whether such integration affects both the performance quality of interpreting and learners' confidence as speakers in the Iranian academic context, i.e., in an undergraduate English translation and interpretation program.

2. Public Speaking and Interpreting

Interpersonal skills, such as public speaking, are essential for a variety of occupations in daily life. The ability to communicate in social and public settings can significantly impact a person's career development, helping to build relationships, resolve conflicts, or even gain the upper hand in negotiations. Lee (2008) believes that the most important criteria for successful performance or public speaking are: good articulation and smooth delivery (i.e., no long pauses, hesitations, false starts, fillers, excessive repairs, or frequent self-corrections), eye contact and posture, and good voice projection. According to Chen et al. (2016), public speaking is a multifaceted fusion of psychological, cognitive, linguistic, and para-linguistic skills. Based on Schreiber and Hartranft (2013), public speaking is considered one of the most valued skills an individual can possess, and many professions require some ability in public speaking. Accordingly, it seems to be essential in the practice of interpreting, which deals with the oral production of a language in front of an audience. Herbert (1952:59) claims that "a good interpreter must be a skilled public speaker". Jones (1998:40) points out that "the skill of professional public speaking tends to be considered part and parcel of the interpreter's skills".

In consecutive whole speech interpreting, being aware of the necessity to keep the tone confident and positive to conceal the potential gaps in content understanding saves the situation and assists the interpreter to manage stress levels. Accordingly, public speaking and interpreting are interrelated. Therefore, in this study, public speaking skills were applied to CI teaching to examine the effects on students' confidence and quality of performance.

3. Drama Techniques in Interpreting Teaching

Effective communication is thought to encompass factors such as problem-solving and quick-thinking techniques. Both interpreters and stage actors must be able to deal with unexpected situations. Since a significant part of theatrical training involves empathy, it can help trainee interpreters grasp the nonverbal elements of messages and successfully incorporate them into their delivery. "The basic techniques of theatre are the techniques of communication" (Spolin, 1973:13). According to Cho and Roger (2010), the core of both interpreting and theatre is the art of communication. Quianthy and Hefferin (1999:28) also argue that "effective oral

communication involves generating messages and delivering them with attention to vocal variety, articulation, and nonverbal cues". However, the function of public speaking in interpreting is different from that of acting. To draw out this distinction, what Gile claims may be relevant:

> People who speak on their own behalf are free to speak their own mind and bypass possible production difficulties by rearranging the sequence of information and ideas, or by dropping or modifying some of these or using standard phrases which are not necessarily quite in line with their initial message. In contrast, interpreters find themselves forced to follow rather closely the path chosen by another speaker, if only because waiting for a sentence to finish before starting to interpret it would cause excessive short-term memory load (1995:163).

4. Anxiety Control

Communication anxiety is considered a significant factor in foreign language learning, especially in learners' oral performance. Allwright and Baily (1991:173) believe that "the more anxious learners are, the less likely they are to perform well in speaking". The literature on foreign language anxiety is very relevant to the situation of trainee interpreters as many students begin their interpreting studies with language skills that are inadequate for the purpose (Shaw et al., 2004). According to Cho and Roger (2010), the complex and inherently unpredictable nature of interpreting can be a significant source of anxiety for interpreting students, especially when they interpret in a language where their language skills and confidence may be limited. This, as Shafiei (2019) reports, is the case for Iranian undergraduate students, which can be attributed to the flawed method of admitting students to the B.A. program in the Iranian educational system. Unfortunately, this is contrary to the principles of the main interpreter education programs worldwide (Pöchhacker and Liu, 2014), which require full mastery of languages prior to admission.

Yan (2007) investigated language anxiety in interpreting students at the City University of Hong Kong. She claimed that near-perfectionism resulting from anxious feelings related to language interacts with other learning factors to affect students' performance. Her assertion is consistent

with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) findings that the discrepancy between language learners' mature thoughts and their less mature foreign language skills is a potential source of self-consciousness and anxiety. Interpreting is a very complex cognitive activity, and several elements may contribute to an interpreter's anxiety. The source of anxiety in interpreting may be related to the unpredictability of the task, the presence of the audience, and the time constraints.

