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GenAI for Self-Directed Individual and Collaborative Learning in the Training of Conference Interpreters for the European Union Institutions

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Abstract

Students pursuing studies in conference interpreting with a view to taking the European Union's interinstitutional accreditation test are generally required to invest in self-directed individual and collaborative learning to complement their in-class training. Digital technologies may prove beneficial in this regard. The present paper discusses the four main digital technologies in the interpreting workflow, viz., computer-assisted interpreting training (CAIT) tools, computer-assisted or computer-aided interpreting (CAI) tools, remote or distance interpreting, and machine interpreting. While there may be some overlap, generative AI (GenAI) is proposed as a fifth, distinct category. Four piloted GenAI-based proposals are put forward to complement in-class training, along with their learning outcomes and suggested assessment method. In addition, the importance of critical AI literacy is addressed as a key skill for both trainers and students in preparing for institutional interpretation in the 21st century. Finally, the paper presents the results of a small-scale survey among students, gauging their experiences using GenAI for individual and collaborative tasks in the framework of a postgraduate program training students for the EU's interinstitutional accreditation test. While limited in size and scope, the survey provides insight into student engagement with this new technology and supports further curriculum refinement.

Keywords: technology, artificial intelligence, generative AI, conference interpreting, European Union institutions, interpreter training, self-directed learning, collaborative learning, survey

1 Introduction

Conference interpreter training programs in Western Europe generally span one to two academic years and are mostly underpinned by the standards and best practices

established by international associations such as AIIC[1] and CIUTI[2]. In Europe, a number of higher education institutions[3] which train students to cater for the interpreting services of the European Union institutions have joined forces into the EMCI[4] consortium. The latter has established a core curriculum and provides support by means of digital tools, such as practice speeches by interpreter trainers and pre-recorded lectures.

Given the limited number of contact hours in most training programs, students are required to invest in self-study and collaborative learning (Kalina and Barranco-Droege 2022, 330). The shift from a trainer-centered to a learner-centered approach in recent decades has resulted in collaborative learning practices gaining recognition in interpreter training (Rui and Salaets 2025, 1–2). Group practice is not only engaging and stimulating, it also promotes the creation of additional practice material and the exchange of valuable feedback, which is intrinsic to learning (Gillies 2024, 13) and may be tracked through portfolios (Kalina and Barranco-Droege 2022, 330).

In this framework, the use of new digital technologies is not only beneficial but also essential in order to prepare students for the technological advancements that await in industry post-graduation. Since the COVID-19 crisis, digital technologies have played a pivotal role in both industry and interpreter training, with AIIC, CIUTI, and EMCI highlighting their relevance. The interpretation services of the European Union institutions[5] have also joined the heated debate on the increased deployment of digital technologies, and the associated risks and uncertainties. In 2025, DG SCIC, the Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission, dedicated its annual Interpreting Europe Conference[6] to artificial intelligence, inviting industry experts, academics, and institutional players to reflect on the possibilities and challenges of AI in interpretation.

The present paper is a response to the call by Pym and Hao (2025, xxiii) to involve students in the testing of new technologies, including AI, and to reflect on their experiences and findings. While Pym and Hao (2025) focus primarily on language learning and translator training, with marginal reference to interpreting, the present paper shifts the focus to the training of conference interpreters for the European Union institutions. The aim of the proposals presented is to encourage the incorporation of interpreting technology into the curriculum in a structured manner, as advocated by

[1] The International Association of Conference Interpreters: https://aiic.org (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[2] Conférence internationale permanente d'instituts universitaires de traducteurs et interprètes: https://www.ciuti.org (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[3] Fifteen at the time of writing, viz., March 2025
[4] European Masters in Conference Interpreting: https://www.emcinterpreting.org (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[5] The Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission (DG SCIC), the Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences of the European Parliament (DG LINC) and the Interpretation Directorate of the Court of Justice of the European Union
[6] https://commission.europa.eu/get-involved/events/interpreting-europe-conference-2025-02-06_en#anchor-programme (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

Defrancq (2023, 302), with particular emphasis on self-directed individual and collaborative learning.

An overview of the technology tools commonly used in the interpreting workflow and in training programs is followed by a proposal to integrate generative AI (GenAI) tools into the curriculum, particularly for self-directed individual and collaborative learning. The strategies proposed are grounded in recent literature (Fantinuoli 2022; Fantinuoli 2023; Corpas Pastor and Defrancq 2023; Pym and Hao 2025), and the proposed exercises draw on experience at the University of Malta, where the Master in Interpreting Studies was recently redesigned to include the use of GenAI for individual and collaborative tasks both in the classroom and beyond.[7] This program trains students for conference interpreting at the European Union institutions. Hence, the approaches described apply mainly, but not exclusively, to training for this specific institutional context, particularly with a view to graduates taking the European Union's interinstitutional accreditation test.[8] It must be noted that while empirical studies are still ongoing, initial exercises both in and outside the classroom have produced encouraging results.

