

Teaching English-Spanish Simultaneous and Consecutive Interpretation During COVID-19

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ABSTRACT: In this article, I would like to leave written testimony about how we coped with the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spanish Interpretation Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS), where I teach English into Spanish simultaneous and consecutive interpretation. I will describe our experience immediately after COVID-19 hit the US, how professors and students transitioned from an in-person program to a remote one, how we stayed in a fully remote program for two and a half semesters, and how we went back to the physical classroom to a hybrid model once restrictions were lifted in the US. I will explain how I structured my simultaneous and consecutive interpretation classes in each semester that we stayed remote and the changes that I introduced once we went back to campus to a hybrid model. In addition, I will address some of the pros and cons that I found with each model based on my own experience. I will also cover the different initiatives that MIIS has put in place to support the professional development of professors to adapt our classes to the remote and hybrid model. To conclude, I would like to share with the readers the results of a survey conducted among students taking the Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretation (MATI), Master of Arts in Conference Interpretation (MACI), Master of Arts in Translation (MAT), and Master of Arts in Translation and Localization Management (MATLM) in the Spanish Interpretation Program at MIIS. The students who completed the survey were exposed to the remote, hybrid, and in-person models. The purpose of the survey was to informally gather the students' opinions on the different models for learning interpretation

that they experienced: in-person, online, and hybrid. I will finish the article with a reflection on the future of teaching interpretation in the Spanish Interpretation Program at MIIS.

KEYWORDS: MIIS, conference interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, consecutive interpretation, remote, in-person, hybrid, distance interpreting, technology, Zoom, trust

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este artículo es dejar constancia escrita de cómo hicimos frente a la COVID-19 en el Programa de Interpretación de Español del Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS), programa en el que imparto clases de interpretación simultánea y consecutiva de inglés a español. En el artículo se describirá la experiencia en el aula cuando se declaró la pandemia en Estados Unidos, la transición que supuso para profesores y alumnos pasar de un programa presencial a uno a distancia, los dos cuatrimestres y medio de clases a distancia y la vuelta a clase en la modalidad híbrida una vez que las restricciones se eliminaron en Estados Unidos. En el artículo se abordará la estructura de las clases de interpretación simultánea y consecutiva de inglés a español los cuatrimestres en los que impartimos las clases a distancia, así como los cambios incorporados una vez que volvimos al campus en una modalidad híbrida. Asimismo, se abordarán las ventajas y desventajas de cada modalidad tomando como base la experiencia de la autora. Además, se hará mención de las distintas iniciativas que se han llevado a cabo en el MIIS para fomentar el desarrollo profesional de los docentes con el fin de adaptar las clases a la modalidad híbrida y a distancia. Para concluir, se compartirá con los lectores un cuestionario realizado a los alumnos del Máster en Traducción e Interpretación (MATI, por sus siglas en inglés), Máster en Interpretación de Conferencias (MACI, por sus siglas en inglés), Máster en Traducción (MAT, por sus siglas en inglés) y Máster en Gestión de Traducción y Localización (MATLM, por sus siglas en inglés) en el Programa de Interpretación de Español en el MIIS. Los alumnos que respondieron al cuestionario cursaron clases a distancia, híbridas y presenciales. El cuestionario tenía como objetivo recabar, de manera informal, las opiniones de los alumnos sobre las distintas modalidades de aprendizaje de interpretación: modalidad presencial, a distancia e híbrida. El artículo concluye con una reflexión sobre el futuro de la enseñanza de la interpretación en el Programa de Interpretación de Español del MIIS.

PALABRAS CLAVE: MIIS, interpretación de conferencias, interpretación

simultánea, interpretación consecutiva, enseñanza de la interpretación a distancia, enseñanza de la interpretación presencial, enseñanza de la interpretación híbrida, tecnología, Zoom, confianza

I teach simultaneous and consecutive interpretation (English into Spanish) in the Spanish Interpretation Program at Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS), which is part of the Graduate School of Translation, Interpretation and Language Education (GSTILE). Apart from Spanish, the school also offers programs in interpretation in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, German, and Russian. Our program is a master's degree with a duration of two school years. Interpretation is part of the Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretation (MATI) and the Master of Arts in Conference Interpretation (MACI). Classes have a maximum of 12 students per class. Students with Spanish A and English A are part of the same class, which allows students to have a benchmark for comprehension in their B language and to support each other with language issues in their production. For example, if while interpreting, a Spanish A student does not understand a part of a speech in English, we can always ask English A students if they understand the same part, which could be a benchmark for Spanish A students who are striving to achieve perfect comprehension of the source language, which in the case of my classes is English.

When COVID-19 hit, all the classes in the Spanish Interpretation Program at MIIS were being held in person, except for the classes taught by Professor Olsen. Professor Olsen lives in Washington D.C. and was teaching his consecutive and simultaneous interpretation classes from there. Our students' experience with remote interpretation was limited to these two classes. Apart from Professor Olsen, all the faculty members in the Spanish Interpretation Program were teaching their classes in person in the simultaneous interpretation labs located on campus or in a regular classroom for consecutive interpretation.

The communication platform of the university is Zoom. Before the pandemic hit, we all had experienced Zoom as a communication platform

to hold meetings but had never used the interpretation functionality as educators and/or interpreters.