Bowen (1994) points out that while the role of the interpreting teacher is not to terrorise the unworthy but to help build confidence, interpreting teachers often focus almost exclusively on students' mistakes. The danger is that such a focus reinforces students' pre-existing fears about their lack of ability, undermining confidence and lowering performance on interpreting tasks (Hansen and Shlesinger 2007). As Cho and Roger (2010) put it, this vicious cycle underscores the need for measures to address anxiety early in interpreting programs to prevent a loss of motivation through demoralisation. Emotional aspects present in drama and public speaking seem to influence trainees in a collaborative and creative atmosphere, and as Gibert (2014) claims, learning would be more memorable than in a neutral, predominantly cognitive environment. Bontempo et al.'s (2014) findings also revealed that self-esteem and emotional stability, openness to experience and conscientiousness are essential predictors of sign language interpreter competence. Therefore, this study sought to create a stress-free, learner-centred learning situation to help trainees overcome their anxiety and engage in interpreting tasks.

5. The Study

Given the importance of the production phase of CI as an oral task, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using acting and public speaking techniques in CI training to see the performance quality and confidence of students as speakers. Accordingly, the present study addresses the following research questions:

(1) Does exposing undergraduate students to drama and public speaking techniques affect the quality of their CI performance?

(2) Does exposing undergraduate students to drama and public speaking techniques affect their confidence as speakers?

Based on the findings of Bendazzoli (2007) on the positive effect of drama techniques on interpreting and the previously discussed theoretical and empirical justifications on the benefits of public speaking techniques, it is hypothesised that applying drama and public speaking techniques will have a positive effect on Iranian students; nevertheless, due to the paucity of local empirical evidence in this regard, it would be statistically safer to formulate null hypotheses (see Hatch and Lazarton, 1991). Therefore, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

$H_0$1: Exposing undergraduate students to drama and public speaking techniques does not affect their CI performance quality.

$H_0$2: Exposing undergraduate students to drama and public speaking techniques does not affect their confidence as speakers.

5.1. Method

The methodological approach taken in this study is a quasi-experimental pre-test treatment- post-test design (see Table 1 for more information).

Table 1: Design of the study

Groups	Pre-test	Treatment (Twelve weeks)	Post-test
Experimental Group (E.G) (N=25)	CI test (testing the quality of CI performance) + Personal report of confidence as a speaker (PRCS)	Applying drama techniques and public speaking skills to interpreting teaching in the Iranian academic setting	CI test (testing the quality of CI performance) + Personal report of confidence as a speaker (PRCS)
	CI test +	Applying common teaching practice of	CI test +

Control Group (C.G) (N=25)	Personal report of confidence as a speaker (PRCS)	interpreting in the Iranian academic setting	Personal report of confidence as a speaker (PRCS)

5.1.1. Teaching Procedure

In a traditional classroom, the learner passively absorbs the knowledge being passed on rather than actively engaging in the learning process. However, Richards and Rodgers (2001) believe that task-based teaching (TBT) aims to promote negotiation, modification, reformulation, and experimentation and improve learners' motivation to enhance learning. Therefore, TBT has been found to help promote interaction among learners and develop autonomy and responsibility. It can also be helpful for interpreting courses in the Iranian context and similar courses where there is limited time for teaching, which makes it challenging to engage learners and motivate them to engage in the learning process. Therefore, the learner-centred environment of TBT seems to help Iranian learners reduce their probable inhibitions and be more present in the learning process (see Shafiei et al., 2019).

Accordingly, the present researcher, who had participated in several workshops on drama techniques and public speaking and had knowledge of these techniques, designed a specific TBT lesson plan for CI courses for the experimental group.

5.1.1.1. Lesson Plan

The lesson plan designed based on TBT, similar to the pre-drama phase (warm-up), drama phase, and calming phase in theatrical activities designed for the experimental group, can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Task cycle in interpreting training

	The instructor: - introduces the technique and its supporting strategies and presents related articles and books on the skill