The use of digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, presupposes sound digital literacy and critical thinking skills. The present paper therefore addresses critical artificial intelligence literacy and the discerning of ethical concerns as essential components of a pedagogical framework integrating such technologies.

Lastly, the paper outlines the findings of a small-scale survey gauging student engagement with GenAI for individual and collaborative tasks, specifically glossary creation, the summarization of lengthy documents, speech writing, and mock debates.

2 Technology Tools in Interpreter Training

Technology has been intrinsic to conference interpreting since its inception in the 1920s (Fantinuoli 2022, 508), when the first simultaneous interpreting system was made operational by Boston businessman Edward A. Filene for use at conferences of the International Labour Organisation (Baigorri-Jalón 2021, 5; Kalina and Ziegler 2015, 410). However, it was not until the Nuremberg Trial in 1945–1946 that the equipment was first used on a large scale, garnering international attention and laying the foundations of conference interpreting as we know it today (Behr 2015, 288).

In the past two decades, and more recently since the COVID-19 pandemic, the interpreting profession, and conference interpreting in particular, has been faced with

[7] The redesigned Master in Interpreting Studies was launched in October 2024. The programme of study and language profiles can be found on https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/overview/pmisftt-2025-6-o/ (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

[8] For more information about the interinstitutional accreditation test, see https://europa.eu/interpretation/freelance_en.html (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

a relentless technological turn due to the increased reliance on remote interpreting and the advent of AI. During the COVID-19 pandemic, out of necessity, the majority of interpreter trainers were obliged to master conferencing platforms with remote interpretation features such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Webex virtually overnight (Salaets and Balogh 2023, 266). In addition, the rapid evolution of AI-based machine interpreting, as discussed in section 2.4, has garnered scholarly attention and raised questions on the long-term viability of the profession (Downie 2020). This has resulted in interpreter training institutions rethinking their pedagogical approaches and the tools used both inside and outside the classroom to train conference interpreters for the 21st century.

It must be acknowledged that the entire interpreting workflow is now underpinned by digital technologies, and their use is expected to increase further in the near future. Four categories of digital technologies can be identified in the interpreting workflow *(ibid.)*:

1. Computer-assisted interpreting training (CAIT) tools
2. Computer-assisted or computer-aided interpreting tools
3. Remote or distance interpreting
4. Machine interpreting

A fifth, rapidly emerging area of digital technology shall be added to this list, viz., Generative AI (GenAI), as described in detail in section 3.

The training of conference interpreters is by definition technology-intensive and encompasses several, if not all, of the digital technologies listed above. Sections 2.1 to 2.4 provide a brief description of each of these four categories, along with examples and practical applications in self-directed individual and collaborative learning processes. Subsequently, section 3 defines GenAI.

2.1 Computer-Assisted Interpreting Training (CAIT) Tools

CAIT tools harness the possibilities of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to augment interpreter training (Sandrelli and de Manuel Jerez 2007, 269; Prandi 2020). These tools are used both by trainee conference interpreters and by qualified, practicing interpreters to enhance their skills. CAIT tools encompass a variety of applications, from speech databases or repositories to authoring tools, virtual learning environments, and remote teaching platforms (Fantinuoli 2022, 512). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, digital training communities, such as online or hybrid interpreter training groups, have also become increasingly popular.

A first category of CAIT tools – and probably the most widely used in the training of conference interpreters – is that of speech repositories. The best-known is the Speech

Repository 2.0[9], developed by DG SCIC. This CAIT tool provides trainers and students with access to over 4,500 speeches[10], labelled according to their suggested use (consecutive without notes, consecutive or simultaneous) and difficulty level, from beginner to advanced/test-type, and accompanied by keywords. For some speeches, downloadable transcripts are also provided, which students can use for text analysis, memory exercises, sight translation, and/or terminology work. The speeches in this database are modelled on the ones used in the interinstitutional accreditation test and are hence ideal to prepare for this test. A recent initiative by DG SCIC is the Dedicated Speech Repository for Trainers, which was launched in 2024 and provides trainers with exclusive access to speeches that are not publicly available in a limited number of languages.[11]

A second category of CAIT tools is that of authoring tools, which allow interpreter trainers to create custom exercises mirroring real-life environments, with video- and audio-recording functionalities, as well as assessment features (Fantinuoli 2022, 511). Many of these tools have been discontinued or have become obsolete due to limited interest from trainers *(ibid.)*.