In the Spring Semester of 2020, I remember attending a meeting of the Translation and Interpretation (T&I) Faculty Department and hearing rumors of a potential lockdown. At that moment, it seemed impossible. The lockdown that was taking place in China seemed far away. One week before Spring break, we were informed that MIIS would be closing its doors and that students needed to gather their belongings and go home immediately. I was teaching when it was announced, and as I thought of my students, my heart sank. It was a little bit later that day that it hit me: all our classes had to be moved online. We were dismissed on a Friday; the following week was Spring Break. I remember spending that week, a midterm vacation week that I typically use for grading and resting, trying to adapt my classes to the on-line program and meeting with my fellow professors regularly to test a way to try to accommodate for consecutive and simultaneous interpretation.

Since it was mid-March, we only had 7 weeks left to finish the school year. The school year at MIIS finishes in mid-May. In the Spanish Interpretation Program, we hold final exams the week before our last week of classes. The last week of classes is used to meet with students individually and give feedback. In practice, this meant that we only had 5 weeks of formal instruction left. I felt that in the midst of all the shock and sadness at the loss of human life, at least there was a silver lining for us. We only had to push through the last 5 weeks and then we would have the whole summer to keep working on adapting our classes to a remote model if the situation were not to improve before the end of the summer.

One more thing in our favor was the fact that we already knew the students. As I mentioned above, the master's degree program at MIIS is composed of two years. The school year starts in August and finishes in May. This meant that when the pandemic hit, we had a first-year cohort and a second-year cohort. I was teaching in person up to that point, and I knew all my students well. Both years were tight-knit groups, the students had an excellent rapport with their group of peers. The bond was already there as a group. This was the perfect scenario to move online, if there were ever to be one. While working to adapt my classes to the remote mode that week of Spring break, thinking of this was a ray of hope.

1. Spring 2020, a Semester in a Full Remote Mode

That very first semester online (Spring 2020) I was in survival mode. The Learning Management System (LMS) at MIIS is Canvas, therefore all the content of our classes was already online. The questions which remained were: how to structure a class fully online? How to listen to the students? How to give feedback? How to make sure that the students were paying attention?

I tried to start with the issues at hand. The most important aspect was to be able to hold a class from my computer and be able to teach a 2-hour class from there. What equipment would be needed to effectively teach online? Thanks to the fact that we had Professor Olsen in the team, we knew right away that we were going to need a microphone for everybody to be heard properly while interpreting. The MIIS Administration was kind enough to send students and professors a headset with an attached microphone. MIIS also sent professors their school laptops home so we could have all the equipment needed to teach from home. They also provided professors with iPads and Apple pencils.

In addition, I thought of having a dedicated space at home to teach. In my case, I was lucky enough to have my own office in a small in-law house located in my backyard, so I was able to teach from there, away from my husband (who was working from home) and my two young children (who were also attending classes from home). I remember starting my day, opening my computer to teach my classes, and thinking of my colleagues who, unlike me, did not have a dedicated space. Many colleagues struggled because of a lack of physical space from which to teach their classes.

All these aspects were the logistics. My colleagues and I created a checklist to make sure we were all set (headset, computer, background, tablet, electronic pencil, and dedicated space). That week that we were on vacation, we also addressed the content that needed to be covered. Canvas was already in place for most of us, therefore all speeches, exercises, and homework were already online. In the physical classroom, Canvas is shared on the classroom screen for students to follow. Students can also connect to Canvas from their homes. Since Zoom was our communication platform before the pandemic, it was clear to me that I was going to start my classes on Zoom. It was very simple to share the screen on Zoom and go over the contents prepared for

class and the objectives for the day.

1.1 Remote Consecutive Interpretation Classes

For my consecutive classes, I decided to stay on Zoom, share the speech and then have the students interpret. We actively promoted the use of F groups, so students could always wait there or work in small groups if needed. This is the routine that I established for a consecutive interpretation class:

- The professor starts the class as a group in Zoom.
- The professor shares Canvas and the teacher's objectives of that class.
- The professor shares a speech.
- Students take notes.
- Two students volunteer or are selected to interpret.
- One student starts first. The second student is placed in a breakout room.
- Once the first student finishes interpreting, the second student is brought back to the main room and proceeds to interpret so the class can hear a second version of the same speech.
- Discuss feedback as a group and share notes.

1.1.1 Note-taking in a remote consecutive interpretation class

Two years before the pandemic, I had started to take notes on my iPad in the physical classroom with very positive results. As a matter of fact, I had presented on how to use an iPad and Apple pencil to do sight translation at the ATA 58th Conference in Washington D.C. in 2017. In the physical classroom, I would share my notes on the big screen or send them by email after the class. Now that we were remote, Zoom turned out to be an excellent tool to share my consecutive notes with my students. I just shared the iPad screen directly from Zoom! I would connect my iPad to Zoom via Airplay or wired cable. Immediately after the first class in Zoom, the students gave very positive feedback about being able to see the professor's notes on their own screens right away. Students started to share their notes the same way. The iPad and the Apple pencil proved to be a wonderful tool to teach consecutive interpretation remotely via Zoom. Also, notes can always be shared

asynchronously by email directly from the iPad.

For students who did not have an iPad, the act of sharing their notes was much more cumbersome, since it was not something that would happen instantaneously. They would either take their notepad and bring it closer to the computer camera so their peers and their professor could see their notes (which meant having to adjust the camera) or they would take pictures of their notes and share them by email after the class. This involved taking a picture of each page. The students complained that this was a lengthy process that took a long time. In the remote mode, having a tablet and an e-pencil is much more conducive to sharing consecutive notes with others.

In general, to adapt my in-person consecutive classes to a full remote model was relatively easy. I just took the structure and methodology of the in-person class and brought it online, taking advantage of Zoom. The fact that I was already using the iPad and the Apple pencil in my classes before the pandemic, and that they were fully integrated to Zoom, made sharing my notes a very organic process in the online format.