Pre-task	- provides the learners with relevant resources - familiarises the learners with how to do a task to achieve a successful performance (faultless performance, e.g. a speech with less hesitations or fillers.) The learners: - study the resources and make themselves familiar with the intended concepts - ask the instructor about any problems and difficulties they have encountered in understanding the instructions
Task-cycle	The instructor: - provides the simulated (preferred for the preliminary sessions) and authentic tasks for the class - divides the learners into pairs or groups - monitors and facilitates the learners' activities - encourages the learners to do the task in a stress-free collaborative manner - takes notes of learners' performance for future evaluation and guidance The learners: - do the requested task collaboratively - observe the teamwork requirements - ask for any clarification needed to do the task thoroughly and successfully
	The instructor: - gives feedback on the tasks done by the learners - encourages peer- assessment

Post-task	The learners: - do self-and peer- assessment - reflect on the process of managing the technique and its significance in doing an interpreting task - share with the class their viewpoints on the difficulties and problems they have encountered in doing the task - share with the class any solutions or innovation they have tried during the task completion

To clarify the task-cycle more, we can assume a scenario in which the trainer selects a video or audio of a specific context such as a political speech in language A and then divides the students into some equal groups inviting them to focus on a specific time span (for example, each group on 2 minutes). The trainer plays the video or audio for the students, pauses it at some points, and asks the group to consult each other and guess the word that best fits the muted section. The trainer can predetermine the muted section as a verb, adjective, or the like. At the same time, the other groups are required to take notes of the words offered by the group doing the task, and then they will discuss the choices in the post-task section. To the present researcher, such a task cycle that may be called an oral-cloze practice or test will affect students' diction, language flexibility, memory, and register awareness. Furthermore, teamwork may increase the engagement of the students' participation in production tasks. The same cycle can be repeated for language B.

5.1.1.2 Techniques Highlighted

The following are some of the drama techniques and public speaking skills used to improve learners' performance quality and confidence as speakers.

(1) Improvisation (focuses on fluent, grammatically and socially accurate language). The main aim here is to develop the learner's communicative competence. It is also helpful in gestural language. It also aims to develop imagination and dynamism of performance; it activates terminology and concepts and teaches how to organise ideas quickly and without preparation. In

this section, the tasks can be divided into prepared and unprepared improvisation. In prepared improvisation, learners take a topic (given by the instructor), read a good deal of material beforehand, and then present a 5-minute talk on that topic. In unprepared improvisation, learners improvise a talk on a topic given by the trainer in front of the others. They must use the body to produce appropriate speech and express emotions and ideas through gestures, posture, and facial expressions. The highly verbal and quick-thinking nature of improvisational games provides excellent creative opportunities for learners.

(2) Role-play (allow learners to view a situation from a different perspective by experiencing it independently). Role-playing games aim to allow learners to explore realistic situations through interaction with other people. Here, students are asked to work in a dialogic pattern, going through different sources and acquiring terminological knowledge on a particular topic of interest and simulating different situations in which an interpreter works. This pattern helps them to become familiar with different contexts, registers and the appropriate terminology that each situation requires. The role-plays are carried out in both A and B languages. For instance, they are required to simulate a doctor-patient initial meeting. In this regard, they have to be familiar with the type of discourse and terminology of this interaction. They are encouraged to navigate the internet and watch the videos or read the scenarios in both English and Persian in such encounters.

(3) Hot-seating (aims to understand characters' motives, background, feelings, personality, and relationships with others). The character in the role who is in the *hot seat* is interviewed by another learner who is also in a role, such as a judge, journalist, sociologist, and TV reporter. Before the show, the instructor gives the learners time to prepare the questions and discuss some commonly used terms related to the profession (for instance, cinematic terms). Here, the interviewer and interviewee speak in English or Persian, and two other learners are assigned as interpreters for the hot seater and interviewer. The learners take turns in these four roles, and they are encouraged to learn teamwork as well. The role plays may last for 30-35 minutes. The preference for speaking is first in Persian and then in English.

(4) Body language activities and pantomime (focus on the importance of body language and para-linguistic features in conveying the message and guessing the feelings and thoughts of others). Through each technique, learners are encouraged to slip into roles and duplicate gestures, posture, intonation and speech rhythm in different situations. They are also motivated to maintain eye contact with the audience and take fewer pauses when speaking and interpreting the two languages studied.