Virtual learning environments are a third category of CAIT tools, which promote situated and immersive learning (Braun and Slater 2014; Fantinuoli 2022, 511). Through these tools, trainee interpreters engage with 3D virtual spaces and avatars, which is thought to facilitate learning (Sandrelli and de Manuel Jerez 2007, 269). Such tools are not commonly used in the training of conference interpreters. A less immersive yet equally engaging subcategory consists of platforms which take the form of online resource databases and interactive exercise banks, such as ORCIT[12], a project funded by the European Commission, or interpreter practice groups modelled on the Speech Repository format. These online or hybrid practice groups are managed by trainee or professional interpreters, who deliver and record speeches for peers inspired by those in the Speech Repository 2.0. Many of these speeches are made available freely online, allowing students to use them for individual or group practice.[13] Many universities also use virtual learning environments such as Moodle, through which students can manage their course materials, upload and access speeches and practice materials, join online or hybrid lectures, and engage in conversation with peers and trainers through discussion forums.

CAIT tools lend themselves well to self-directed individual and collaborative learning. They are generally introduced to students early on during their in-class practice and are

[9] https://speech-repository.webcloud.ec.europa.eu (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[10] See previous footnote.
[11] Five at the time of writing (March 2025): English, French, Portuguese, Arabic and Chinese
[12] https://orcit.eu/ (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[13] Examples at the time of writing (March 2025) include the Interpreters in Brussels Practice group, REPRIS Madrid, Interpreters in Toronto, and Toronto Interpreters Practice (TIP), which all have a web presence.

arguably the most accessible, user-friendly, and commonly used tools by trainee conference interpreters.

2.2 Computer-Assisted or Computer-Aided Interpreting (CAI) Tools

Computer-assisted or computer-aided interpreting (CAI) tools are designed to support interpreters in one or more parts of the interpreting workflow, from assignment preparation to terminology extraction and management, among others (Fantinuoli 2018, 155; Fantinuoli 2022, 512–513). In their most basic form, these tools, which may be corpus-based and include concordance functionalities, allow interpreters to compile and manage terminology and to retrieve it in the booth. More advanced tools enhanced by Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), such as the Artificial Booth Mate (ABM), are also gaining ground (Defrancq 2023, 302). The latter extracts items such as numbers or terms from the source speech and displays them on a screen in the booth *(ibid.)*, thus giving the interpreter real-time visual access to known problem triggers. Research in this relatively new field is ongoing but has produced promising results (Defrancq and Fantinuoli 2020; Pisani and Fantinuoli 2021). An alternative for trainee conference interpreters who do not have access to ASR-enhanced artificial booth mates are AI-generated captions and transcripts. When using speeches from interpreter practice groups, auto-generated captions and transcripts – while not always equally accurate and not originally intended for use by interpreters – may be used as rudimentary artificial booth mates to gain instant visual access to numbers and names. They can also help students double-check vocabulary and assess the difference in cognitive load when interpreting with and without text.

Digital pens, which combine audio recording with note-taking, as well as tablets and smartpens to replace traditional notebooks and pens, are another example of CAI tools that are attracting attention from scholars and industry experts alike (Ahrens and Orlando 2022, 40–42). While conference interpreters work mostly in simultaneous mode, including at the European Union institutions, consecutive interpreting is still used in meetings where no equipment is available and in high-stakes bilingual meetings between politicians and/or diplomats *(ibid.*, 34). In addition, consecutive interpreting is considered a solid foundation for students to acquire the techniques required for simultaneous interpreting. The interinstitutional accreditation test therefore includes a consecutive component. Hence, this category of CAI tools is certainly relevant in conference interpreter training.

DG LINC, the Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences of the European Parliament, in its Memorandum of Understanding with universities training conference interpreters for the European Union institutions[14], stipulates that

[14] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/236214/memorandum.pdf (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

students should be taught how to use new technologies, including CAI tools and platforms for remote simultaneous interpreting, which are discussed in section 2.3 below.

2.3 Remote or Distance Interpreting

Remote or distance interpreting is an interpreting mode where interpreters and participants are not necessarily in the same physical space (Seeber and Fox 2022, 491) and requires the use of ICT in the form of digital platforms.

AIIC makes a distinction between four types of remote or distance interpreting depending on the interpreters' visual access to the speaker(s) and the audience (AIIC, n.d.), viz., (1) videoconference interpreting, (2) audioconference interpreting, (3) video remote interpreting, and (4) audio remote interpreting. These are described in detail in AIIC's position paper on this interpreting mode *(ibid.)*, the foundations of which were laid in the 1970s, with the technology being refined and its use becoming widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic (Downie 2023, 281).

During the pandemic, existing online conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Webex, were 'retrofitted' with interpretation features. As these platforms were not originally designed and intended for interpretation purposes, they have their limitations, notably a limited number of languages and the lack of a dual channel. The latter allows interpreter trainers to listen to the source and target speeches simultaneously with a single headset. Other platforms, such as Interactio, offer more advanced functionalities but are costly and therefore not accessible to all trainee interpreters.