1.2 Remote Simultaneous Interpretation Classes

My simultaneous interpretation classes were a different story. I really worried about that over my Spring break week. I had never interpreted online at that point and could not even imagine how to go about using the technology. Professor Olsen gave a few presentations on ZipDX, the platform that he had been using himself to teach simultaneous interpretation from Washington D.C. before the pandemic. After attending his presentation, ZipDX looked very intimidating for me to use in my classes. I was concerned about having to teach interpretation and manage the platform at the same time. Unfortunately, we did not get technicians assigned and I was by myself to manage my classes.

At that point, a few colleagues and I thought of GoReact. We had tested GoReact in the past and had used it a few times for assignments. With only a few days to start in a fully remote mode, I decided to use GoReact for the students to interpret in simultaneous classes. I remember uploading the speeches for the first class in GoReact. I was feeling nervous about being able to listen to the students in real time.

The structure of my remote simultaneous classes that semester was:

- Before starting the class, the professor uploads the speeches in GoReact and makes the speeches visible for the students in the class.
- The professor starts the class on Zoom.
- The professor shares Canvas and the teacher's objectives for that class.
- The students and the professor close the camera and the mic in Zoom.
- The students go to GoReact and start interpreting.
- The professor connects to GoReact and listens to the students.
- Once done with interpretation, the professor and the students close GoReact and go back to Zoom to discuss feedback, strengths, and weaknesses of the students' performance.

Right after each class, I started to document arguments for and against using GoReact. The students loved that their interpretations were recorded automatically and that they would have a repository of all their work, which was very convenient to listen to their own interpretations after class and go over the feedback shared in class. However, a big negative, in my case, was that every time the students went to GoReact to interpret, I would lose contact with them. We could not be in Zoom at that point since the computer cameras could not be shared between the two platforms. I had no effective way to communicate with them in real time. Something that I did not particularly like was the fact that I could not play or stop the speech that the students were interpreting. They would go to GoReact and click on play themselves, which meant that not everybody would start and interpret the same part of the speech at the same time. After a few weeks, I knew that the situation was not optimal and that if we were going to continue to hold classes remotely the following school year, I had to find something different.

In addition, at the end of each class (consecutive or simultaneous) I would collect feedback from the students. The first two weeks of being remote, it became very clear that the students were getting more tired on Zoom and that they wanted longer breaks in between classes. As for my own feedback, I started to become aware that I had difficulty reading the dynamics of remote classes. In person, it was easy for me to look at the students' faces, see who was paying attention, make a comment in order to include somebody who

looked distracted or was simply shy, and read faces that would tell me “we are not following you”, “we do not understand you”. I could read all these social cues and act to quickly adapt to the situation. I did not know how to articulate it at that time, but I could not do the same in Zoom. I was having difficulty reading the room and following the students’ reactions in the little Zoom squares. I also noticed that students were participating less when compared to in-person classes. After a few weeks, I decided to ask students to not turn off their cameras. Teaching without seeing my audience was becoming very hard.

Next thing we knew, it was time for final exams. I found myself preparing for my first-ever remote graduation ceremony. We survived!

2. Fall 2020-Spring 2021 School Year, Fully Remote

It was the middle of the summer when we received final confirmation that we would start the 2020-2021 school year in a full remote mode. I worked over the summer to prepare for my classes. MIIS offered professors the opportunity to attend workshops and classes through the Office of Digital Learning and Inquiry (DLINQ). DLINQ is a cross-institutional group of instructional designers, digital scholars, and teaching and learning professionals who offer consultations and workshops to faculty, staff, and students. Topics covered by DLINQ range from teaching online and hybrid, data privacy, technology learning, to digital wellness and identity. I signed up for a few workshops that summer, which was very helpful.

Also that summer, we received official instruction from the Administration to make the classes shorter, finish our classes on time and give longer breaks in-between classes so students could rest and cope with “Zoom fatigue” (something that we knew existed since students and professors were reporting to feel exhausted after a whole day in Zoom) and that was well documented by Bailenson in his article published half a year later in February of 2021.

I remember feeling even more nervous than the prior semester. I already had the experience of half of a semester teaching online. However, there was a key difference this time: trust. As an educator, I knew that trust is one of the important factors either fostering or damaging the students’ online teamwork

learning experience (Tseng et al., 2019). I was not worried about my incoming second-year students (we had been almost a whole school year in person before COVID-19 hit, they knew me well at that point), but I was very stressed about starting on-line with a new cohort of first-year students whom I had never met in person. I was not sure if I would be able to establish the same trust and close rapport as with an in-person class.

2.1 Remote Consecutive Interpretation Classes

The format in consecutive had worked well the prior semester, especially with the ability to share notes directly from the iPad. I did not plan to make any changes to the structure of my consecutive classes. The only thing that I added was the possibility for students to record their own performance locally from Zoom.

2.2 Remote Simultaneous Interpretation Classes

Simultaneous was a different kettle of fish. I was not fully satisfied with GoReact for the reasons mentioned above. GoReact was a wonderful tool for students to do their homework since speeches can be uploaded and preassigned, and all interpretations are recorded in real time, but it was very cumbersome to switch platforms every time the students had to interpret in class. As I mentioned, I did not like that because as the instructor, I was not in control of playing/stopping speeches, students were not starting/finishing interpreting all at the same time, and I could not communicate with my students while they were interpreting. After careful consideration, I decided to use Zoom for my students to interpret in class. As I am writing these lines, one year and a half after, it seems very easy to use Zoom and its interpretation feature. The interpretation feature has become very popular in the US. However, I remember that back in the summer of 2020, it was not very common to use Zoom to interpret or to teach interpretation. At that point in time, if you shared a speech in Zoom as the host, you could not listen to the interpretation channels on the same device, so I decided to log in to Zoom with two different devices, one to teach and share content, and the other one to listen to my students interpret. This meant that I needed to have

two devices for my simultaneous classes.