5.1.1.3. An Example of a CI Task

The instructor here asks the trainees to take responsibility for a simulated talk show and engage in an interaction to introduce situational interpreting. The interviewer (one of the students) and the interviewee (another student) speak in English, and two other students are assigned to interpret the interviewee and the interviewer consecutively into Persian. The students determine when to pause interactants. The interpreters can take notes. Such role plays help the learners engage in speaking, reduce fears, and observe body language skills and the like.

5.2. Participants

Participants were selected using the convenience sampling method. Two classes of 62 participants were selected from two universities, one public (state-run) and one private (commonly known in Iran as Azad University). The participants were male (22) and female (23) and varied in age from 22 to 28 years. They were homogenised based on the number of courses completed in translation and interpreting and a mock TOEFL test. All were third-year students in English translation and interpretation who had completed one interpreting course plus six written translation courses. Two modules of listening and reading comprehension in a mock TOEFL test were administered to the students to determine their homogeneity in general English proficiency at the beginning of the study. Considering the standard curve and histogram of the participants' TOEFL scores, those with abnormally high or low scores were excluded from the results. Finally, twenty-five students remained in the control group and twenty-five in experimental. The administration of such a test was crucial because the participants were studying at two different universities. Participation in the study was voluntary and the research proposal was approved by the University’s research ethics committee.

5.3. Instruments

5.3.1. CI Test (Performance Check)

A 5-minute and 43-second sociopolitical audiovisual English speech served as a CI pre and post-test to assess students' CI performance, focusing on the delivery. It was a 641-word speech delivered by a native speaker of American English with an average of 130 words per minute. The text was played through a computer connected to high-quality speakers. Test takers translated the text from English to Persian consecutively. The English speech was divided into meaningful chunks based on reasonable pauses and the meaningfulness of the speaker's speech. Based on the meaningfulness, the chunks fluctuated from a clause to a complete sentence. This was done to homogenise the length of the chunks for all participants. Participants were filmed during the test. Filmed interpreter tests have an advantage over transcripts in that extra-linguistic factors can be observed. Another reason is that the present study aimed to compensate for the lack of audience in the actual situation, and filming is a way to simulate a stressful situation for the participants to see their reactions and performance. Each participant was simultaneously filmed while interpreting the source language on a computer. During each task, the researcher sat next to the camera as the participant's audience, coordinating the filming and controlling the pauses of the source language with another computer. The impact of the presence of the instructor was not the focus of the present study.

5.3.1.1 Text Selection Criteria

The text for the test section was selected based on the following criteria:

a. The text has to have a reasonable degree of difficulty to be used as a tool to measure the possible result in students' performance. Expert judgment was utilised. Bloomfield et al.'s (2010) list of listening passage characteristics and difficulties was taken into account as well. It has to be born in mind that we are not dealing with professional interpreters; that is to say, by no means do we expect the trainees at the end of the experiment to have turned into totally competent interpreters capable of dealing with interpreting a text with all the natural delicacies and complexities. Therefore, care was taken to ensure that the text would not pose such difficulties.

b. Authenticity, the general topic with little specialised terminology and logical length, should be considered in the text selection procedure (Tiselius, 2009). An authentic text (here, a socio-political speech), the topic of which was common in real-world interpreting experience, was used. Mahmoodzadeh (1992) considers the political text among essential types of texts which interpreters deal with. It is worth noting that simulated interpreting texts were utilised for in-class tasks in preliminary sessions, which carry all the characteristics of an authentic interpreting project except that they did not have a real client.

5.3.1.2. Reliability and Validity Concerns in CI Test

A test should have certain characteristics to be considered reliable and valid measures of the constructs under question. According to Farhady, Ja'farpur and Birjandi (2004, p. 125), "the notion of consistency of one's score concerning one's average score over repeated administration is the central concern of the concept of reliability". Reliability can be influenced by some factors that should be taken into account. The researcher controlled the following factors to increase the test reliability and validity as much as possible:

Structure of the test: the structure of the test regarding the homogeneity of text chunking, the speed of the speaker's speaking and the length of the test were observed.

Test input: variation in test input and difficulty levels were eliminated by presenting the students the same oral text selected based on the criteria mentioned before.

Administration: to avoid variation in the administration, the interpreting exam was administered in a language laboratory that trainees attended during the semester. Therefore, all students experienced the same place and physical conditions.