While the shift to remote interpreting was inevitable during the pandemic, it is now a deliberate choice in both industry and in institutional contexts. In fact, all the European Union institutions rely on remote interpreting, to varying degrees. For example, in its 2023 Annual Activity Report[15], DG SCIC acknowledges that remote interpreting is gaining ground, but in 2023, 84.6% of meetings were still held in person. The Council of the European Union has relied on remote interpreting for years (Graves et al. 2012, 110) as has the European Parliament (Mouzourakis 2006). Given these developments, remote or distance interpreting should form an integral part of programs aimed at training conference interpreters (Seeber and Fox 2022, 504), including for the European Union institutions.

In this framework it is important to note that DG SCIC and DG LINC provide support to universities in the form of virtual classes, online pedagogical assistance, and mock conferences. Students are thus introduced to a number of remote interpreting

[15] https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/7ce6203a-1393-485a-ac6c-286c6bcf8b96_en?filename=SCIC_AAR_%202023_final.pdf (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

platforms[16] through these initiatives. This helps them identify the advantages and disadvantages of these tools and navigate technical challenges, such as potentially higher cognitive load and increased stress levels due to audio and video issues, or obstructed or unclear visual access to the speaker.

The use of remote interpreting platforms fosters independence in distance learning because students can practice remotely with peers regardless of their location. It also prepares them for the interinstitutional accreditation test, which is now fully administered online. In addition, the use of remote interpreting platforms enables students to think critically about the importance of proper video and sound equipment, such as cabled headsets and microphones, as well as professional demeanor, delivery, and presentation at a distance.

Students should be encouraged to interpret speeches live and in a virtual booth to explore the differences between the two in terms of cognitive load. A blended approach to the training of conference interpreters, consisting of an on-site and an online component, is therefore beneficial and advisable.

2.4 Machine Interpreting

Machine interpreting (MI) refers to "automatic speech-to-text translation, speech-to-speech translation or spoken language translation" (Fantinuoli 2022, 517). It is also referred to as "speech translation" (Pöchhacker 2024, 10) and "automated speech translation" (Downie 2023, 283). The concept of machine interpreting first appeared in the scholarly literature in the 1990s but the terminological confusion and lack of a stable definition have hindered its clear delineation (Pöchhacker 2024). Despite this semantic ambiguity, the common denominator in all definitions is that MI is fully automated, thus eliminating the human interpreter from the equation.

Despite the US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicting an increase in demand for human interpreting by 20% between 2019 and 2029, investments in MI have surged since 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic, and today interpreting technologies, including MI, are expected to affect the entire interpreting landscape (Downie 2023, 277–278). Interpreter training is no exception.

MI is arguably considered the main threat to the profession as it has ushered in a post-humanist view of interpreting. MI applications are already freely available, albeit in a limited number of languages, and it is not inconceivable to envisage their use in low-stakes settings, such as the provision of instructions in everyday tasks (Downie 2023, 289). However, there is no indication that MI will replace human interpreters in institutional contexts such as the European Union institutions in the near future,

[16] At the time of writing, at the University of Malta, the platforms used were Zoom, Webex and Interactio.

particularly due to ethical concerns and confidentiality issues. In addition, more research into the output of MI is required to shed light on the relevance of semiotics, human intuition, empathy and world knowledge in the interpretation of delicate subject matter in political negotiations, discussions and debates. This raises questions about the dichotomy between the visibility and invisibility of the interpreter, between the interpreter as a conduit and as an active agent. The human interpreter's role is said to fluctuate between non-participation and active participation (Pöllabauer 2015, 356). In the debate on the possibility of MI fully replacing human interpreters, the position of the interpreter on this spectrum should take center stage. If MI can fully and successfully replace human interpreters, is interpreting merely a mechanical process, and is the human interpreter therefore nothing but an invisible conduit? Research into the role of conference interpreters appears to suggest otherwise, underscoring the interpreters' active participation in constructing meaning (Diriker 2004).

In training, students should be made aware of the existence of MI tools and actively test them so as to critically analyze their output. A suggested collaborative exercise is to compare the output of an MI tool with live interpretation using authentic institutional speeches. The discussion should center on the role of the interpreter, linguistic differences, potential errors, fluency, time lag, suitability for purpose and ethical issues. The latter are key concerns as MI relies on big data[17] and Large Language Models (LLMs)[18], which also underpin generative AI models, as described in section 3 below. Ethical issues are addressed in section 4.

