

# Simultaneous-consecutive in interpreter training and interpreting practice: use and perceptions of a hybrid mode

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## Abstract

*By examining the nature and status of the under-researched hybrid mode of interpreting Simultaneous-consecutive, this article aims to assess the amenability of its use in interpreting training and practice. After reviewing the development and specific features of the mode, initial studies and trials carried out in various contexts, as well as impressions from practitioners and users, the authors consider contemporary observations and future directions, and discuss possibilities to implement the mode in interpreter training curricula. Finally, in an attempt to potentially democratise its use in the interpreting community, the paper focuses on the perception of practitioners, as well as of twenty-five trainee interpreters trained to perform in the mixed mode.*

## Keywords

Modes of interpreting, interpreting pedagogy, interpreting research, interpreting performance, digital technology.

## Introduction

In the context of recent and innovative advances in the pedagogy of interpreting, the use of digital technology is currently being trialled as a means of offering

a hybrid mode of interpreting, *Simultaneous-consecutive*. Used for the first time at the end of the 1990s, this unorthodox mode – which consists of recording a source speech with a digital device, in a consecutive interpreting context, and playing it back to interpret it simultaneously – has intrigued researchers, trainers and practitioners over the last two decades. Several studies have been carried out to test its viability. Several trainers have explored its pedagogical specificities with a view to offering an alternative to traditional consecutive interpretation, or to scaffolding the acquisition of interpreting skills differently. Several attempts to popularise its use amongst professionals have been made, using various types of digital recorders.

The research question that this article addresses is the following: What is the amenability of the use of *Simultaneous-consecutive* in interpreter training and interpreting practice?

The term “amenability” is understood here as a characteristic of a tool that allows a user to employ its features in a way that is straightforward and simple, across a variety of applications or settings, and where the tool enables an improved or augmented ability to perform a particular activity, in our case spoken interlingual transfer or interpreting. In addressing the research question, this paper is structured in the following way. Firstly, an overview is provided that traces the development of *Simultaneous-consecutive* and how it is usually operationalised. A review of the initial studies trialling its use is also provided. We then present discussion of contemporary opinions and positions, which is followed by a discussion on how this mode could be introduced into the curriculum of an interpreting course. We then provide a presentation of reported or elicited responses from both practitioners and an informant sample of 25 trainees at the end of a 2-year post-graduate interpreting degree. These responses were gathered as part of a classroom exercise and study on the introduction of the *Simultaneous-consecutive* mode. We provide general information only on the perception of trainees after practice in this mode, with no comparative data on their renditions and performances, or on modes.

We conclude with a summing up of the ‘state of play’ for *Simultaneous-consecutive* as a mode that professional interpreters can employ in certain situations, and as a skill that could be integrated into interpreter training curricula in the future.

1. The emergence of *Simultaneous-consecutive* as a hybrid mode over the last twenty years

As proposed by Pöchhacker (2016: 11), who relied on Otto Kade’s 1968 criteria, interpreting can be defined as “a form of Translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language”. In consecutive interpreting, the interpreter starts speaking after having heard an entire speech, or a lengthy passage thereof, and therefore knows where the speech is going. In simultaneous interpreting, as described by Jones (1998: 67), this is not the case: “The interpreter has no such luxury. You do not know where the speaker is going, even as you

speak. And this is true both at the macro level of the speech and at the micro level". This is one of the reasons why many training programmes introduce consecutive before simultaneous interpreting: to give trainees enough understanding of and experience with the interpreting exercise before adding the difficulties of simultaneous: the acoustic (listening and speaking at the same time) and the intellectual (not knowing where the speech is going). The functions of the hybrid mode discussed in this paper transcend the confines of both modes. In *Simultaneous-consecutive*, while recording the speech, the interpreter first listens, understands, and analyses what the speaker is saying and possibly takes notes, as for any consecutive interpretation. The main difference is that when the speaker is finished, the interpreter plays back the recording and listens to the speech a second time and interprets it simultaneously. The advantage is that the interpreter already knows the content of the speech when beginning to interpret, and can use the notes taken, either in anticipation or as backup.

### 1.1 Origins of and designations for *Simultaneous-consecutive* interpreting

As many researchers approaching this mixed mode of interpreting viewed it as something entirely novel, they employed different designations to refer to it: "Digitally remastered consecutive" or "Technology-assisted consecutive" (Ferrari 2002), "DRAC – Digital recorder assisted consecutive" (Lombardi 2003), "Digital voice recorder assisted CI" (Camayd-Freixas 2005), "SimConsec" (Hamidi/Pöchhacker 2007; Pöchhacker 2016), "Simultaneous-consecutive" (Hiebl 2011), "Consec-simul with notes" (Orlando 2014), or 'Simultaneous-consecutive' (Setton/Dawrant 2016a, 2016b). In this article, we will refer to it as *Simultaneous-consecutive*.

The origin of the hybrid mode is now well documented (Hamidi/Pöchhacker 2007; Orlando 2014): the "inventor" and first known user of *Simultaneous-consecutive* is Michele Ferrari, a SCIC interpreter who, in 1999, decided to record the source speech of a commissioner he had to interpret, then played it back from his digital recording device, and interpreted it simultaneously. For the first time, a consecutive interpretation was performed simultaneously. When asked about the rationale for such a choice, Ferrari explained:

I have always felt a sense of dissatisfaction in performing a consecutive, as if it was a constant struggle against impossible odds. Indeed, I firmly believe it is impossible to do a perfect consecutive, when faced with a difficult, dense and fast speech. Even in the best consecutive of this world, there is always a little something missing.

