BLENDED LEARNING SCENARIOS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN COURT INTERPRETING

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Abstract

By drawing upon cognitive resources, professional court interpreters should uphold as a guiding principle for their choices the need to preserve the pragmatics of the ongoing interaction between legal experts and witnesses during the trial, since participants' speech style, register and rhetorical strategies are bound to deeply influence the overall outcome of the judicial proceeding. In Italy, however, low quality standards and lack of specific training paint a grim picture of legal services with regard to the achievement of pragmatic equivalence in courtroom settings, thus suggesting the need for further research in this field. Given these premises, the aim of this paper is to propose a new didactic approach to provide adequate preliminary training for future consecutive court interpreters from English into Italian and vice-versa. In particular, after briefly discussing the issues, tasks and challenges of legal equivalence, an actual ESP course – developed in order to widen non-specialists' pragmatic and sociolinguistic micro-skills in court interpreting – is taken as a reference for effective needs assessment, syllabus design and material selection. The rationale of this approach lies in the creation of a student-centred and rich learning environment where multi-layered teaching methodologies, audio-visual resources and corpus-linguistic evidence are tailored to the learners' background knowledge and increasingly approximated to real-life situations. Specifically, this paper argues for the need for a flexible syllabus suitable for enhancing students' understanding of the spoken language of the law through the creation of 'blended learning scenarios' in which the analysis of popular legal movies can pave the way for more challenging activities aimed at identifying – in real-life trials – translation equivalents and pragmatic patterns from a cross-cultural perspective, with the ultimate goal of fostering students' procedural knowledge, i.e. the ability to predict and find the best interpreting solutions in professional situations when constrained by time pressure and extremely high-level expectations.

1. Introduction

The concept of legal equivalence in court interpreting is a multifaceted one, being related not only to the keeping of technical language and jargon, but also to all those pragmatic aspects concerning the social and inferential meaning-making characterizing the language of the courtroom where opposing parties strategically exploit rhe-

torical devices and language power to persuade the triers of fact (the judge or jury) of the truthfulness of their legal arguments. In this setting, accurate interpreting entails firstly knowing how to cope with these aspects from a cross-cultural perspective. In particular, interpreters should be fully aware of their role and ensure that the "context of situation" (Halliday 1985: 12), which is jointly negotiated and co-constructed by participants during the course of the interaction, is not inadvertently altered by the interpreter-mediated discourse which, by arbitrarily acting as a filter, could neutralize or amplify the accomplishment of specific communicative aims pursued by the speakers.

The difficulties pertaining to this task are immediately apparent when comparing the courtroom, as has often been suggested, to a battlefield where the main weapon is language. Here, the style of the message matters and the victory of a case is often dependent on how persuasively evidence is presented and elicited through questions and answers, rather than on how strong the case actually is. This last remark clearly emphasizes the close relationship existing in this context between illocutive force and form of the message and suggests that "interpreting semantically" (Hale 2010: 61), thus providing only the 'gist' of the message without transposing the illocutive force behind it, may lead to a translation loss, defined by various authors in terms of "pragmalinguistic failure" (Thomas 1983: 93), "linguistic distortion" (Gonzales *et al.* 1991: 5) and "communication breakdown" (Hale 1996: 65-66). On the contrary, "interpreting pragmatically" (Hale 2010: 61) – i.e. interpreting in a way that the same perlocutionary effects of the original message are achieved in the target language – requires specialized skills and training on the part of the interpreter in order to be able to detect and transpose, through appropriate stylistic means in the target language, those pragmatic cues with which participants strategically steer the interaction in particular directions. In this regard, it is worth noting that although it is still all too common for courts to rely on untrained bilingual volunteers or foreign language graduates who have not received any specific training before being allowed into practice, being bilingual, even fluently so, is an insufficient qualification for interpreters to guarantee a fair trial whenever foreigners are involved, as is blatantly exemplified by two famous Italian trials which received high international media coverage, namely the trial of Amanda Knox and the G8 trial in Genoa [1] (see Garwood 2012). These assumptions have been confirmed by empirical studies [2] demonstrating that untrained interpreters tend to alter the pragmatic force of the original message, hence leading to different perlocutionary effects in

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[1] Involving respectively the American student Amanda Knox and the British freelance journalist Mark Covell.

[2] Translators have been found to weaken the level of coerciveness, either by omitting tag questions in cross-examinations (Hale 2001; Rigney 1999) or by changing leading questions into other weaker types (Berk-Seligson 1999; Hale 2004; Rigney 1999). There is also evidence of omissions and mistranslations of discourse markers such as "well", "now", and "you see" (Fraser and Freedgood 1999; Hale 1999, 2001). Moreover, by drawing upon what O'Barr (1982) and O'Barr and Atkins (1980) have called a "powerful" and "powerless" speech style, Berk-Seligson (1988, 1990, 2012) and Hale (2002) found in empirical studies with mock jurors that interpreters who tended to use their own style rather than replicating the witnesses' affected the evaluation of the testimony on the part of the jury. In particular, those testimonies arbitrarily translated in a "fragmented style", adding hedges, hesitations and markers of vagueness and uncertainty, were evaluated more negatively than the original utterances, while those which omitted these elements were rated more favourably. On the contrary, when the interpretation was accurate, being faithful to both content and style, almost identical results were achieved.

the target language. Consequently, it can be argued that ensuring legal equivalence in court interpreting largely depends on cross-cultural pragmatic expertise, a proficiency which can only be built by exposing students to a rich learning environment featuring the real language usage they will encounter outside the classroom.

2. Course description, material selection and teaching methodologies

The results and materials presented in this study are based on an actual ESP course held for Italian undergraduate students with no previous experience in court interpreting. The main aim was to introduce them to the core knowledge, skills and abilities that qualified court interpreters should possess in order to interpret faithfully, by preserving the pragmatic force of the ongoing interaction in direct and cross-examinations.

In this section the main teaching methodologies, together with some of the activities proposed to students, are analysed in order to evaluate the benefits of introducing in ESP teaching "blended learning scenarios" where information – in the shape of accessible input – is introduced along a continuum from "popular" to "authentic" renditions of the language of the law.

2.1. *Preliminary needs assessment survey*

The course was preceded by an anonymous survey consisting of very simple questions aimed at identifying students' prior knowledge and familiarity with the spoken language of the law. The questionnaire was created on-line with Google Forms and then sent to students to be completed. Interestingly, courtroom discourse appeared to be the most distant area of legal expertise with respect to students' knowledge and everyday experience. Indeed, to the question "Have you ever attended a court hearing or a trial?" 94 per cent answered "no", hence clearly displaying a total lack of familiarity with this type of legal communication and setting. The majority of them (53%) also admitted that legal movies might affect their perception of real-life court proceedings. However, an even higher proportion (70.6%) expressed doubts about the reliability of movies in terms of accuracy and realism, hence showing their unawareness about the didactic benefits offered by these tools when supported by critical thinking skills.

The questionnaire also tested students' expectations about the language used in direct and cross-examinations. In this regard, while more than half of the students (65%) reported that what actually befuddles most laymen is the lawyers' use of rhetorical devices, some of them (35%) evaluated that comprehension problems mostly arise due to specialized terminology, thus demonstrating confusion with regard to the main features of written and spoken legal language. Finally, when asked to define translators' roles and aims, only a few of them (5.9%) claimed that interpreters should translate semantically, others (38%) stated that interpreters should insert, whenever necessary, personal explanations or clarifications for the benefit of witnesses and defendants, while the majority of them (56.1%) recognized the importance of preserving both content and style without any sort of alteration.

2.2. *Discovering courtroom questioning through popular legal movies*

The survey results suggested the need to tailor the input to students' limited background knowledge, therefore opening up the possibility of integrating into the syllabus,

at least in the early phases of the course, 'popular' audio-visual materials which could make their approach to the study of the language of the law more stimulating, by lowering their affective filter and level of anxiety (Krashen 1982).

In that respect, it is worth mentioning that even though in recent decades multimodal literacy has been strongly advocated in the field of General English (e.g. Cummins, Brown and Sayers 2007; Towndrow 2007; Vaish and Towndrow 2010) and in ESP courses (see Plastina 2013; Camiciottoli and Bonsignori 2015; Bonsignori 2018), in the legal domain the possibility of exploiting 'popular' renditions of the language of the law for teaching purposes is still dismissed by some conservative scholars stating that "it is beyond dispute that the cinematic portrayal of the American legal system and its personnel is far removed from legal reality" (Machura and Ulbrich 2001: 118).