3 Generative AI (GenAI)

Before attempting to describe Generative AI (GenAI), artificial intelligence (AI) must be defined. There is no consensus on the definition of artificial intelligence (AI), making it an elusive concept (Sheikh et al. 2023, 15-16). A narrow definition is "imitation by computers of the intelligence inherent in humans" *(ibid.*, 15). A major limitation of this definition lies in the fact that 'human intelligence' itself lacks a clear definition *(ibid.)*. Therefore, the following definition of AI is better suited to the realm of translation and interpreting studies:

> "The use of computer technology to perform and augment tasks that humans can perform. Technically, AI is at work in all electronic translation technologies. The term has nevertheless come to be associated with the use of LLMs to perform language tasks based on prompts." (Pym and Hao 2025, xi)

[17] Big data can be defined as "the Information asset characterized by such a high volume, velocity and variety to require specific technology and analytical methods for its transformation into value" (De Mauro et al., 2016)

[18] "The use of algorithms that work on very large databases (theoretically as big as 'the Internet') to carry out language tasks like those that humans perform" (Pym and Hao, 2025, xiv)

A distinction must be made between 'strong AI' and 'weak AI'. 'Strong AI' is also referred to as Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) (Horváth 2021, 2). This form of AI implies sentience and is so far only a theoretical concept *(ibid.*; Bory et al. 2024). 'Weak AI' or 'functional AI', refers to tools and machines that execute specific tasks normally performed by humans in a highly precise manner (Horváth 2021, 2). It is also labelled 'narrow AI' (Bird et al. 2020, 1). It is important to highlight that AI tools rely on big data, algorithms and deep learning[19], which has resulted in increased accuracy. However, at present, AI tools only *mimic* human behavior. As they are not sentient, they do not have the ability to reason as humans do.

AI became well-known to the general public with the launch of ChatGPT by OpenAI in 2022. ChatGPT, or 'Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer' is a conversational chatbot based on generative artificial intelligence or GenAI, a form of weak AI which "can generate human-like text and creative content" (Fui-Hoon Nah 2023, 277). GenAI uses artificial intelligence to "perform operations based on inputted instructions ('prompts') and a very large database" (Pym and Hao 2025, xiii).

The terms AI and GenAI are sometimes used interchangeably, but they differ in that AI does not generate content. AI tools are trained for specific tasks, for example, making predictions or identifying patterns in data. Unlike GenAI tools, they do not generate new data. GenAI creates new, original data based on the data in its training set. The outputs are not limited to speech and written texts, but also include images, sounds, code, and so on, with no two outputs being identical. Essentially, GenAI is a more advanced form of AI (Yusuf et al. 2024, 3).

GenAI has revolutionized the manner in which we live and work, also penetrating research and higher education. Yusuf et al. (2024, 4) conclude their literature review on the integration of GenAI in educational settings as follows:

> *"The studies collectively highlight the transformative opportunities presented by GenAI in education, including customized learning, research support, and enhanced problem-solving skills. However, they also underscore the importance of addressing challenges such as biases, ethical considerations, and the need for responsible implementation. Thus, the integration of GenAI in higher education requires a careful balance between harnessing its potential and mitigating associated risks."*

Several of the tools described in sections 2.1 to 2.4 rely on AI and/or GenAI, notably CAI tools and machine interpreting. Before presenting additional practical GenAI applications for the training of conference interpreters in section 4, section 3.1 addresses a number of ethical concerns that must be taken into consideration in the adoption of GenAI in the curriculum.

[19] Deep learning refers to machine learning systems that operate based on large Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) with multiple layers and vast training data sets (Bird et al., 2020,2)

3.1 Ethical Concerns

Ethics refers to "a branch of moral philosophy that seeks to establish principles of fairness or justice (or right and wrong behavior)" (Setton and Prunč 2022, 144). In the framework of proposals for curriculum enhancement through the integration of GenAI, trainers and students must be aware of both AI ethics and the ethics of AI in education.

AI ethics deals with "the important question of how human developers, manufacturers and operators should behave in order to minimize the ethical harms that can arise from AI in society, either arising from poor (unethical) design, inappropriate application or misuse" (Bird et al. 2020, 2). These concerns, which also apply to GenAI, include data bias and quality, data privacy and ownership, and transparency, among others, as outlined by Horváth (2021).

Insofar as the ethics of AI in education is concerned, the focus is on "improving students' learning outcomes and their lifelong opportunities" (Holmes et al. 2021, 505). A critical issue here is the ownership and interpretation of data *(ibid.*, 506), which is particularly relevant to the proposal outlined in section 4.4.

Students must be made aware not only of ethical concerns but also of the importance of critical thinking when adopting GenAI tools. The emphasis should be on the ability to discern fact from fiction through proper fact-checking and on harnessing the potential of GenAI in a responsible manner. The aim is not to engage in a 'man versus machine'-style debate, but rather to identify how GenAI can complement the human interpreter of the 21st century. Trainers, on their part, should be aware that in the age of GenAI, the assessment of their students' (Gen)AI literacy should focus on creativity and critical thinking, as the latter cannot be outsourced to AI (Zhai 2022).

The aim of a critical and well-reflected use of GenAI is to foster Critical AI Literacy (CAIL), viz., "the skills needed to work with and through AI technologies, and the active awareness of its affordances and limitations" (Giustini and Dastyar 2024, 197). Once the ethical concerns have been properly addressed, trainers and students may proceed to introduce GenAI in the classroom and beyond, for self-directed individual and collaborative learning, as detailed in section 4.