Equipped with two devices, I started the 2020-2021 school year with Zoom as the main platform to teach simultaneous interpretation. It worked very well from the very beginning. This was the structure followed in my simultaneous classes on Zoom:

- The professor starts the class on Zoom with the first device.
- The professor connects the second device to Zoom and mutes the second device before officially starting the class.
- The professor shares Canvas and the teacher's objectives for that class on Zoom using the first device.
- The professor assigns the interpretation channels.
- The professor asks the students to record their interpretation.
- The professor shares the speech to be interpreted.
- The professor silences the audio from the main device used as a group in Zoom.
- The professor closes the interpretation channels whenever the speech is over.
- The professor unmutes the audio from the first device to communicate with the class as a group.
- The professor and the students discuss feedback, strengths, and weaknesses of the students' performance.

The beauty of all this was that everything could be done in Zoom. There was no need to switch platforms. I could keep control of playing the speech, all students started to interpret and finished at the same time, and I could always communicate with the students. In GoReact, if the students had a technical issue, we had to go back to Zoom to discuss. There was a delay in communication. With Zoom, everything could be done directly from there. I know all this seems obvious now, but it was a breakthrough in the summer/fall of 2020.

At one point that summer, I remember considering using ZipDX since my colleague, Professor Olsen, was using it in his classes. However, since Zoom was the university's corporate communication platform, I was already familiar with it. I had been teaching on Zoom for half a semester already,

it was a very practical option at that point. Moreover, the platform was intuitive, easy to use, and I felt that I did not need technical support to run my simultaneous classes. This does not imply, by any means, that Zoom did not have cons. If students wanted to work as part of the same booth on Zoom, they could not listen to each other, so they would need two different devices to work as a booth and be able to listen to their partner: one device to interpret and one device to listen to their partner. Students could not choose a relay channel either (Zoom added the relay feature in February of 2022). However, my classes are not a multilingual practicum; they are classes from English into Spanish, so both shortcomings were a minor issue for me. In my case Zoom served its purpose: I could assign the channels right away and share the content easily, students could interpret, and I could listen to them without needing to change platforms. Zoom allowed me to teach interpretation effectively without the need for technical support.

As mentioned above, the Fall 2020 semester was the first time that the Spanish Interpretation Department at MIIS was welcoming a new cohort of first-year students who would be fully remote. As an educator, I was feeling very anxious. Would I be able to connect with them? Would I be able to read the classroom? Manage the dynamics of the group? Indeed, establishing a trusting relationship and a positive environment with my first-year students (whom I had never met in person) was the hardest thing for me. It proved to be more challenging than I had anticipated. We started the year with an ice-breaker exercise with the whole Department to get to know each other better. I tried my best to adjust to the university guidelines: shorter classes with frequent and longer breaks. Clear objectives for each class. Asynchronous feedback to complement active time teaching in the classroom. However, as the semester moved forward, it was clear to me that first-year students seemed disengaged, defensive when receiving feedback, and not as happy as my second-year students. The reason was obvious to me: I had met my second-year students in person and taught them in person in the fall of 2020 (they were first-year students back then). However, the cohort of first-year students in the fall of 2021 were fully remote students, and because I had never met them in person, the technology barrier was proving to be very difficult to overcome. I had reflected on my experience teaching online the prior semester and gathered best practices, I had the support of the

Administration with initiatives such as DLINQ, I was able to listen to my students work, give them feedback, and identify strengths and weaknesses for each student, the technology existed to teach consecutive and simultaneous interpretation remotely. However, students did not seem as receptive and open to the learning experience.

Things did not get any better later in the school year. There was some hope that we would be able to go back in person in Spring 2021, but that never crystalized. COVID-19 numbers were not improving, and the university confirmed that we would stay remote for the whole school year. I could tell the students were becoming tired in general. I knew that I was teaching the content and that the technology was up to par, but somehow students did not seem as excited to be in the classroom, they did not seem to enjoy the learning experience as a group. In February of 2021, an article titled “Nonverbal Overload: A Theoretical Argument for the Causes of Zoom Fatigue” (Bailenson, 2021) was published. The article documented to the dot my experience in the Zoom classroom. “Zoom fatigue” existed and, according to Bailenson, there were four possible explanations for it: excessive amounts of close-up eye gaze, cognitive load, increased self-evaluation from staring at video of oneself, and constraints on physical mobility (Bailenson, 2021). Right after reading the article, I knew that my feelings were backed up with research. I decided to share the article with my students and apply its recommendations. The one recommendation that was key to me was the default setting of hiding the self-view window. I had never realized how distracted my students and I were by staring at ourselves throughout the whole day, having an all-day mirror on our screens. It is also worth noting that, in interpretation classes, not only are we communicating and learning, but students must also interpret. The cognitive load reaches maximum levels.