Nonetheless, it is also equally important to highlight that in the academic field new paths have been strongly advocated, as evidenced by research showing that alternative approaches are possible. In particular, in her corpus-based study Forchini (2018) found very little linguistic and textual variability between naturally-occurring trials and movie courtroom scenes, an outcome which clearly suggests that movie language can be used "as a remarkable source […] for learning the specialized features of courtroom discourse" (*ibid.:* 245). Similarly, Vyushkina (2016) in her teaching manual entitled *Legal English Through Movies* claims that selecting film episodes according to a particular communicative situation can undoubtedly prompt students to focus their attention on typical language patterns, a didactic slant designed to develop cross-cultural and interlinguistic awareness while facilitating the acquisition of linguistic and non-linguistic pragmatic elements[3].

Finally, Canepari (2019), in her project aimed at finding new methodologies for teaching legal English in academic settings, fruitfully experimented the use of comics as well as other audio-visual and graphic products to help non-specialists understand some of the main features typical of legal language and foster the acquisition of a "communicative competence" to be used in professional settings (*ibid.*: 115-116).

As far as the course presented here is concerned, the use of audio-visual materials was accompanied by the inclusion of the flipped classroom model into the teaching methodology which provided the chance to devote classroom time for more engaging and productive activities aimed at stimulating learning by doing and teaching for skills.

Specifically, outside the classroom students were required to watch all courtroom scenes portrayed in the following popular legal movies, namely *Philadelphia, A Few Good Men, A Time to Kill,* and *Anatomy of a Murder* – evaluated by the American Bar Association among the best legal films ever made about lawyers and law (see Brust 2008) – and to identify, in terms of morphosyntactic features, the most common question types used in courtroom questioning (Table 1). Once in class, they were prompted to recognize in lawyers' questioning eight communicative functions (Table 2) which I

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[3] Even more remarkable is the growing debate aroused in the USA by the Law and Film Studies Movement (see Robson and Freeman 2005; Elkins 2006; Salzmann 2010; Meyer and Davis 2018; Corcos 2018) which in the last twenty years has been promoting the adoption of theoretical and methodological practices aimed at designing academic courses for law students by stressing the relevance of popular culture in the construction of law as well as the need to determine the level of accuracy of legal representation in motion pictures.

had previously elaborated to introduce them to power dynamics in courtroom discourse. These activities are summarized in the following tables (Table 1) (Table 2): some examples from the above-mentioned courtroom scenes are also included.

Question type	Description	Examples from the Movie Corpus
(1) Broad *wh*-questions	Questions asking broadly for descriptions, narratives and explanations often introduced by e.g., *how, why, what etc.*	Q. "Why did you think so?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)* Q. "And what happened?" *(A Few Good Men)* Q. "How did that make you feel?" *(Philadelphia)*
(2) Narrow *wh*-questions	Questions asking for specific pieces of information often introduced by e.g. *where, when, which, what, who etc.*	Q. "What was the order? *(A Few Good Men)* Q. "How long have you lived there?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)* Q. "And who is the chief psychiatrist at Whitfield? *(A Time to Kill)*
(3) Indirect questions	Indirect and more polite ways to ask for information or make requests.	Q. "Will you tell us what you found among these towels on the day after Mr. Quill was killed?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)* Q. "Would you tell the Court the substance of that meeting?" *(A Few Good Men)* Q. "Sheriff, if you would, will you please identify this weapon?" *(A Time to Kill)*
(4) Alternative questions	Questions which present two or more possible answers and presuppose that only one is true.	Q. "Were you satisfied, or were you pleased?" *(Philadelphia)* Q. "From which entrance did he come? From the lobby entrance or the outside entrance?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)* Q. "He took you all at once, or one at a time?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)*
(5) Grammatical *yes/no*-questions	Inversion questions which license only *yes* or *no* as default answers.	Q. "Lieutenant Kendrick, did you order Corporal Dawson and Private Downey to give Willy Santiago a code red?" *(A Few Good Men)* Q. "Do you know what constitutes rape under the law?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)* Q. "Can you see the lesions on your chest in this mirror?" *(Philadelphia)*
(6) Negative *yes/no*-questions	Inversion questions which license only *yes* or *no* as default answers. They contain negative elements and have already undergone an evaluation by the questioner, thus adding a tone of surprise or disbelief upon hearing the answer.	Q. "Wouldn't this form of discipline be considered a code red?" *(A Few Good Men)* Q. "Wasn't he in fact pretty well loaded that night, Mr. Paquette?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)* Q. "And didn't you swear to a lie to keep him from hitting you again?" *(Anatomy of a Murder)*
(7) Prosodic questions	Declarative sentences which lack morphosyntactic cues that clearly identify them as questions. They hint the belief of the questioner in the proposition and can be identified through the intonation used when asking the question.	Q. "Commander, you testified that it takes lactic acidosis 20 to 30 minutes before it becomes lethal" *(A Few Good Men)* Q. "In other words, in your case you happen to be an innocent victim of the AIDS tragedy" *(Philadelphia)* Q. "Then it would be fair to say that you found insane people sane for the purpose of a trial? " *(A Time to Kill)*
(8) Tag questions	Declarative sentences followed by a tag which can be divided into two categories: 1) Checking tags, composed of a declarative sentence and a tag of the opposed polarity. 2) Confirmatory tags which agree with the expression posed, e.g. "Right?", "Is that correct?"	Q. "You were present at the murders of Billy Ray Cobb and James Lewis Willred, were you not? *(A Time to Kill)* Q. "Kendrick ordered the code red, didn't he?" *(A Few Good Men)* Q. "As a homosexual, one is often forced to conceal one's sexuality, is that right?" *(Philadelphia)*
(9) Other	Constructions which do not follow within the previous categories, including elliptical and imperative constructions.	Q. "Shortness of breath?" (A Few Good Men) Q. "Really?" (A Time to Kill) Q. "Tell the Court what Lieutenant Manion had to say about the trial" *(Anatomy of a Murder)*

Table 1*. Movie Corpus*: Question types classification according to morphosyntactic features