4 GenAI in the Training of Conference Interpreters

The following sections, from 4.1 to 4.4, illustrate how GenAI may be used for self-directed individual and collaborative learning as a fifth, distinct digital technology in the interpreting workflow, in addition to the four technologies identified by Fantinuoli (2022). These proposals are derived from experiences in the training of conference interpreters for the European Union institutions at the University of Malta. The presented format is modelled on the proposals by Pym and Hao (2025) and supplemented with a suggested method for self-, peer- and/or trainer assessment.

4.1 GenAI for Assignment Preparation

Learning outcome: extract terminology, prepare glossaries and summarize documentation in a time-efficient manner

Task type: ideally collaborative

Assessment: critical analysis of the prompts and the output

Digitalization has transformed the manner in which interpreters prepare for assignments, giving them access to a wealth of resources at the click of a button (Fantinuoli 2022, 509). GenAI can be used to summarize documents, extract terminology, and create glossaries (Pym & Hao 2025, 107), which can subsequently be exported in the desired format. This is particularly useful when faced with lengthy, non-confidential specialized texts as documentation, such as EU directives, regulations, position papers, recommendations and opinions.

While this exercise can be presented as an individual task, given that conference interpreters generally work in teams of two or three, it is more suited to group work and may produce better results in a collaborative setting. Once divided into small groups, students are assigned a different GenAI tool to test, such as ChatGPT[20], Gemini[21], Copilot[22], and Claude[23]. They should keep track of the initial prompts used and, if applicable, the amended prompts.

The subsequent group discussion could focus on prompt engineering, the successful or unsuccessful processing of uploaded documentation, the quality of the glossaries produced, the format of the (exported) glossaries, linguistic and factual errors. Merging the outputs may result in a more complete and satisfactory result.

4.2 GenAI for Speech Writing

Learning outcome: prepare speeches for individual or group practice

Task type: individual or collaborative

Assessment: suitability for purpose, linguistic revision and editing, fact-checking

Interpreters are public speakers. They must be able to produce and deliver a speech in a competent manner (Gillies 2024, 117). A valuable exercise for trainee conference interpreters using GenAI consists of providing students with a set of speech criteria, from mode to format, difficulty, register, and density in terms of numbers and proper names, among others, and asking them to craft prompts to generate full or skeleton speeches using GenAI tools. Students participating in virtual classes offered by the

[20] https://chatgpt.com (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[21] https://gemini.google.com (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[22] https://copilot.microsoft.com (last viewed on 30 March 2025)
[23] https://claude.ai (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

European Commission and the European Parliament, and actively using the Speech Repository 2.0, are familiar with the criteria used by the European Union institutions.

After a speech has been generated, students should edit, revise, adapt, amend, fact-check, and possibly engineer more advanced prompts. The generated speeches may also be reinput into the GenAI tool to change the register and target audience, thus producing multiple similar yet distinct speeches on the same topic.

Once the speeches have been generated and edited satisfactorily, students can take turns delivering and interpreting the speeches. They can also compare their (recorded) interpretation with the translated version generated by the same GenAI tool or even with a machine-interpreted version.

Students who have passed the interinstitutional accreditation test and start working for the European Union institutions as accredited freelance interpreters or, at a later stage[24], as staff interpreters may be asked to participate in virtual classes in the framework of the pedagogical assistance offered to universities. In this setting, they are asked to prepare and deliver speeches and assess the students' output. Hence, the ability to produce a speech that meets the EU criteria is a valuable skill. GenAI can prove helpful in this context.

4.3 GenAI for Mock Debates

Learning outcome: prepare a mock debate as a group

Task type: collaborative

Assessment: group discussion on suitability for purpose

Mock debates, ideally multilingual, promote situated learning and help students build stamina in preparation for lengthy meetings and plenary sessions at the European Union institutions. However, logistically, they may be difficult to organize due to limited resources, time pressure and small student groups. GenAI can prove useful in shaping these debates, from the identification of suitable topics to the creation of structured scripts, the assigning of roles to speakers, and the preparation of speaking notes. While real-life debates are not always structured, in a training context it may be worthwhile to adopt a more systematic approach. GenAI can also be used to generate glossaries of EU jargon and to identify the linguistic conventions in place at the European Union institutions.

In this exercise, students use GenAI to shape a mock debate as a group from A to Z, from the debate topic to the roles of each student, their language regime as speakers/interpreters, their positions and any required glossaries. The task can be assessed by means of a group discussion following the actual debate. Was the topic

[24] All interpreters who pass the interinstitutional accreditation test begin their career as freelance accredited interpreters.

relevant to the training context and suitable for the progression level of the group? Were the roles assigned equitably, i.e., did all students have a fair amount of time inside and outside the booth? Were the arguments presented well-researched and factual? Were the glossaries relevant and complete? Can any issues be ascribed to improper prompt engineering?