I could not wait to go back to the classroom in person. Not only did I know my students and I were exhausted because of “Zoom fatigue”, but I also knew that I was not being able to fully connect with my first-year students, despite all my efforts (ice breakers, group conversations, private conversations to build rapport with my students, sharing research, making classes shorter, giving plenty of breaks, setting concrete objectives, promoting positiveness and being compassionate in the classroom). I felt I had no more tricks up my sleeve. I even remember getting into a heated conversation with one of my colleagues who

said that remote interpretation was the future of the profession and that we should stay on-line no matter what. I realized at that point that interpreting remotely and teaching remote interpretation were two very different things, and we needed to start to differentiate the two tasks at hand. Also, I am not of the opinion that teaching remotely cannot be done; I did it for one and a half years, but I truly believe that I have been able to be a more effective teacher in person. In any case, the way that I was feeling was not the most important thing; what was truly important was the way students were feeling.

3. Back on campus in Fall 2021, a Hybrid Environment

In summer of 2021, it was announced that we would go back to campus in person. MIIS was encouraging students to join classes in person to take full advantage of the resources available in Monterey but was also giving the option to keep studying remotely if on-site study was not an option for students. Everybody on campus was required to be vaccinated (unless exempted because of medical and/or religious reasons) and needed to be masked. Not knowing for sure if all the students would be able to go back to campus in person, that summer the university tried to train professors to teach in a hybrid environment. We went back to campus one week before classes started to test the equipment.

A new first-year cohort was starting that fall, and everybody in that cohort in the Spanish Interpretation Program was able to attend classes in person. The environment in first year was fantastic, the group was full of energy from the very beginning. Students were eager to learn and very open to feedback, exuding pride to be studying at MIIS. This positive attitude was what I was used to as a professor.

Regarding the second-year cohort, all the students were able to come to campus in person, except for one student who decided to stay remote for the fall semester of 2021. This meant that the second-year cohort was going to be a hybrid one. The most emotional moment for me was when I met the students in person (they were the first-year students who stayed remote for their whole first year, they were the group that I was having so much difficulty to create a bond with). They all looked so different! We all commented on how

we thought people were tall on Zoom and then they were short in real life, and the opposite. After two weeks of teaching in person, the dynamics of that cohort changed completely. I could see that they were happy, excited, and passionate about learning. Instead of having to call students out for volunteering (as happened to me in every on-line class with this cohort), I had to limit the number of volunteers; suddenly, they all wanted to participate in class. Students were more receptive to feedback and were putting in the extra work. I just could not believe it. They looked like different students to me.

3.1 The Hybrid Classroom

3.1.1 Hybrid consecutive interpretation classes

Polycom units had been installed in the classrooms, which meant that for consecutive classes in Zoom, in-person and remote students could work together. When the students interpreted in class, my remote student could hear her peers through the Polycom system, and we could all see each other on Zoom. Zoom was connected to the main screen in the classroom. The experience in the classroom was fine with the integration of these two technologies. We could hear the remote student well. However, since all my students were in person except for one, and I was also physically present in the classroom, I realized that sometimes I was focusing on the students in person and forgetting about my only student online. Even if she was on the main screen in the classroom, I really had to make a conscious effort to make sure that I was always including my remote student. Moreover, the remote student complained several times about not hearing her peers clearly. The Polycom system was supposed to pick up the voices of students, but depending on the acoustics in the classroom, the quality of the sound for my remote student would vary. It is worth noting that the classrooms at MIIS were not originally built to teach remotely or in a hybrid environment; the classrooms had been retrofitted to adapt to the hybrid environment.

This is the structure that I followed in a hybrid consecutive class:

- The professor starts the class on Zoom from the desktop computer located in the classroom and connects the Polycom device to Zoom.

- The professor shares Canvas and the teacher's objectives of the class via Zoom. Students in person see Canvas via Zoom on the main screen located in the classroom; the remote student sees Canvas on her computer screen via Zoom.
- The professor shares a speech via Zoom. Students hear it through the Polycom system in the classroom. The remote student hears it via Zoom.
- Students take notes.
- Two students volunteer or are selected to interpret.
- One student starts interpreting first. The second student goes out of the classroom and waits outside if attending the classroom in person. If the second student is attending the class remotely, the student is placed in a breakout room.
- Once the first student finishes interpreting, the second student is called and goes back to the classroom to interpret. If the second student is remote, the student is brought back into the main room and proceeds to interpret so the class can hear a second version of the same speech.
- The class discusses feedback as a group. The professor and the students share their consecutive notes. If an iPad is used by the professor or the students, notes can be shared with Zoom via Airplay or a wired cable connected to the classroom computer. As an option, notes can also be emailed, downloaded, and shared in Zoom. If notes are taken in a physical notebook, the sharing aspect is much more difficult, as mentioned above.

3.1.2 Hybrid simultaneous interpretation classes

Hybrid simultaneous classes were a bit different. To teach hybrid simultaneous interpretation classes, I went back to a physical lab with booths. In the lab that I was assigned, each booth has a desktop installed. The lab also has a round table in the middle for guest speakers, and for students and the professor to discuss feedback as a group. Thanks to the hard work of our technician, Mark Basse, we were able to connect the microphones located in the round table in the middle of the room to Zoom. This was a game changer for teaching hybrid classes with Zoom from our simultaneous labs.

This was the structure that I followed to teach simultaneous class to my second-year students, with one student attending remotely:

- The professor starts the class on Zoom from the instructor's computer located in the lab.
- The professor shares Canvas and the teacher's objectives for that class. In-person students can see this on the screen installed in the classroom. The remote student sees this information on her own computer through Zoom.
- In-person students go to their physical booths and get ready to interpret.
- The professor assigns the interpretation channel in Zoom to the remote student.
- The professor shares the speech to be interpreted on Zoom. The speech can also be heard in the booths through the lab system.
- The professor asks the students to record their interpretation. The in-person students can be recorded with the lab system, or they can use their own cell phones. The remote student can record her interpretation using Zoom.
- The professor listens to her in-person students through the lab system. The professor uses a second device connected to Zoom to listen to the interpretation of the remote student. The microphone on the second device is always muted.
- When the speech is over, the professor asks the in-person students to come out of the booth and closes the interpretation channel in Zoom.
- The class discusses feedback, strengths, and weaknesses of the students' performance as a group. The microphones on the round table located in the middle of the lab need to be on so the remote student can hear the discussion. The class listens to the remote student on the main screen in the classroom.