Communicative Function	Description	Examples from the *Movie Corpus*
1. Construction of Evidential Discourse (CED)	Construction of a coherent version of the story by controlling the flow of information and by eliciting only those elements which fit into the lawyer's preferred reconstruction of the case.	Q. "Why did you go to Private Santiago's room on the night of August 6th?" (*A Few Good Men*) Q. "What happened then?"(*Anatomy of a Murder*) Q. "Please tell us in your own words what happened" (*Anatomy of a Murder*)
2. Eliciting Contrast (EC)	Lawyers often construct their own arguments by deconstructing the other party's version of events, thus exhibiting its weaknesses and inconsistencies and suggesting its unreliability.	Q. "Corporal Dawson's been charged with a number of crimes, why wasn't he charged with firing at the enemy without cause?" (*A Few Good Men*). Q. "Now since you went to find him and hold him for the police, why did you shoot him?" (*Anatomy of a Murder*) Q. "Dr. Harcourt, psychiatry is an effort to probe into the dark, undiscovered world of the mind, and in there the world might well be round, it could be square. Your opinion could be wrong, Dr. Smith opinion could be right. Isn't that true?" (*Anatomy of a Murder*)
3. Eliciting an Evaluation (EE)	Lawyers usually ask defendants, as well as lay and expert witnesses for evaluations, opinions and impressions on the evidence presented in court, in order to emphasize the strengths of their case and/or exhibit the weaknesses of their opponent's.	Q. "When Lieutenant Manion entered the bar, how did he appear to you?" (*Anatomy of a Murder*) Q. "What impressed you about him?" (*Philadelphia*) Q. "As far as you could tell, would you say that he was in complete possession of his faculties?" (*Anatomy of a Murder*)
4. Reformulation and Repair Strategies (RR)	Lawyers often deploy reformulation and repair strategies to paraphrase the answers provided by the witnesses and allow their own version of events to go on the record, by neutralizing the most troublesome parts in cross-examinations, as well as stressing the most favorable ones in direct examinations. These strategies are also used by lawyers to rephrase their own questions in case of non-cooperative witnesses.	Q. "You mean it's a lover's lane?" (*Anatomy of a Murder*) Q. "Could not tell right from wrong nor understand the consequences of his actions. Therefore, legally insane?" (*A Time to Kill*) Q. "I'll rephrase. Jeffrey, did you ever want to give Santiago a code red?" (*A Few Good Men*)
5. Reporting Evidence (RE)	Lawyers often report spoken or written testimonies previously rendered by witnesses and defendants, either to support their own version of events or to show discrepancies in the testimonies provided by the witnesses during direct examinations (i.e. impeachment by prior inconsistent statement).	Q. "According to the deposition, you said you were thrilled, impressed, overwhelmed by the quality of Andrew Beckett's work. Do you remember saying that?" (*Philadelphia*) Q. "You've testified the lesions on your face were visible to the people you worked with, correct?" (*Philadelphia*) Q. "As you left the bar, do you remember Alphonse Paquette stopping you and saying you'd better not run away from this? ... and your reply...do you want some, too, Buster?" (*Anatomy of a Murder*)
6. Suggesting blame (SB)	In order to deconstruct the other party's version of events, lawyers usually try to cast doubts on the credibility of hostile witnesses or defendants by suggesting some kind of blame on their part. However, they can never unnecessarily harass or embarrass them, in which case the question can be objected to by the other party for being unfair or prejudicial (i.e. they paint the party in a bad light to the judge or the jury) or for being argumentative (i.e. the lawyer is arguing with the witness during the cross examination).	Q. "Did you have anything to do with this file being... misplaced?" (*Philadelphia*) Q. "Isn't it true you have spent your life pretending to be something you're not, so much so that the art of concealment and dishonesty has become second nature to you?!" (*Philadelphia*) Q. "And that's why it had to be, poison, right, Commander? 'Cause Lord knows, if you put a man with a serious coronary condition back on duty with a clean bill of health, and that man died from a heart related incident, you'd have a lot to answer for, wouldn't you, doctor?" (*A Few Good Men*)
7. Eliciting an Emotional Response (EER)	Lawyers often try to elicit an emotional response from their friendly witnesses in order to prompt a favorable and empathetic reaction on the part of the jury. However, this technique can also be used to provoke an emotional response into a hostile witness who may disclose some important elements of the case and affect negatively his or her position in the eyes of the jury and/or judge.	Q. "How did that make you feel?" (*Philadelphia*) Q. "Do you think they should deserve to die?" (*A Time to Kill*) Q. "Do you still love her?" (*Anatomy of a Murder*)
8. Eliciting Physical Gestures and Actions (EPGA):	During the trial, witnesses can be asked to perform physical gestures or actions related to the evidence presented in court (e.g. the accepted practice of pointing at the accused when asked "Do you see the person, here in this courtroom, who committed this crime?").	Q. "If it pleases the court, I'd like to ask Mr. Beckett to remove his shirt, so that the jury can have an accurate idea of what we're talking about" (*Philadelphia*) Q. "Would you turn to the chapter that deals with code reds, please?" (*A Few Good Men*) Q. "Would you read your hand written remarks at the bottom of the page, please, sir" (*A Few Good Men*)

Table 2. *Movie Corpus*: Question types classification according to pragmatic purposes

2.3. Movie Corpus: *quantitative and qualitative analysis of question types in direct and cross-examinations*

After the in-class discussion, students were provided with the results obtained from the construction of the *Movie Corpus* containing all legal scenes set in a courtroom collected from the movies analysed, where each defendant and witness examination had been classified and annotated in terms of morphosyntactic type and communicative function performed (see Table 1 and Table 2), as well as contextualized in accordance with the legal procedures in which courtroom questioning occurred, i.e. direct and cross-examination of lay and expert witnesses [4].

The extensive coding scheme adopted (Table 3) (Table 4) shows the results of this quantitative analysis out of a total of 666 questions and stresses the main pragmatic purposes as well interactional mechanisms potentially realized by each question.

PRAGMATIC FUNCTION	DIRECT EXAMINATIONS (LAY WITNESSES)								TOTALS, QT (direct exam. lay witnesses)		CROSS-EXAMINATIONS (LAY WITNESSES)								TOTALS, QT (cross-exam. lay witnesses)	
	CONSTRUCTION OF EVIDENTIAL DISCOURSE (CED)	ELICITING CONTRAST (EC)	ELICITING EVALUATIONS (EE)	REFORMULATION AND REPAIR STRATEGIES (RR)	REPORTING EVIDENCE (RE)	SUGGESTING BLAME (SB)	ELICITING AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE (EER)	ELICITING PHYSICAL GESTURES AND ACTIONS (EPGA)	N°	%	CONSTRUCTION OF EVIDENTIAL DISCOURSE (CED)	ELICITING CONTRAST (EC)	ELICITING EVALUATIONS (EE)	REFORMULATION AND REPAIR STRATEGIES (RR)	REPORTING EVIDENCE (RE)	SUGGESTING BLAME (SB)	ELICITING AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE (EER)	ELICITING PHYSICAL GESTURES AND ACTIONS (EPGA)	N°	%
QUESTION TYPES (QT)																				
BROAD WH-QUESTIONS	21	4	17	0	1	0	3	0	46	25,8	6	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	12	15,4
NARROW WH-QUESTIONS	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	12,9	18	23	2	1	0	3	0	0	47	13,3
INDIRECT QUESTIONS	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	8	4,5	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0,6
ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	1,7
GRAMMATICAL YES/NO QUESTIONS	51	0	16	2	4	0	3	0	76	42,7	50	71	13	0	2	9	3	1	149	42,1
NEGATIVE GRAMMATICAL YES/NO QUESTIONS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	13	0	0	0	4	0	0	18	5,1
PROSODIC QUESTIONS	3	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	12	6,7	7	41	1	6	1	12	1	0	69	19,5
TAG QUESTIONS	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2,8	7	19	0	1	1	9	0	0	37	10,4
OTHER	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	4,5	3	2	0	0	2	2	0	5	14	3,9
TOTALS N°	113	6	34	11	5	0	6	3	178		94	174	19	9	7	41	4	6	354	
%	63,5	3,4	19,1	6,2	2,8	0	3,4	1,7		100	26,5	49,1	5,4	2,5	2	11,6	1,1	1,7		100

Table 3. *Movie Corpus*: Direct and cross-examinations (lay witnesses)

[4] Scenes staging the private lives of fictional characters and not concerned with the exercise of the legal profession were excluded from this corpus of legal-specific courtroom scenes, as well as those trial phases not dealing with direct and cross-examinations (i.e. opening statements, closing arguments, other lawyer-client interactions).

PRAGMATIC FUNCTION	DIRECT EXAMINATIONS (EXPERT WITNESSES)										CROSS-EXAMINATIONS (EXPERT WITNESSES)									
	CONSTRUCTION OF EVIDENTIAL DISCOURSE (CED)	ELICITING CONTRAST (EC)	ELICITING EVALUATIONS (EE)	REFORMULATION AND REPAIR STRATEGIES (RR)	REPORTING EVIDENCE (RE)	SUGGESTING BLAME (SB)	ELICITING AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE (EER)	ELICITING PHYSICAL GESTURES AND ACTIONS (EPGA)	TOTALS, QT (direct exam. expert witnesses) Nº	%	CONSTRUCTION OF EVIDENTIAL DISCOURSE (CED)	ELICITING CONTRAST (EC)	ELICITING EVALUATIONS (EE)	REFORMULATION AND REPAIR STRATEGIES (RR)	REPORTING EVIDENCE (RE)	SUGGESTING BLAME (SB)	ELICITING AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE (EER)	ELICITING PHYSICAL GESTURES AND ACTIONS (EPGA)	TOTALS, QT (cross-exam. expert witnesses) Nº	%
QUESTION TYPES (QT)																				
BROAD WH-QUESTIONS	9	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	14	24,6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1,3
NARROW WH-QUESTIONS	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	12,2	6	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	12	15,6
INDIRECT QUESTIONS	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1,7	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1,3
ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3,9
GRAMMATICAL YES/NO QUESTIONS	13	4	7	2	0	0	0	0	26	46	5	18	1	0	1	1	0	1	27	35
NEGATIVE GRAMMATICAL YES/NO QUESTIONS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6,5
PROSODIC QUESTIONS	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	5	8,8	0	7	0	0	1	2	0	0	10	13
TAG QUESTIONS	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5,3	1	6	0	2	0	2	0	0	11	14,3
OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1,7	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	9,1
TOTALS Nº	33	7	12	4	0	0	0	1	57		12	49	4	3	2	6	0	1	77	
%	54,7	13,2	22,6	7,5	0	0	0	1,8		100	15,6	63,6	5,2	3,9	2,6	7,8	0	1,3		100