4.4 GenAI for the Analysis of Feedback Logs

Learning outcome: track student progress

Task type: individual

Assessment: reflective essay

Feedback, ideally in the form of self-assessment, peer and trainer assessment, is an intrinsic component of the learning process. Students should be encouraged to keep track of their progress. When working towards interim and final examinations, and the interinstitutional accreditation test, the European Union's marking criteria for consecutive and simultaneous interpreting should be adopted.[25]

Feedback logs can be designed as tables listing each criterion, the progression of which is tracked using either binary variables or a Likert scale. The analysis of the tables should be incorporated into the curriculum at set intervals. Given that a manual or semi-automated analysis may be time-consuming and taxing on the students, GenAI tools can be used to generate graphs and/or summarize the data in the tables in a time-efficient manner, giving students a comprehensive, possibly visual, overview of their strengths, weaknesses and progress.

As explained in section 3.1, a critical issue here is data ownership and interpretation. Therefore, it is recommended that all data be either pseudonymized or anonymized before being processed by GenAI tools.

The output can be assessed by means of a reflective essay, in which the students compare their performance, either perceived or based on actual exam results, with their tracked progress.

The following section reports the results of a brief student survey on the use of GenAI for glossary creation, document summarization, speech writing and mock debates. Feedback logs were not included in this survey as they are being studied as part of another research project, the results of which shall be published in a separate paper.

[25] https://europa.eu/interpretation/doc/marking_criteria_en.pdf (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

5 Survey Gauging Student Experiences with GenAI for Individual and Collaborative Tasks

5.1 Methodology

During the academic year 2024/2025, five students completed the first year of the redesigned Master in Interpreting Studies at the University of Malta,[26] which trains students for the Maltese booth at the European Union institutions.[27] They were contacted by email and asked to participate in a short anonymous Google Forms survey to gauge their experiences using GenAI tools for individual and collaborative tasks. Two of the five students agreed to take part in this survey.

The survey consisted of five sections. The first section gauged student experiences with GenAI for glossary preparation. The second focused on the summarization of lengthy documents, the third on speech writing, and the fourth on mock debates. In the fifth and final section, students were asked to provide additional feedback and suggestions on the incorporation of GenAI into the curriculum. The survey questions can be found in Annex 1.

5.2 Findings

In the first section of the survey, the students were asked to what extent they found GenAI useful for the preparation of interpreting assignments, specifically for glossary creation, on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "not useful at all" and 5 "very useful". This same scale was used in all the subsequent survey sections. One student answered "3", and the other "4". Both students indicated that they found ChatGPT[28] the most effective tool for glossary creation. When asked whether GenAI was more useful for individual or collaborative tasks involving glossary creation, or both, the two students answered "both". As for the main challenges, one student encountered document upload errors, particularly with EU regulations. That same student considered the output quality to be acceptable, though it required extensive post-editing. The other student reported output quality, spelling, and the generation of nonexistent words as the main issues.[29]

[26] The Master in Interpreting Studies is a two-year programme consisting of a taught component (two semesters, equalling 60 ECTS), followed by a research component (one or two semesters totalling 30 ECTS). Students who have successfully completed the taught component meet the requirements for the European Union's interinstitutional accreditation test.

[27] The exercises involving GenAI are in accordance with the language profiles for this programme, which can be found on https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/overview/pmisftt-2025-6-o/ (last viewed on 30 March 2025)

[28] Other options were Gemini and Copilot, which the students also familiarised with in class. The survey also included the option 'Other', which none of the respondents selected.

[29] The students did not specify the input and output languages, but given the language profiles required in the programme, Maltese, a low-resource language, is assumed to be the output language.

In the second section of the survey, the students were asked to what extent they found GenAI useful for the summarization of lengthy documents, such as EU directives. Their replies mirrored those in section 1 with one student answering "3", and the other "4". Both students believed ChatGPT to be the most effective tool in this framework, and one student also found Gemini effective. In this section too, both students considered GenAI useful for the summarization of lengthy documents in both individual and group tasks. As for the main challenges encountered, one student once again indicated that document uploads posed an issue. The other student mentioned output quality as the main obstacle.

The third section of the survey focused on GenAI for speech writing, which the students felt was less useful, rating it "2" and "3". ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot were deemed to be the most effective tools. GenAI was described as useful for both individual and group tasks. As for the main issues encountered, one student mentioned effective prompting while the other prefers not to delegate speech writing to GenAI, as it limits engagement with the subject of the speeches and requires extensive post-editing.

With regard to the use of GenAI for the preparation of mock debates, the students rated its usefulness at "2" and "3". Gemini was deemed the most effective tool in this context, and both students agreed it was most helpful for group tasks. However, one student did not recall using GenAI for the preparation of mock debates, while the other did use it and identified spelling as the main challenge.

In the final section of the survey, one student provided additional feedback, stating that more exercises involving EU directives would be useful, particularly for glossary creation, to help students familiarize themselves with EU terminology.