For the in-person students to work in the same booth with the remote student, they can bring their own device and connect to Zoom to listen to their booth partner and work together this way.

In this setting, it is important to note that the source speech for students who were in person was coming through the system in the lab and not through Zoom. Also, as the instructor, I had to wear two headphones, one pair of headphones to listen to my students in the lab, and another pair of headphones to listen to my remote student on Zoom, which could be

cumbersome. We ended up tagging the two headphones, since they were both black and I could not distinguish one from the other when I was actively listening to students.

As it happened in my hybrid consecutive class, it was easy for me to “forget” about the student connected online. I had to constantly remind myself that she was there. As mentioned above, the microphones located in the round table in the lab needed to be turned on whenever we were discussing something as a group, once the students had come out of the booths. This sounds obvious, but it is something that does not come naturally when you are in person and you are just discussing feedback, and not giving a speech.

4. The Survey, Spring 2022

The fall semester came and went in the blink of an eye. My only remote student announced that she would come back in person for the semester of Spring 2022, which meant that in the Spanish Interpretation Program all students in first and second year would attend classes in person.

A few weeks into the Spring semester I realized that we needed to ask the students about their whole experience during COVID-19. It was particularly important to survey the second-year cohort. This was a cohort who started fully online, studied the first year of the master’s degree online, and then the second year in person in the hybrid format for the first semester (with one student remote and all the other students attending in person), and fully in person in the second semester. If there was a group that could give us data about both experiences, it was this one. As an educator, throughout the pandemic, I felt that the focus was always on us, how were the teachers feeling? How was teaching online? What did educators think of the experience? Of course, we needed to document the teachers’ experience, but I thought it was important to remove the focus from us and ask the students about their experience. I met with the Program Coordinator of the Spanish T&I Department, Professor Shulman-Mora, to discuss the possibility of conducting a survey among our Spanish T&I students. Professor Shulman-Mora created the survey and distributed it among our students. The survey is included below (Figures 1 to

5). As shown on Figures 1 and 2 below, the survey was filled out by students taking the Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretation (MATI), Master of Arts in Conference Interpretation (MACI), Master of Arts in Translation (MAT), and Master of Arts in Translation and Localization Management (MATLM). The survey was sent to 27 students; 18 students responded to the survey (10 students from first year and 8 students from second year). As shown on Figure 5, to the question, “If you had a choice of attending the MA in any format, which format would you choose?” 18 students answered that they would choose in-person. 3 students answered that they would choose on-line. Because 18 students in total answered the survey, we must conclude that 3 students chose both options. However, it is important to note that a