Table 4. *Movie Corpus*: Direct and cross-examinations (expert witnesses)

Students were first of all asked to analyse these data by focusing on the overall frequency of question types according to legal domain (figure 1).
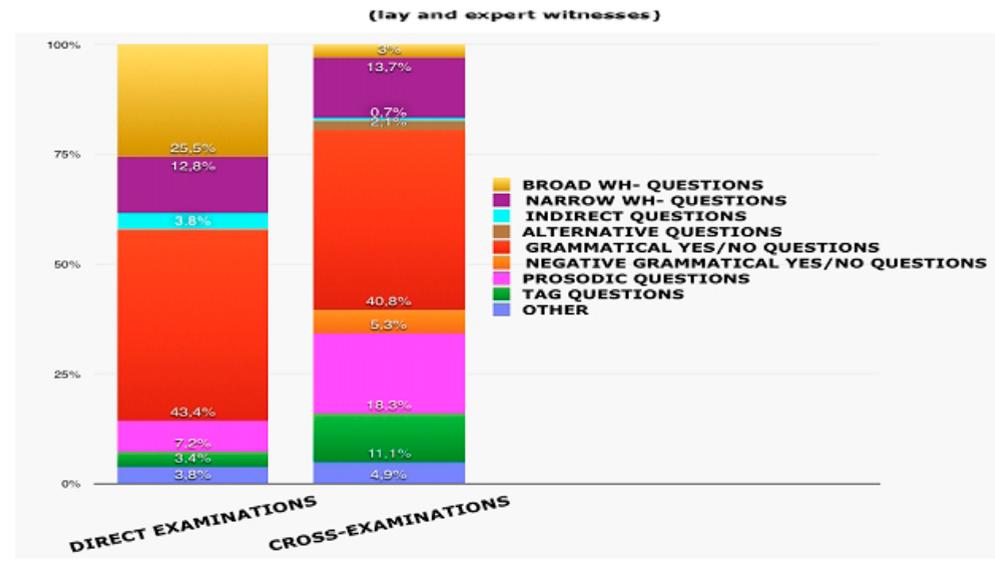
(lay and expert witnesses)

Legend:
- BROAD WH- QUESTIONS
- NARROW WH- QUESTIONS
- INDIRECT QUESTIONS
- ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS
- GRAMMATICAL YES/NO QUESTIONS
- NEGATIVE GRAMMATICAL YES/NO QUESTIONS
- PROSODIC QUESTIONS
- TAG QUESTIONS
- OTHER

DIRECT EXAMINATIONS: 25,5%; 12,8%; 3,8%; 43,4%; 7,2%; 3,4%; 3,8%

CROSS-EXAMINATIONS: 3%; 13,7%; 0,7%; 2,1%; 40,8%; 5,3%; 18,3%; 11,1%; 4,9%

Figure 1. *Movie Corpus:* Overall frequency distribution of morphosyntactic types in direct and cross-examinations (lay and expert witnesses)

In this regard, the results appeared to be highly realistic, since direct examinations exhibited a far higher degree of broad questions (25%) as compared to cross-examinations (3%), thus demonstrating the non-confrontational nature of this legal context,

while in cross-examinations the percentage of closed questions [5] accounted for 75% of all question types, a result that turned out to be in line with Cotterill's research (2003) on real-life trials which, in re-elaborating the studies by Harris (1984), Woodbury (1984), Graffam-Walker (1987) and Luchjenbroers (1997), demonstrated that closed questions usually account for between 65 percent and 87 percent of all questions in cross-examinations. Moreover, students noticed that the face-threatening value of courtroom questions does not only depend on strictly morphosyntactic categories but rather on the intention behind it. In particular, yes/no questions – the least controlling type among the category of closed questions – appeared to be widely used not only in cross-examinations, where the main aim is to exercise coercion over the witnesses, but also in direct examinations (46.1% and 43.4% respectively) to maintain topic control, given the impossibility of using leading questions, i.e. prosodic and tag questions, which are not allowed for being suggestive since they help the witness provide the desired answer [6], hence performing a completely different pragmatic aim as compared to cross-examinations where these questions are widely used to express the speaker's beliefs and provide a complete and ready-made incriminating proposition which leaves witnesses and defendants with no other choice but to confirm or deny. As far as the main communicative functions performed by questions in direct and cross-examinations (figure 2)
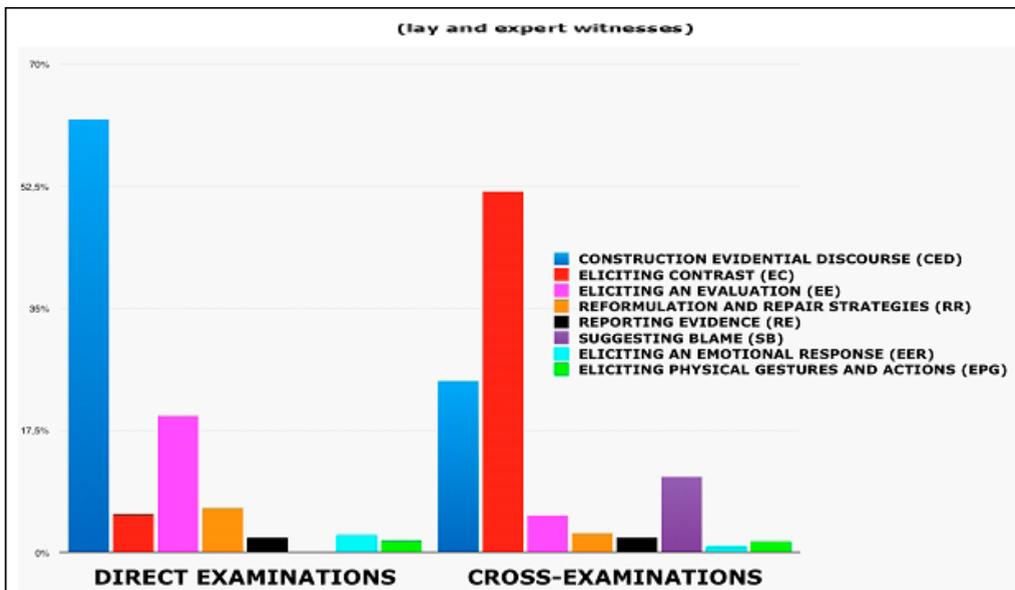

Figure 2. *Movie Corpus:* Overall distribution of communicative functions in direct and cross-examinations (lay and expert witnesses)

[5] By drawing upon Woodbury's (1984) continuum of control, this study considers question types from the most controlling and closed to the least coercive in the following order: (I) tag-questions, (II) prosodic questions, (III) alternative questions, (IV) negative grammatical yes/no questions, (V) grammatical yes/no questions, (VI) *wh*-questions with only the latter category being considered as open.

[6] Their occurrence in direct examinations in the *Movie Corpus* as well as in real-life trials should not surprise us since lawyers may fail to comply with this regulation eventually stumbling into an objection of the other party, a demeanour which is portrayed and sometimes emphasized in popular legal movies.

are concerned, results, once again, demonstrated that legal movies can be exploited as powerful tools to introduce students to courtroom questioning by underlining that "the dualism specialized vs. popularized texts is an oversimplification and a distortion of a highly complex and rapidly evolving situation" (Williams 2014: 6).

In particular, students found out that in direct examinations questions were mainly used to construct evidential discourse (CED) (62.1%), elicit evaluations (19.6%) and exploit reformulation and repair strategies (RR) (6.4%). In this regard, it is also worth noticing that while suggesting blame, as expected, was not represented, eliciting contrast, did rank in direct examinations (5.5%). This result, at first sight awkward, reflected, however, an important strategy used by lawyers in courtroom questioning which could be defined as 'anticipating contrast'. In other words, lawyers often bring out those elements they think will be used by the opposing party as a weapon during the cross-examination in order to neutralize or at least try to diminish blame allocation on their friendly witnesses and defendants by providing an anticipatory explanation. On the other hand, in cross-examinations questions appeared to be mainly used to elicit contrast (EC) (51.7%), construct an alternative evidential discourse (CED) (24.6%) and suggest blame (SB) (10.9%) (figures 3-4), which in turn reflected the main goal of this trial procedure, i.e. deconstructing the version of events presented by the opposing party.