5.3 Discussion

This survey, albeit limited in size and scope, provides insight into student engagement with GenAI tools in conference interpreter training and supports further curriculum refinement. The responses reveal that students perceived GenAI tools as useful, particularly for group tasks. They appeared most satisfied with ChatGPT in terms of effectiveness. Their critical thinking skills emerge from their ability to recognize the core issues associated with this technology, particularly output quality and incorrect spelling. While the students did not report the input and output languages, it can be assumed, based on the language profiles required to register for the Master in Interpreting Studies program, that Maltese was the main output language. Classroom-based activities were generally conducted with English as the input language. Given that Maltese is a low-resource language, it is unsurprising that output quality and spelling were identified as key issues. Further empirical research could investigate these aspects more thoroughly.

6 Conclusion

Digital technologies are rapidly transforming the interpreting workflow in industry and, by extension, in training. CAIT, CAI, remote, and machine interpreting are well-established and well-documented. However, GenAI could be added to these technologies as a distinct category of technology suited to self-directed learning, both individual and collaborative. A small-scale survey among students revealed that the introduction of GenAI into the curriculum at the University of Malta was well received, particularly for collaborative tasks. ChatGPT emerged as the most effective tool, despite challenges with output quality and the need for significant post-editing.

While acknowledging the ethical concerns that arise from the use of GenAI, the present paper takes the stance that GenAI is beneficial in the training of conference interpreters for the European Union institutions as it facilitates self-directed learning, particularly in group settings. In addition, it fosters greater independence, as well as analytical and critical thinking, as students are able to identify issues and acknowledge the need for thorough post-editing. The piloted exercises listed in the present paper and the survey results suggest that with proper guidance, GenAI tools can complement in-class practice and help students prepare for the interinstitutional accreditation test in a more independent manner.

It is hoped that the proposed GenAI-based exercises will serve as inspiration for interpreter trainers, students and researchers alike, and promote empirical research in this emerging field which will undoubtedly revolutionize the interpreting landscape and the pedagogical approaches to interpreter training in the years ahead.

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Annex 1 – Survey

The use of GenAI in the Master in Interpreting Studies

Anonymous survey information letter and consent form

Participation in this survey

Do you agree to participate in this anonymous survey?

O I agree to participate

O I do not agree to participate

1. GenAI for assignment preparation - Glossaries

To what extent did you find the use of GenAI useful for the preparation of interpreting assignments, specifically for glossary creation?

Scale 1 to 5

1 – Not useful at all

5 – Very useful

1.1. Which tool(s) did you find most effective for glossary creation?

☐ ChatGPT

☐ Gemini

☐ Copilot

☐ Other

1.2. Did you find the use of GenAI in glossary creation more useful for individual or group tasks, or both?

O Individual tasks

O Group tasks

O Both

1.3. What were the main challenges you faced when using GenAI for glossary creation (e.g., effective prompting, output quality, etc.)?

2. GenAI for assignment preparation - Summaries

To what extent did you find the use of GenAI useful for the preparation of interpreting assignments, specifically for the summarisation of lengthy documents, such as EU directives?

Scale 1 to 5

1 – Not useful at all

5 – Very useful

2.1. Which tool(s) did you find most effective for the summarisation of lengthy documents, such as EU directives?

☐ ChatGPT

☐ Gemini

☐ Copilot

☐ Other

2.2. Did you find the use of GenAI in the summarisation of lengthy documents more useful for individual or group tasks, or both?

O Individual tasks

O Group tasks

O Both

2.3. What were the main challenges you faced when using GenAI for document summarisation (e.g., effective prompting, output quality, etc.)?

3. GenAI for speech writing

To what extent did you find the use of GenAI useful for speech writing?

Scale 1 to 5

1 – Not useful at all

5 – Very useful

3.1. Which tool(s) did you find most useful for speech writing?

☐ ChatGPT

☐ Gemini

☐ Copilot

☐ Other

3.2. Did you find the use of GenAI in speech writing more useful for individual or group tasks, or both?

O Individual tasks

O Group tasks

O Both

3.3. What were the main challenges you faced when using GenAI for speech writing (e.g., effective prompting, output quality, etc.)?

4. GenAI for mock debates

To what extent did you find the use of GenAI useful in the preparation of mock debates?

Scale 1 to 5

1 – Not useful at all

5 – Very useful

4.1. Which tool(s) did you find most useful for the preparation of mock debates?

☐ ChatGPT

☐ Gemini

☐ Copilot

☐ Other

4.2. Did you find the use of GenAI in the preparation of mock debates more useful for individual or group tasks, or both?

O Individual tasks

O Group tasks

O Both

4.3. What were the main challenges you faced when using GenAI for the preparation of mock debates (e.g., effective prompting, output quality, etc.)?

5. Additional feedback and suggestions

Do you have any additional feedback and/or suggestions regarding the use of GenAI in the Master in Interpreting Studies curriculum?

Thank you.