Scoring: even for the holistic rating, the same main criteria used in the rubric were discussed with the raters to be considered in their assessment procedure to reduce fluctuation in scoring as much as possible.

It is noteworthy that, as Farhady et al. (2004, p. 140) maintain, "since human beings are dynamic creatures, the attributes related to human beings are also dynamic." The implication is that it is inevitable to control the effect of the testees and the fluctuations in their performances.

Similarly, the concept of validity was addressed. It refers to the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Therefore, in addition to construct validity, to ensure the content validity the factors such as authenticity of the subject matter, which relates to "the frequency with which the topic of an interpretation is encountered in real-life interpreting situations" (Sawyer, 2004, p.99), the "difficulty of the exam material and the modes of interpreting" were taken into account (ibid, p.100).

5.3.2. Audio and Video Recorders

Audio and video recorders were used to film the participants during the interpretation tests. These recordings helped the raters to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' performance while performing the task.

5.3.3. Personal Report of Confidence as a speaker (PRCS)

Personal Report of Confidence as a Speaker (PRCS) questionnaire (Paul, 1966) is commonly used to assess public speaking anxiety. It is a 30-item questionnaire that has a true-false format. This 30-item true-false scale assesses subjective anxiety related to public speaking. Half of the items are reverse scored, with 'true' responses receiving a score of 1 and 'false' responses receiving 0. The total score is the sum of all items, with higher scores indicating greater speech anxiety. Internal consistency (α=.91; Daly, 1978), 2-week retest reliability (r=.81), and convergent and discriminant validity of this measure have been demonstrated (Klorman et al. 1974; Paul 1966). A large body of evidence supports the reliability and validity of the PRCS (see Phillips et al. 1997).

5.4. Procedures

A CI test and a PRCS questionnaire (Paul, 1966) were administered to both experimental group and control group to test the equality of the two conditions in terms of students' interpreting performance and confidence level before the experiment. Then, learners in the experimental

group underwent twelve-week treatment spending 4 hours per each technique (see Table 1). Meanwhile, learners in the control group underwent the common practice of interpreting in Iranian universities, which according to Mousavi Razavi (2015) and confirmed by Shafiei et al. (2019), is similar to listening and speaking language courses without applying any unique CI-specific technique or the suggested treatment techniques. After a twelve-week interval, both experimental and control group post-tests on CI and PRCS questionnaires were administered to see the difference between CI performances and confidence levels between the groups.

5.5. Scoring Method

The 50 videotaped tests were analytically evaluated by two raters.

The main criterion was performance/presentation/delivery, which had eight sub-categories with specific weights taken from an analytical rubric developed for CI assessment in Iran (Shafiei, 2019). Finally, the sub-categories in a checklist format were given to the raters as following:

1. The student demonstrates fluent text/message delivery (few pauses, hesitations, filler words, and false starts).

2. The student conveys an impression of confidence (through eye contact and appropriate gestures and posture).

3. The student uses clear (not mumbled) articulation.

4. The student reproduces the source text/message at an appropriate rate. (appropriate rate: not talking too fast or too slow)

5. The student has precise pronunciation.

6. The student avoids backpedalling and self-correction. (backpedalling: changing ideas)

7. The student delivers an interpretation with the correct intonation.

8. The student has an appropriate voice volume. (appropriate voice volume: not too quiet or too loud)

Each feature in 1 and 2 was assigned 1 point, and the remaining features were assigned 0.5 points, making a total score of 5.

5.6 Raters

Two raters, who were unaware of the study's intervention process, were recruited and asked to make analytical judgements about the interpretation of the pre-and post-tests, based on specific criteria mentioned earlier, which were discussed with them in a moderation session. As in most moderation sessions, the primary purposes are: identifying the similarities and differences in judgment, resolving any differences, achieving consistency of judgments, and achieving a shared understanding of the consistency of criteria and language used to assess. Without such sessions, raters are more likely to make impressionistic judgement. In addition to performance criteria, ethical issues regarding filmed participants were also discussed with them.

Table 3 presents the demographics of the raters.