2.4. *Real-life trials: speech styles, modality, hedging and violation of conversational maxims*

The second part of the syllabus was designed to bring students' understanding of the spoken language of the law closer to real-life settings by focusing on those micro-pragmatic cues which can reveal the strategic use of language in courtroom discourse. In particular, students were required to watch selected scenes from the Amber Guyger Trial[7] and the Conrad Murray Trial[8], two law proceedings which aroused great interest in the USA, available on YouTube.

Moreover, in order to maximize the effectiveness of these audio-visual resources and to tune the new input to the learners' state of proficiency, I asked them, before introducing new tasks, to identify in these real-life trials the communicative functions previously analysed in the *Movie Corpus*. The main aim was to prompt their critical thinking and make them realize that those parameters are actually a valid preliminary scaffolding resource to rely on when confronted with courtroom questioning in professional settings where the adoption of a top-down approach can really make a difference in remaining detached from source-text syntax in order to avoid "atomistic lexical segmentation" (Garzone 2000: 80). In particular, the ability to predict and make use of specific inferences can help interpreters contextualize – at least at the macro-level and within the limited amount of time characterizing courtroom interpreting – the commu-

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[7]On September 6, 2018, Dallas Police Department patrol officer Amber Guyger entered the apartment of 26-year-old Botham Jean and fatally shot him. During the trial she said that she had entered the apartment believing it was her own and that the victim was a burglar.

[8] Conrad Murray, Michael Jackson's personal physician, was charged with involuntary manslaughter for the pop singer's death on June 25, 2009, from a massive overdose of the general anesthetic propofol.

Figure 3. Amber Guyger describes the moments before the shooting

Figure 4. Amber Guyger becomes emotional and cries during direct examination

nicative aims performed, prior to concentrating their comprehension efforts on lower level linguistic elements.

In that respect, it is worth briefly mentioning that during the warm-up activity students expressed doubts about the possibility of finding in real-life trials two parameters out of the eight analysed, that is, eliciting an emotional response and eliciting physical gestures and actions which they thought to be sensational and unrealistic cinematic representations of real-world situations.

In actual fact, however, Amber Guyger's direct examination proved to be particularly useful to show students that also those features could be considered as highly realistic. In particular, students noticed that Guyger's defendant lawyer heavily relied on these two strategies to persuade the jury about his clients' unintentional conduct, by asking her to physically re-enact the moments which preceded and followed the murdering of Botham Jean (figure 3) and by eliciting an emotional confession, with Amber Guyger breaking down and tearfully expressing remorse (figure 4).

Amber Guyger's cross-examination. Some extracts from Amber Guyger's cross-examination (figures 5-6) proved to be particularly useful in showing students that also witnesses, as well as lawyers, perform their own communicative aims during the interplay, a strategic use of language which – more or less subtly and more or less successfully – inevitably leads to constant realignments on both sides.

In particular, students were recommended to pay special attention to the interactional and constantly negotiated nature of courtroom questioning in order to foster their capacity to identify shifts within the speakers' speech style and raise their awareness with regard to the importance of maintaining these nuances during the interpreting process, thus avoiding altering the dynamic of the interaction.

As a matter of fact, students noticed that Guyger – while attempting to resist prejudice and bias allocation for not having properly performed CPR on the man she shot – made a very specific use of personal pronouns and disclaimer strategies. Their anal-
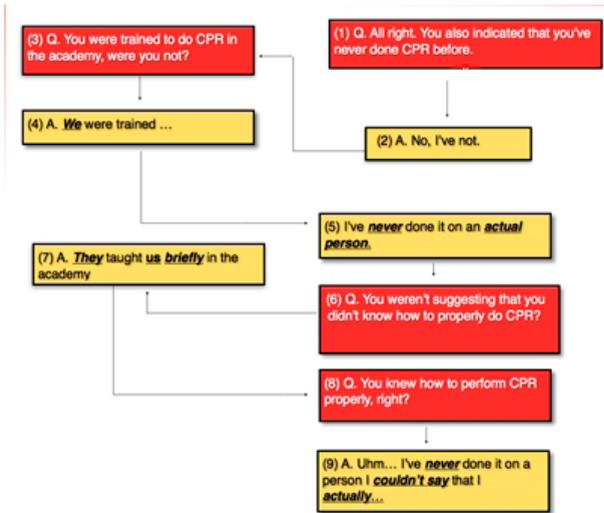
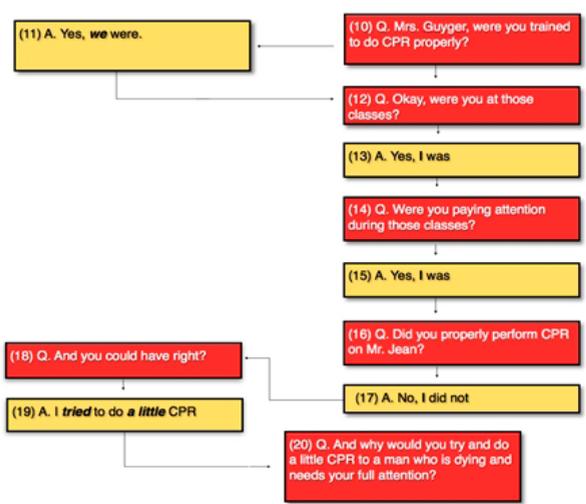**Figure 5.** Disclaimer strategies employed by Amber Guyger in cross-examination

Figure 6. Lawyer's realignment strategies in Amber Guyger's cross-examination

ysis is shown in Figure 5: on the left Guyger's answers are basically aimed at softening the prosecution's case by using the first person plural pronoun "we" which accompanies verbs like "teach" and "train" (4) (7) so as not to fully admit that she should have known how to perform CPR, even though the questions are clearly addressed to her and not to the police corps as a whole. On the right, Guyger's answers demonstrate that she is willing to shift to the first personal pronoun to stress her own version of the story by also adding new elements throughout the interaction (2) (5) (9), thus subtly implying a disclaimer strategy aimed at explaining to the jury the reason why she did not perform this life-saving medical procedure which could have saved Botham Jean.

The qualitative analysis carried out in class also demonstrated specific realignment strategies developed by the lawyer in order to finally obtain yes/no confirmatory answers from Amber Guyger. As shown in Figure 6, the effectiveness of this strategy is signalled by fewer answers on the left – which portray the defendant's efforts to digress – as compared to those on the right, where Guyger gets cornered by the lawyer. In particular, after a first attempt to address even more directly the witness by repeating her name (10) – which is again disregarded by the defendant who keeps answering with the first personal plural pronoun "we" (11) – the lawyer engages in the battle to construct his own version of the story (12-20). This change in demeanour is signalled by the discourse marker "Okay": questions become

even more specific, increasing the pace of the interaction and leaving the defendant with no choice but to confirm. Nonetheless, Guyger tries one last time to regain ground (19) by partially rejecting the main accusation (18), a justification immediately discarded by the prosecutor who, through the next broad *wh*-question (20), nullifies her last attempts to avoid incriminating herself, therefore suggesting blame and simultaneously eliciting contrast with respect to her version of events.

Conrad Murray Trial: Kenny Ortega's cross examination. The following excerpt (figure 7), this time taken from the Conrad Murray Trial, was employed to introduce students to powerful and powerless speech styles by considering speakers' linguistic choices from the perspective of the modality system [9].

In particular I wanted students to focus their attention on the varying degrees speakers can express their attitudes toward the truthfulness of what they are saying and commit themselves to the proposition they are uttering, hence controlling or losing control of language during courtroom questioning, a feature which should be maintained during the interpreting process.