Figure 1: Degree track

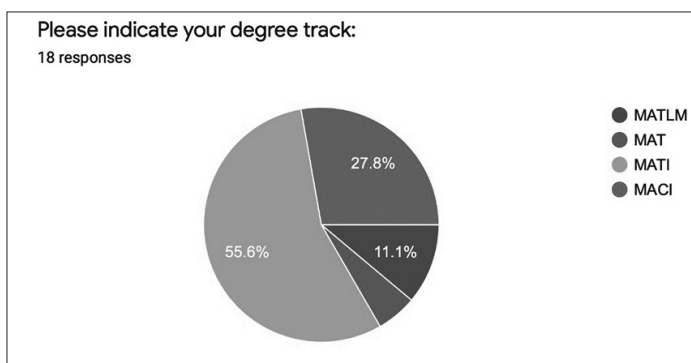


Figure 2: Year of study

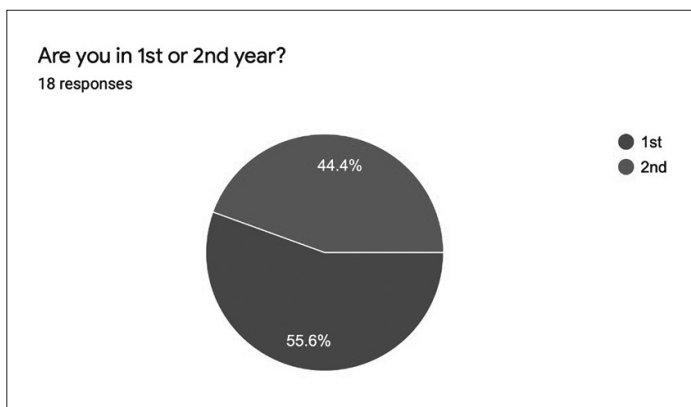


Figure 3: Modes of attendance

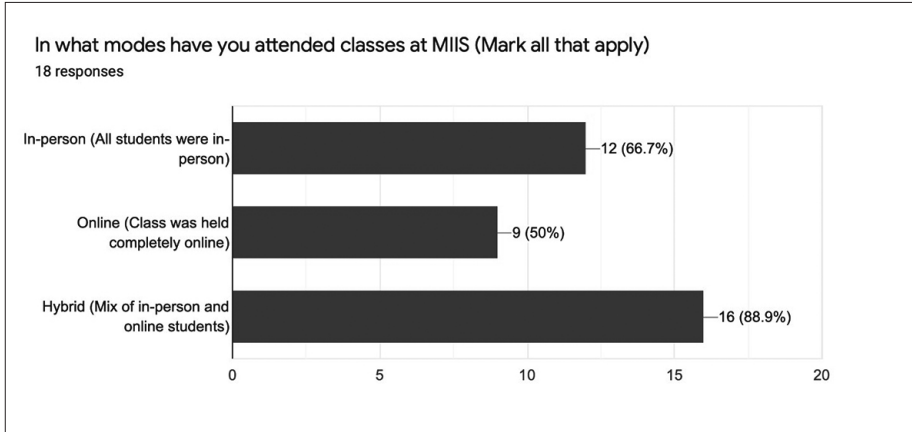
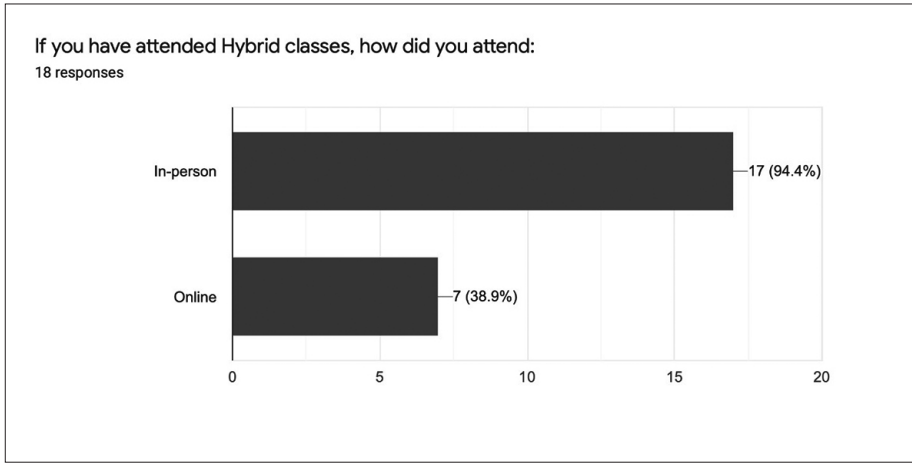
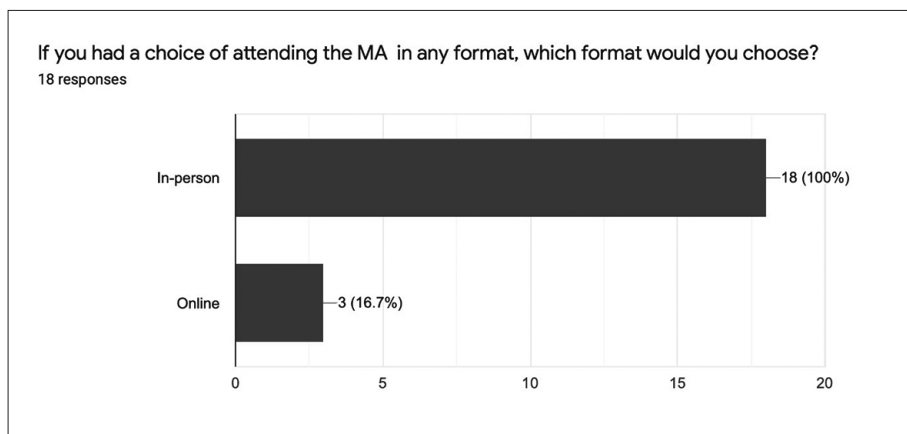
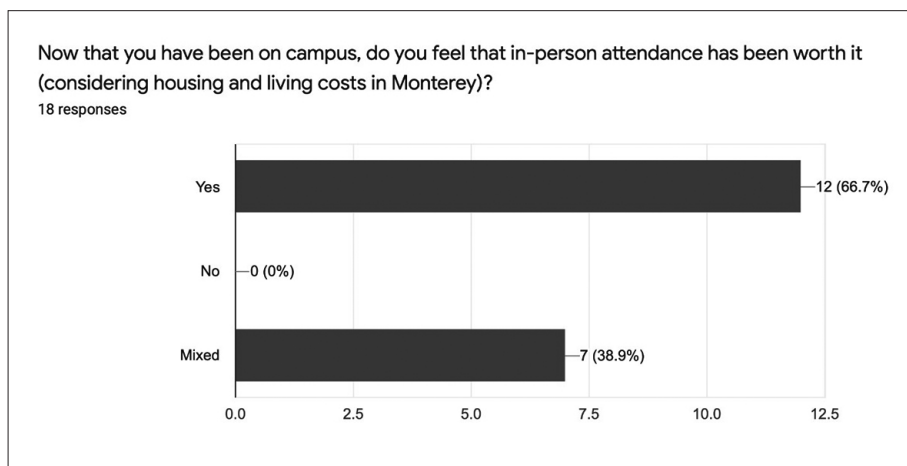


Figure 4: Hybrid classes. Modes of attendance



large majority of students chose attending the program in person (see Figure 5 below).

In the open-ended questions, the students stated that it is much easier to interact in person and not as mentally taxing. They also said that interactions with peers and professors are more intimate and more supportive in person vs. online. They mentioned that having to interact with everyone through a screen for at least 5 hours a day (outside of homework) became almost unbearable by the end of the semester. They mentioned that some professors seemed more severe online, that once on campus professors acquired a

Figure 5: Format preference**Figure 6: Perception of value**

certain humanity, so to say. Students also commented on the glitches with technology, especially in the hybrid format. Based on their responses, the experience with hybrid tended to be more cumbersome since different technologies needed to be integrated. Students who attended remotely complained that at times they could not hear the group discussion happening in the classroom or that they were just simply forgotten because they were on-line.