Table 3: Demographics of raters

No	ID	Gender	Years of experience in professional interpreting (Consecutive and Simultaneous)	Experience in interpreting assessment	Age	Current Degree
1	HT	Male	14	10	41	M.A. in translation studies

2	AG	Male	12	9	39	M.A. in translation studies

6. Results

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for the mean scores of the CI and PRCS questionnaire for both experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) before treatment (pre-test). As shown in Table 4, the mean scores for both tests are very similar in the two groups; however, to determine if the differences between the means for the pre-tests were statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was performed.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for CI performance and PRCS questionnaire pre-tests

Group	Variables	N	Mean	SD
CG	CI Performance	25	2.2300	0.85367
	PRCS Questionnaire	25	15.0800	8.11850
EG	CI Performance	25	2.4000	0.97895
	PRCS Questionnaire	25	15.1600	7.71190

Table 5: Independent samples t-test for EG and CG on pre-tests

Test	df	Significance (two-tailed)	Mean difference
CI test	48	0.516	0.17000
PRSC Questionnaire	48	0.972	0.08000

As the results of an independent t-test for the pre-tests show (see Table 5), there is no significant difference between the EG and CG group on the CI test (t (48) = 0.52, p .05) and PRCS questionnaire (t (48) = 0.97, p .05), so the two groups were relatively equal in terms of CI performance and PRCS. This result makes sense since there should be no difference in their pre-test at the beginning of the intervention.

Our first research question is whether exposing students to drama and public speaking techniques significantly affects CI performance. To answer this question, we need to examine the post-tests (see Table 6 and 7) for CI performance of the two groups. The mean scores for CI presented in Table 6 show a considerable difference between EG (3.90) and CG (2.69) in CI performance. Moreover, the results of the independent samples t-test (see Table 7) confirm that in the post-test, the students of EG performed better than the students of CG in terms of CI performance (from 2.23 to 2.69) (i.e., from 2.4 to 3.9). (p=0.000). As the results of the independent t-test for the post-test show, there is a significant difference between EG and CG in both the CI test (t (48) = 0.000, p .05) and the PRCS test (t (48) = .005, p .05).

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for CI and PRCS questionnaire *post-tests*

Group	Variables	N	Mean	SD
CG	CI performance test	25	2.69	0.84249
	PRCS Questionnaire	25	13.40	7.96869
EG	CI performance test	25	3.90	0.81330
	PRCS Questionnaire	25	7.6000	5.90903

Table 7: Independent samples t-test for E.G and C.G on post-tests

Test	df	Significance (two-tailed)	Mean difference
CI performance test	48	0.000	1.21
PRSC Questionnaire	44.266	0.005	-5.8000

Given that CG and EG were the same in the pre-tests (see Tables 4 & 5) and that the only factor that distinguished the two groups was EG's engagement with acting techniques and public speaking (the treatment), it is reasonable to attribute the observed difference to the intervention that the EG received. Thus, there is good evidence that engagement with these treatment techniques could positively influence learners' CI performance.

Our second research question was whether performing drama and public speaking significantly affects learners' confidence as speakers. The descriptive statistics in Table 8 show a significant decrease in the experimental learners' scores on the PRCS, indicating an improvement in their confidence. This, in turn, demonstrates that the EG treatment positively impacted the learners' scores in the PRCS post-test. The impact is statistically significant in Table 7, where the independent sample t-test indicates the statistically significant difference between the PRCS mean scores of the EG and CG.

In addition, the assessment of inter-rater reliability is often required for research designs in which data are collected through the ratings of trained or untrained coders. Inter-rater reliability was calculated by the correlation coefficient between the set of scores marked by the two raters for test interpretation. Therefore, the result of the Pearson correlation coefficient for the pre-test and post-tests of interpretation tests (Table 8) is as follows:

Table 8: Inter-rater reliability

Tests	N	Reliability Indexes
Pre-test (CG)	25	.957

Pre-test (EG)	25	.985
Post-test (CG)	25	.823
Post-test (EG)	25	.895

Table 8 shows that the inter-rater reliability for the pre-test and post-test indicates a high degree of agreement between the two raters.

7. Limitation of the study

Despite positive findings of the study, it is plausible that a number of limitations might have influenced the results obtained. One of the major limitations of this study had to do with the small number of participants. The number of participants was too small to generalize beyond the context of this study; thus, with no claim on the generalizability, this study proved to be effective in enhancing the trainees' quality performance in CI and PRSC test. Future researchers may replicate the study possibly with a larger sample size.