Therefore, students were prompted to recognize that while the subjective use of interpersonal metaphors with a low modal value (Halliday 1994) on the part of Kenny Ortega (2) (6) (10) (12) could be considered as one of the most common features in cross-examinations to express vagueness – so as not to fully commit to the lawyers' ar-

Figure 7. Defense counsel Edward Chernoff cross-examines Kenny Ortega in Conrad Murray Trial

[9] According to Halliday (1994: 356), "modality refers to the area of meaning that lies between yes and no: the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity".

guments – Chernoff's use of "would" (5) (7), a modal verb with median value of modality, to discuss important details of the case, seemed quite odd. On closer inspection, however, students also observed that it was precisely thanks to this verb that Chernoff was able to test the willingness of the witness to disclose important information about the rehearsals, without therefore providing him with the exact answer in advance. Indeed, after an initial factual question (1) the lawyer, given the negative answer provided by the witness, changes his strategy and – by pretending not to know these details – makes sure that the jury perceives the elusiveness of the witness, only to strike a decisive blow (13-21) by impeaching him and showing his real intention from the beginning, i.e. to cast doubt on Kenny Ortega's character and indirectly on the testimony previously released during the direct examination which Chernoff is trying to attack, if not on its merits, at least by suggesting its unreliability.

Conrad Murray Trial: Dr. Robert Waldman's cross examination. Finally, other excerpts from the Conrad Murray trial were employed to show students why interpreters should not act as intermediaries to restore conflicts arising from the conversation, since conversational maxims [10] are often deliberately and voluntarily flouted by the speakers within the linguistic battlefield of courtroom questioning. (figures 8a-b) show students' in-class analysis of Dr. Waldmann's cross-examination when tensions between prosecutor David Walgren and Dr. Robert Waldmann reached a peak.

(22) Q. And you also do the dialysis work? (23) A. I do. (24) Q. Is that full-time? (25) A. What do you mean by full time? (26) Q. Well typically means 40 hours a week. Something like that. **(27) A. I wish I worked 40 hours a week and so does my family.**	**VIOLATION OF THE MAXIM OF RELEVANCE** The witness deviates from the subject of conversation, thus avoiding to provide an informative answer (27).
(28) Q. So the question's still out there. Do you… (29) A. I work a great deal of hours every week. (30) A. Okay. How many hours do you work in dialysis? (31) Q. You know I'm not being glib but the real answer is… I see every patient every week and I work as long as I need to… *its variable… sometimes it's many many hours, sometimes it's less hours.*	**VIOLATION OF THE MAXIM OF QUANTITY** Quantity hedges e.g. "a great deal" (29), "variable", "many many hours'" and "less hours" (31) indicate that the information provided is not as much precise as required.

Figure 8a. Violation of Gricean maxims of Relevance and Quantity in Conrad Murray case

[10] The Cooperative Principle (Grice 1975) describes four categories which language users should ideally adhere to in order to establish an effective and efficient conversation: the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner.

	VIOLATION OF THE MAXIM OF QUALITY
(32) Q. Approximately how many hours a week do you work in dialysis? (33) A. I don't know. I couldn't quantify that, Sir. I don't keep track of that. (34) Q. You can't give me a range? (35) A. I really can't. I **honestly** I don't count them, I don't track them. (36) Q. Is there a reason why it's so difficult for you to answer my questions when it was so easy for you to answer Mr. Chernoff session? *Objection!* *Judge: Sustained!*	The witness violates the maximum of quality (33) (35) which requires the speaker to be truthful, a violation emphasized by the use of "honestly" (35) a quality hedge which prompts the prosecutor to express his annoyance (36), almost forgetting his institutional role.
	VIOLATION OF THE MAXIM OF MANNER
(37) Q. You can't answer how many hours in dialysis, is that correct? (38) A. What you're asking me is extremely non-specific and I'm telling you honestly I don't measure. (39) Q. How many hours did you work in dialysis last week? (40) A. I-I-I don't know. (41) Q. I was specific. (42) A. *I was at the dialysis unit Monday morning and afternoon, Tuesday for a few hours, Friday for a few hours. That's my typical week. Sometimes I go in Thursdays sometimes I don't, sometimes I go on Tuesday sometimes I don't.*	The witness witness refuses to be brief, clear and orderly in his answer (42).

Figure 8b. Violation of Gricean maxims of Quality and Manner in Conrad Murray case

2.5. *Enhancing students' specific performance skills in court interpreting: corpus linguistics as a tool for discovering cross-linguistic patterns*

The last part of the course was devoted to corpus linguistic research conducted for didactic purposes. In particular, this shift from audio-visual tools to more analytical activities was justified by the need to expose students to high-frequency language elements from a cross-cultural and contrastive perspective, in order to help them foster their procedural knowledge, i.e. the ability to predict and find the best interpreting solutions in professional situations when constrained by time pressure and extremely high-level expectations.

Given these premises, but without running the risk that the sheer volume of data would become unmanageable, I decided to build two relatively large corpora [11], one in Italian (*Italian Trial Corpus*, 1,245,293 words) and one in English (*American Trial Corpus*, 1,336,206 words) containing direct and cross-examinations from murder trials conducted respectively in Italy and in the USA [12]. Students were first of all prompted to

[11] According to O'Keeffe *et al.* (2007: 4) any spoken corpus containing over a million words of speech is considered large.

[12] As far as the *Italian Trial Corpus* is concerned, instances of naturally occurring language were collected from the trial of Amanda Knox and the Garlasco murder. This choice was especially determined by the high profile of the legal actors involved in these cases (e.g. Carlo Della Vedova, Giulia Bongiorno, Giuliano Mignini, Carlo Taormina) which I expected could provide food for thought in order to shed light on the best forensic practices and strategic use of Italian legal language in courtroom settings. With regard to the *American Trial Corpus* the bulk of linguistic data was selected from the Jason Van Dyke Trial which proved to be particularly interesting given the nature of the proceeding which concerned the murder of Laquan McDonald. In particular, the very fact that police officer Van Dyke shot a 17-year-old 16 times led to a detailed account of the shooting timeline which involved the presence of a particularly high number of both experts and lay-witnesses during