In general, my impressions were confirmed by the students' responses. Given the choice, and based on their experience, students overwhelmingly

chose in-person learning, although they emphasized that lodging and food costs of living in Monterey are very high. Students are clear that from the economic point of view staying online is better, but they think that the learning experience is much more enriching in person. All these open-ended responses mentioned apply to classes in interpretation only and to the students in the Spanish Program at MIIS.

5. The Future

The Spanish Interpretation Program at MIIS will continue in a hybrid mode next semester (Fall of 2022). For the reasons explained above, in the Spanish Program we hope that most, if not all, of our students come to campus in person. As of now, I firmly believe that in the case of our Spanish Interpretation Program the learning experience works better in person. As a professor, it is much easier to be able to read the room and create a conducive environment for learning. The human connection is much more natural, which seems to be key in the learning process (Robert, 2018). However, this does not mean that our students will not learn how to interpret remotely or will not become familiar with the distance interpreting platforms. The Spanish Interpretation Program will offer one class for second-year students mainly taught online (simultaneous interpretation Spanish into English). This class will be taught by Professor Cox who is based in Washington D.C. Students are also required to take the Practicum, a class that facilitates the transition from the classroom to the first professional interpretation assignment by offering a wide range of interpretation experiences. In this class, the students are exposed to different interpretation platforms for distance interpreting.

Also, this does not mean that we will stay the same as before COVID-19. As we gather more experience teaching in a hybrid mode or fully online, we will be able to establish best practices, we will gather more research and establish clear guidelines which might make the remote learning experience more successful in the future. In the online environment, we are less able to observe and process those subtle non-verbal cues that provide us with conscious and unconscious information about others: how they are feeling, what they are thinking, how they are coping. However, what video calls have

been able to provide for many is a direct line of communication, perhaps more so than when lost in a sea of others in larger classroom, lecture, or staff groups (MacMahon, 2020). Online might not work as a replacement of small in-person classes, as it is the case of the Spanish Interpretation Department in which the maximum number of students per class is 12, allowing the professors to develop close relationships with the students. However, online classes or directed studies online might be a wonderful complement to a large T&I lecture common to all departments in which students are just one of many, allowing for a direct line of contact with the professor (MacMahon, 2020).

The possibility of joining a class remotely also opens a broad range of possibilities. In the winter term, I was able to offer a class on the United Nations Competitive Examination for Language Professions (CELP) Exam with 7 students in person, 1 student attending remotely from the US and one alumnus attending remotely from Qatar. This type of experience could never have happened before. If I was able to do it, it was because I had been teaching 1.5 years on Zoom and I felt confident that it was going to be successful. This course opened the possibility to offer specific professional classes to alumni who otherwise might not be able to travel and stay in Monterey for a certain period of time.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that based on the survey conducted in the spring of 2022 a large majority of the students in the Spanish Interpretation Program prefer in-person learning. This should be important information to shape the future of our Department at MIIS.

Of course, the future is there to be discovered. If hybrid is here to stay, conditions in our campus need to keep improving so students attending remotely are seamlessly integrated in consecutive and simultaneous interpretation classes. There are different needs when teaching interpretation classes in comparison to a regular class. In hybrid interpretation classes remote students need to interpret (they need to be heard), but they also need to be able to listen to their peers who are in person in the actual classroom, in the lab or in the booth.

In addition, if fully remote classes were ever to be considered in the Spanish Interpretation Department, I feel that they would need to be designed that way from the very beginning. They would need to include brief periods

of in-person formal instruction to promote trust and allow for the human connection to be established between the professors and the group of students and the students themselves as a group. In other words, when the pandemic hit, we had to react and adapt our classes the best way that we could to keep educating our students. It is a very different value proposition to intentionally offer an online program. Based on the survey results, other factors would need to be considered to do it successfully. Initiatives such as the Office of Digital Learning and Inquiry (DLINQ) are a wonderful tool for professors to be successful in such endeavors. MIIS is also offering a fellowship for professors for the Digital and Learning Fellows program, which is a brilliant way of getting professors involved and promoting innovation in the long term. Together with these efforts, the Technology Committee must continue staying active and excelling in its work. In January of 2021, a Technology Committee was created at MIIS. The Committee's Chair is Professor Kim from the Korean T&I Department. The Committee's members are Professor Cai and Professor Ding from the Chinese T&I Department, Professor Cooper from the French T&I Department, and myself. The Committee has been meeting monthly since January of 2021. The Committee has met with distance interpreting platform vendors, which have demonstrated the platforms that currently exist in the market. We have also been working with the technician who serves the labs on campus, Mark Basse, to make sure that the labs are working properly and adapted to the hybrid environment. In the semester of Spring 2021, the Committee hosted an RSI Panel. The event was titled "RSI and the Challenges of Interpreting During and After COVID-19". In my opinion, the Tech Committee is doing a great job keeping abreast of the different technologies and identifying clear goals to achieve every semester regarding technology and interpretation. The Committee is the link between academia and the professional market and is actively working to integrate technology into pedagogy. Needless to say, having the support of the MIIS Administration throughout the whole process has been paramount. As an institution that is at the forefront of teaching interpretation in the Americas, it is key to keep promoting such efforts to make sure that we stay competitive and continue training the interpreters of the future.

In honor of all my students and colleagues who bravely coped with

COVID-19 and tried to make the best out of the learning experience despite the circumstances.

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Professional Profile

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