8. Discussion and conclusion

Although a reasonable sample of Iranian translation students participated in this study, recruiting a larger sample based on random sampling could have improved the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the study provided important insights that could potentially contribute to existing knowledge about CI teaching in Iran and similar contexts. The present study sought to investigate the effectiveness of using drama and public speaking techniques on learners' CI performance and confidence as speakers. The first hypothesis of this study regarding the non-effectiveness of teaching drama and public speaking skills on CI performance quality in Iranian undergraduate translation students was rejected, as the EG showed a higher level of performance than the learners in the CG. A plausible interpretation for this difference is that the participants of EG became more motivated by their extensive exposure to drama and public speaking, and this motivation in turn positively affected their academic performance. Moreover, it is consistent with the idea that emotional activities influence one's performance and, more generally, the idea that "there are almost constant interactions between cognition and emotion in daily life" (Eysenck,

2006:407). The result is also consistent with Bendazzoli (2007) and Cho and Roger (2010) study, who emphasised the positive effect of theatrical techniques on student interpreters' performance.

According to Gabriella (2013), theatre techniques open the door to learning based on personal experience and discovery in interactive settings. To participate in a technique such as improvisation, one must use the body to produce appropriate language and express emotions and ideas through gestures, posture, and facial expressions (Wagner, 2002). Accordingly, in the present study, drama helped learners develop their oral language production, which was reflected in their results in the CI test. Moreover, acting out different situations helped them practice vocabulary specific to a given situation in both the source and target languages. Without the proper management of intonation, pitch, body language and necessary emotions, the text, no matter how captivating, cannot achieve the most expected result (Liu, 2002); this can only be achieved by making learners aware of such para-linguistic features. Improving EG performance quality in presentation/delivery components in CI from a communicative perspective (fluency and conduct factors as assessment criteria) ensures the positive effects of such awareness among students.

Concerning the second research question, the significant change in the post-test score on PRCS in EG compared to CG indicates the positive effect of using drama and rhetoric skills on learners' confidence as speakers and reducing their anxiety. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is also rejected. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the way such activities are presented, which require learners to perform verbally and non-verbally in front of others frequently. Therefore, these techniques allow them to use their linguistic and cultural skills and make them more confident and stress-free in performing the interpreting task. The techniques not only helped the learners to be competent but also confident in the delivery phase of the CI. This finding provides further evidence of the effectiveness of stress-free environments for language learning (Cho & Roger 2010; Amiryousefi 2016; Pertaub et al., 2001). According to Paul (2015), a collaborative environment without fear of failure helps students listen and perceive each other better.

During the implementation of the treatment, the researcher observed that the learners were motivated by the experiential learning to use their minds, bodies, voices and emotions to actively

and enthusiastically convey the messages they receive from the source text. Moreover, the learner-centred structure of the class seems to be another crucial factor, as participants admitted, in reducing learners' anxiety.

In relation to the second research question, it might be asked why learners' confidence as a part of personality was increased so much in such a short period of time. However, this question can be answered by looking at the impact of frequent exposure on learning. Since exposure is an essential factor in cognitive behavioural therapy, the intensive exposure to the learning techniques in such a short period of time in the present study helped the learners increase their confidence as speakers.

Implementing lively and learner-centred techniques in an academic context would have a positive impact on learners' performance and prepare them for real-world interpretive tasks. This fact is especially crucial in CI, where the contact is face-to-face and the audience is present to judge the person's performance. Thus, as the findings of this study suggest, one route to interpreting pedagogy that promotes the development of the delivery facets of language production is to apply the task-based teaching (TBT) approach in the academic context of interpreting instruction. Considering that not all trainers are familiar with acting and speaking techniques, it is still highly recommended that trainers at least try to incorporate engaging activities in the CI teaching context to lower students' affective filters, such as anxiety, by making them more present in the learning process.

In light of the findings in this study, undergraduate interpreter trainers may be prepared to use the techniques and teaching approach suggested in this article in their teaching practice. This research, which focused on interpreting teaching in academic settings in Iran, only examined the learning context of whole consecutive speech interpreting. It is recommended that further research be conducted in other regions and focus on other types of interpreting, such as dialogue interpreting.

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