Pragmatic function	Discourse Markers (Italian)	Common Italian Phrases and Examples	Discourse Markers (English)	Common English Phrases and Examples
Construction of evidential discourse (CED)	E, quindi, dunque, prima, dopo, poi.	D. Ricorda la circostanza... D. Vuole spiegare/riferire alle Corte D. Ci può spiegare/ illustrare/ raccontare .... D. Può dirci / Ci può descrivere ... D. Lei era a conoscenza / Lei sapeva.../ D. Che lei sappia D. Poi che cosa accadde? D. Poi che è successo? D. Può dirci chi vide? D. Me la descriva, per favore D. Ci Descriva queste attività per favore D. Dopo cosa accadde? D. E poi? Ci racconti tutto	And, so, then, after, before.	Q. Do you... know/recall/remember/... Q. Can/ could you (please)...explain/ /tell us/ tell me/ tell the court/ tell the jury... Q. (If you can)Please describe/explain/ tell the jury/ us... Q. (Please) Tell me/us/the jury/ Q. To your knowledge.. Q. Are you aware... Q. As far as you know Q. Just tell us/ describe Q. And at some point you learned/ told/ heard Q. What did you see/ say Q. What happened? Q. Then what happened?
Eliciting Contrast (EC)	Veramente, ma, tuttavia, beh.	D. Mi corregga se sbaglio... D. Se non erro ... D. Scusi, ma lei non ha riferito.... D. Ma lei non può escludere che D. Lei dice tuttavia che D. Tuttavia, è corretto dire che... D. Beh, a me risulta che... D. Veramente ci sono dei verbali di udienza... D. E' vero o non è vero che... D. Sarebbe corretto dire che .... D. E' corretto dire che...	Actually, but, in fact, really?, well	Q. But correct me if I'm wrong ... Q. But you also indicated that .. Q. But you said/ told/ testified Q. Actually, you didn't say... Q. Well you testified/ told the police Q. Isn't it right/ correct that you...? Q. Isn't it correct that...? Q. But would it be fair to say that... Q. Is it fair to say that...
Eliciting an Evaluation (EE)	Secondo lei, in base alla sua esperienza, secondo le sue conoscenze/ competenze...	D. Che cosa vuol dire secondo lei che...? D. Lei cosa ne pensa di...? D. Lei ritiene anomalo che ...? D. Lei ritiene le impronte assolutamente compatibili? D. In base alla sua esperienza crede che... D. Lei presume che ....? D. Aveva, a sua conoscenza, dei motivi? D. Che lei sappia...	– In your opinion/ experience, mind/ knowledge/ training/ investigation... – About this matter... – Based on your evaluation/ experience... – As far as you could tell... – As far as you know...	Q. Do you think.... Q. How would you describe.... Q. Did that seem odd to you? Q. Was it your understanding/ impression/ belief ... Q. Describe ..... Q. How would you characterize / describe...
Reformulation and Repair Strategies (RR)	Ovvero, ovverosia, cioè, ancora meglio, ancora una volta, di nuovo, quindi	D. Tanto per chiarire, lei prima ha detto.. D. La riformulo in altro modo. D. Riformulo meglio la domanda. D. Ancora meglio. Voglio dire... D. Io le ho chiesto di ... D. Le ripeto la domanda... D. Ripeto ancora una volta, che cosa avete fatto... D. Intendo dire questo... D. Di nuovo, quali sono ...	– (Once) again, – I mean, – I asked you – I'm not asking you – I said, – In other words	Q. You are telling the jury that Q. Are you suggesting that Q. Are you still telling the jury that Q. Are you telling this jury, under oath Q. Let me rephrase this Q. Let me try that one
Reporting Evidence (RE)	Secondo/ nella sua deposizione/ testimonianza/ interrogatorio	D. Lei ha dichiarato/ riferito/ testimoniato/ detto... D. Lei (mi) conferma... D. Lei quindi conferma... D. Ricorda di aver testimoniato...	– In your deposition/ testimony/ interview... – according to your deposition... – Based on/ upon your direct examination...	Q. You mentioned /said/ testified Q. I believe you said/ told us Q. Is it your testimony Q. Remember testifying Q. You admitted/ mentioned / said
Suggesting Blame (SB)	Come mai, ma come, mai.	D. Ma come ha potuto fare la doccia con la porta aperta e il sangue in casa? D. Lei ha mai fatto delle analisi, delle autopsie in caso di morte a seguito di violenza sessuale di gruppo? D. Come mai ha parlato di "identità probabile" malgrado tutte queste indicazioni di coincidenza?	Never , why.	Q. You never told that to the sheriffs, correct? Q. You never witnessed that yourself, correct? Q. Why didn't you tell the jury.....
Eliciting an Emotional Response (EER)		D. Che cosa ha provato in quella circostanza? D. Quale sensazione ne ha ricevuto?		Q. How did you feel? Q. And you felt ... Q. And you were angry about that, right?
Eliciting physical gestures and actions (EPGA)		D. Le chiedo cortesemente di farci vedere a tutti la fotografia. D. Può leggere due o tre righe?		Q. Could you (please) look at the document... Q. Please read to us the first sentence... Q. Please turn to the last page to Q. If you could turn around an look at the screen behind you...

Table 5. Example from a student's analysis of the most recurring phrases according to communicative function performed in the *Italian Trial Corpus* and *American Trial Corpus*

the trial, an element that could potentially testify to a great variety of communicative functions performed by the legal actors involved as well as varying nuances of witnesses' speech styles.

analyse concordance lines [13] and complete Table 5, designed to summarize their results qualitatively by showing the most recurrent discourse markers and common phrases used to express the eight communicative functions previously investigated during the course.

The main objective of this preliminary screening was clearly to promote the acquisition of the specialized use of language employed by professionals in this domain, both in the source and target language, a communicative competence which would eventually increase students' confidence and proficiency in matching lawyers' speech style, thus diminishing the risk of sounding insecure, as often happens when interpreters, lacking quick and fast references of language-in-use to rely on, rephrase their own utterances, even in cases of unproblematic translations from the semantic point of view, therefore failing to maintain the same level of coerciveness, formality and illocutive force of the original.

Similar research was also carried out with regard to witnesses' speech styles, an analysis of which – even though more varied in terms of patterns of use as compared to questions – fruitfully hinted at the multifaceted issues related to legal equivalence in court interpreting, such as the use of idiomatic and colloquial speech, as well as of profanity and sexual slang, often employed to report important details of the case through direct and indirect speech. The following tables (Table 6) (Table 7) (Table 8) show some

Original excerpt from the Italian Trial Corpus	*English translation provided by students*
(43) *D.* **Senta,** *si ricorda che cosa gridava questo signore quando stava facendo la telefonata?* (44) *R. Si, posso dirlo?* (45) *D. Si.* (46) *D. "T'ammazzo, puttana!"*	(47) Q. **Mr.** XXX Do you remember what was this man screaming while making the phone call? (48) A. Yes. Can I say it? (49) Q. Yes. (50) A. ***"I'll kill ya, bitch!"***

Table 6. English translation provided by students. Focus on slang and profanity and on the Italian word *senta*

Original excerpt from the American Trial Corpus	*Italian translation provided by students*
(51) Q. ***Again, let me just rephrase the question.*** You told the police you were told by XXX that you were pulled off because he did not want anyone to do PR work for Michael Jackson, right? (52) A. Well, as you said, that's a summary of my tapes… (53) Q. Okay. (54) A. -- and I don't remember saying those words exactly. ***(55) Q. Well, didn't you tell the police that this made no sense to you?*** (56) A. Yes, I did.	*(57) D.* ***Le riformulo ancora una volta la domanda.*** *Lei hai detto alla polizia di essere stato rimosso da XXX perché lui non voleva che nessuno facesse il PR per Michael Jackson, vero?* *(58) R. Beh, come ha detto lei, si tratta di un riassunto delle mie dichiarazioni* *(59) D. Okay.* *(60) R. … E non ricordo di aver detto esattamente quelle parole* ***(61) D. Scusi, lei non ha dichiarato alla polizia che questo per lei non aveva senso?*** *(62) R. Si.*

Table 7. Italian Translation provided by students. Focus on the Italian word *scusi*

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[13] Both corpora were investigated with AntConc 3.5.8 (Anthony 2019), a free software program developed for corpus linguistic analysis.

American Trial Corpus	Italian translation provided by students
(63) Q. ***Now***, with regard to the confidentiality issue, obviously it would be improper if somebody tape- recorded a confidential conversation between you and somebody you were investigating, correct? (64) Yes. (65) Q. You indicated during direct examination that you're familiar with the contents of this document; is that right? (66) A. Sure. (67) Q. ***Now***, so at some point during your career you were made aware of the contents of this document; is that right? (68) A. Sure.	*(69) D. **Ora**, a proposito della questione sulla riservatezza, ovviamente sarebbe scorretto se qualcuno registrasse una conversazione tra lei e qualcuno su cui sta indagando, vero?* *(70) R. Si* *(71) D. Nell'esame diretto lei ha dichiarato di conoscere il contenuto di questo documento, è vero?* *(72) R. Certamente.* *(73) D. **Ecco**, quindi ad un certo punto della sua carriera lei è stato messo al corrente del contenuto di questo documento, è vero?* *(74) R. Certamente.*

Table 8 Italian Translation provided by students. Focus on the English discourse marker "now"

of the specific tasks carried out by students as homework, together with the ensuing in-class discussion.

As suggested in Table 6, the use of contrastive corpus research helped students focus on idiomatic translations while self-discovering language usage in this domain. In particular, the search for a pragmatic equivalent for the Italian word *senta* (43) led students to find out that in the *American Trial Corpus* there was no occurrence of expressions like "look", "listen" etc. used as appellatives to introduce questions, hence signalling that the choice of these expressions, although semantically equivalent, would have been far too colloquial in this formal context. On the contrary "Mr" (8246 tokens) "Mrs" (487 tokens), and "Ms" (190 tokens) appeared to be hyper-employed to address witnesses and defendants both at the opening as well as throughout the entire questioning. The possibility of using "Mr" to match the Italian lawyers' register was then confirmed by further corpus research which revealed that even though appellative markers are less frequent in Italian compared to English courtroom discourse, they actually show greater variety in terms of lexical choices, with *Signor* (285 tokens) and *Signora/ina* (418 tokens) only used at the opening of the questioning, and *senta* (804 tokens) also employed throughout the entire testimony. It is also worth remarking that when confronted with profanity and slang expressions, students strove to avoid translation loss and decided to render the informal contraction used in the Italian original utterance (46) with the expression "I'll kill ya, bitch" (50).

The lawyer's speech style was also maintained in the excerpt shown in Table 7. In particular, even though the first line (51) portrays a very common legal expression which is quite straightforward in its meaning, students sensed that a strict literal translation, such as *Lasci che riformuli nuovamente la domanda,* would have sounded far too polite in Italian courtroom discourse, as demonstrated by the concordance lines in the *Italian Trial Corpus.*

However, in order to maintain the face-saving elements characterizing the original, they also added the object pronoun *le* (57), thus recognizing that without this element the back translation would have been "I'll ask you again", thereby leading to a slightly different perlocutionary act as compared to the original intention of the speaker.

Furthermore, this excerpt provided the chance to focus the students' attention on the discourse marker "well" (55) which, in cross-examinations, is mostly employed to preface disagreement, i.e. to indicate "rejection of the witness's/defendant's previous answer" (Hale 1999: 60), characterized, however, by "a more conciliatory tone" as compared to "but" (Schiffrin 1985: 653). According to these findings, students chose to preface the Italian negative question (61) with *Scusi* which appeared to be widely used in the *Italian Trial Corpus* to express contrast (1678 tokens), being weaker and more neutral than *ma*, as well as more appropriate than *senta,* commonly employed to elicit contrast before having received an answer from the witness in order to catch him/her off guard by introducing a new topic. Finally, the English expression "Okay" (59) was maintained in the Italian version as being a common expression used by lawyers in the target language courtroom discourse, as demonstrated by corpus research.

The excerpt in Table 8 shows two different Italian translations provided by students of the discourse marker "now" (63) (67). In particular, they noticed that the main communicative functions performed by this linguistic feature, i.e. (I) controlling the flow of information, (II) reiterating a previous point, and (III) showing disagreement (Schiffrin *ibid.*; Hale 1999), were matched by *ora* (525 tokens)*, a questo punto* (190 tokens)*,* and *ecco* (1885 tokens) in the *Italian Trial Corpus*, with the latter being hyper-used. On a closer look, while *ora* and *a questo punto* were mainly employed to bring out new elements, as exemplified in "Now, with regard to the confidentiality issue" (69), *ecco* was used to focus the attention on specific details previously mentioned by the witness or defendant (II), a linguistic choice underlying the willingness to reiterate a point by eliciting more details (73).

3. Conclusion: reviewing course syllabus, material selection and teaching methodology

This contribution has highlighted the centrality of tailoring the input to students' background knowledge and needs by offering various didactic solutions to syllabus design and material selection aimed at contextualizing, within effective learning environments, the specialized use of language in courtroom settings, before exposing learners to all the pitfalls of real-life situations.

Moreover, it is my contention here that introducing ESP through blended learning scenarios can strongly promote the acquisition of a "multimodal literacy" (Walsh 2010: 213) which proves to be especially important in court interpreting training in order to provide students with ample authentic, or at least highly reliable, input to be processed through the same sensory channels engaged while performing this activity in professional contexts.

In that respect, as my course testified, in this field of ESP teaching there is a strong need for more inclusive approaches, since for most students courtroom discourse is not only far removed from their previous studies, but also antithetical to their everyday experience of the language of the law, usually more related to written documents. From this it also follows that offering students a chance to familiarize with this specific legal environment is a *sine qua non* to prepare them to perform in very formal, adversarial and emotionally charged atmospheres where the pressure of time constraints and pub-

lic speaking are significant challenges to be overcome while they are required to render accurate interpretations without any sort of hesitation.

Consequently, it is plausible to argue that in the first training stages employing video materials can offer students a framework within which to contextualize the ensuing specific activities aimed at developing their interpreting skills. In particular, audiovisual tools can prove to be much more adequate resources than printed texts in order to substitute with meaningful and first-hand learning experiences what could only be achieved through visits to both source and target language professional settings.

Furthermore, the results of this research suggest that popular legal movies can be fruitfully exploited whenever there is the need to establish a shortcut communication with trainees with limited professional expertise in order to introduce complex facts, difficult to explain on their own, more effectively. In particular, while creating a storehouse of knowledge through popular culture references, students become engaged on an emotional level, a situation which can powerfully lead to "meaningful learning" (Ausbel *et al.* 1978) therefore offering teachers the possibility of tapping into these existing schemas on later stages of the course to introduce new input.

Similarly, it should be noted that the plethora of opportunities offered by multimedia tools and new technologies can provide the springboard for the creation of extremely stimulating learning environments where the inclusion of the flipped classroom model can foster a didactic approach moving from global to analytical and provide students with the big picture before asking them to complete in class, under the teacher's guide, more logical thinking tasks, such as analysing specific pragmatic aspects of court interaction, as well as collecting data and classifying corpus linguistic results. In this way teachers, while better connecting to the students' preferred learning style, which has shifted in the past two decades towards a more dynamic and visual pattern, can enhance experiential learning, whereby knowledge "results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb 1984: 41), an approach which can maximize students' chances of developing higher order thinking skills by discovering language at the discourse level, beyond the boundaries of sentence structure.

Ultimately, the positive results of the final examination, as well as the students' enthusiasm about the learning opportunities offered by Internet and popular audio-visual tools, demonstrated that learners had not only widened their cross-cultural procedural knowledge in court interpreting – which was actually the main objective of the course – but had also developed some sort of meta-learning strategies, an aspect signalled by a growing awareness with regard to how these resources, together with corpus linguistics, can be exploited to gain mastery over the pragmatic issues related to court interpreting, hence ultimately fostering their interest and autonomy in learning ESP. Indeed, it was particularly this last aspect which influenced the most the students' preparation for the final exam when they were advised to practise at home by recording their voice while interpreting selected scenes from both mock and real-life trials, and to check their performance in case of doubts through corpus linguistic analysis.

As shown in Figure 9, in this learning approach even teachers are invested with a more dynamic role, being related to designing tailor-made materials, providing scaffolding techniques, while monitoring students' feedback through face-to-face classroom interaction and learning materials. The main aim becomes, therefore, making students 'experience' the unique demands of court interpreting, by improving their understand-
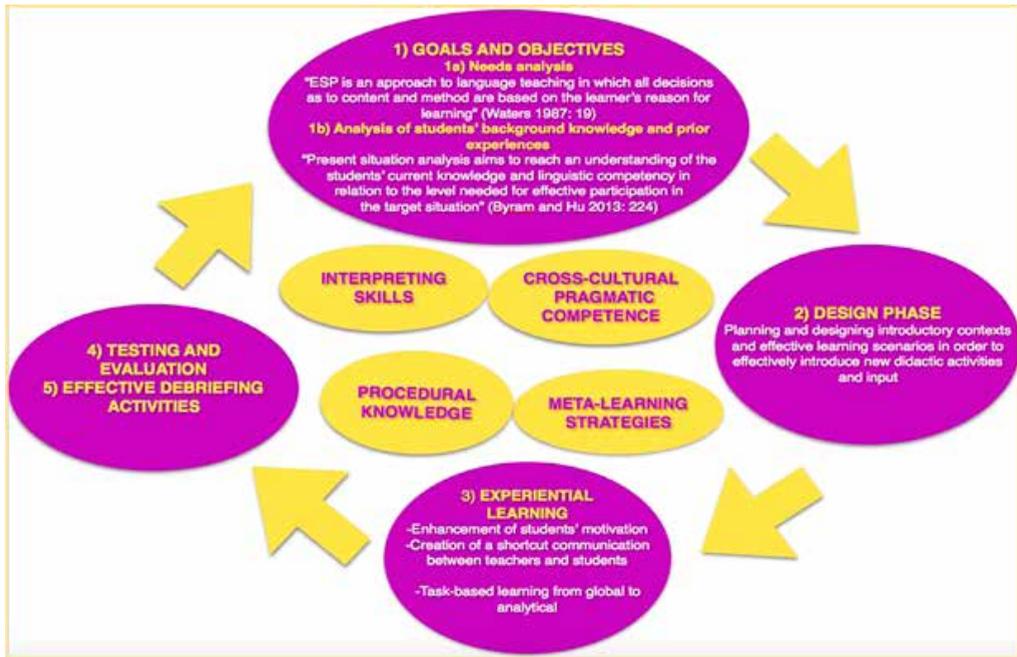
Figure 9. Review of the teaching model presented in this study

ing of this legal environment, while fostering their procedural knowledge and educating them about how to improve their proficiency in this field.

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