[...] This [consecutive interpreting] entails a lack of rigour, which has always troubled me ever since my first consecutive, and which led me to find a better solution, in order to fully respect the speaker's original speech, in all its aspects. (Gomes 2002)

Beyond the intention to fully respect the original speech, this "radical innovation" (Pöchhacker 2016: 183) of having two opportunities to hear a source speech also allowed the interpreter not to have to take notes as s/he would usually do for a traditional consecutive rendition. Indeed, with this "digitally remastered" interpretation, the interpreter can hear the speech twice (first, when it is delivered and, sec-

ond, when it is played back from the recording) and therefore can decide whether traditional forms of note-taking can become superfluous. However, as pointed out by Pöchhacker (2015: 381): “Though the method was intended to do away with the need of note-taking, the interpreter can still use the notepad for memory support”. As described by Orlando (2010, 2014, 2015), or Goldsmith (2018), new technological developments like digital pen technology can facilitate both recording and note-taking via one single device, e.g. *Smartpens*, tablets with a stylus.

## 1.2 Modus Operandi, underpinning processes and equipment

Using Gile’s (1995) Effort Models by which Gile conceptualized the interpreting act as a series of efforts to be coordinated and managed, Orlando (2014) mapped the processes involved in *Simultaneous-consecutive* as follows:

Phase 1	Listening 1 and analysis 1 Short-term memory operations (Note-taking - optional)
Phase 2	Listening 2 and analysis 2 Short term memory operations Long term memory operations (reconstructing the speech) (Note-reading - optional)/Retrieving information/Anticipation/Operating the recorder (playback) Production

Table 1: Effort Model as applied to the *Simultaneous-consecutive* mode of interpreting (Orlando 2014: 41)

During phase 1, the effort components are identical to those involved in a traditional consecutive performance except that the interpreter knows that s/he will hear the speech a second time and interpret it simultaneously. The interpreter may decide to take notes or not; or to take notes in a different way as this ‘anticipatory’ knowledge may lead to more economical note-taking, with a focus on the macro-linguistic and structural elements of the speech, for example. During phase 2, the effort components that are usually required and coordinated in simultaneous interpretation are facilitated by the fact the interpreter hears the content of the speech for the second time. The familiarity with the content, coupled with specific notes the interpreter may have taken, should facilitate management of the extra load that the added coordination and management of operations may bring (e.g. anticipation, re-reading notes from the first hearing, using functions of the recorder).

Concerning the type of equipment that is to be used in *Simultaneous-consecutive* Pöchhacker (2015: 381) notes:

Given the crucial role of technology in this technique, the type of equipment used could be expected to be of primary concern. Indeed, this has evolved from what was then known as a handheld PC, palm-sized computer or personal digital assistant

(PDA), to digital voice recorders (DVR) and mobile devices such as smartpens [...]. Nevertheless, the basic technique of interpreting simultaneously via earphones what has been digitally recorded remains the same with any type of equipment.

It is the present authors' view that any type of reliable digital recording device can be used. As discussed in section 3. of this article, trainees who were surveyed tend to favour their smartphones or tablets with a voice-recording app. Respondents in Özkan's study (2020) expressed a preference for tablets and stylus over digital pens. As indicated by Orlando (2014), Pöchhacker (2016), and reiterated recently by Goldsmith (2018) or Braun (2019), more research needs to be carried out to identify the potential and limitations of the technique, and possibly if any specific equipment should be recommended.

### 1.3 Initial research studies and findings

Following on from Ferrari's first attempt, this new mode triggered the interest of researchers and, from then on, several studies were conducted. As reported by Hamidi and Pöchhacker (2007: 277-278), various practitioners have trialled different tools to test the efficiency of digital assistance when performing a long consecutive interpretation. For example, Ferrari carried out tests at the DG Interpretation with various devices in 2002 and 2003. These initial trials were followed by trialling of *Simultaneous-consecutive* in court interpreting assignments conducted by Lombardi (2003) and Camayd-Freixas (2005). Hamidi (2006) and Hamidi and Pöchhacker (2007) also put the technique to the test and employed the contraction "SimConsec" as a suggested label. Other studies on "note-based vs. recorder assisted consecutive" (Pöchhacker 2012) were then the focus of a number of research projects at post-graduate level, particularly at the University of Vienna in the years 2010-2012 (Hawel 2010; Sienkiewicz 2010; Hiebl 2011). Orlando (2014) studied the mixed mode using digital pen technology and advanced recording features. Three recent master's theses (Mielcarek 2017; Özkan 2020; Svoboda 2020) and one doctoral dissertation (Chitrakar 2016) were also dedicated to the topic.

As most attempts have shown, and as expressed in Hamidi and Pöchhacker (2007: 278), the new simultaneous consecutive mode allows an "improvement in quality" and "is praised for its increased accuracy and completeness". Because "note-taking is no longer necessary [which] allows the interpreter to devote more attention to listening and comprehension" (*Ibid.*) it "permitted enhanced interpreting performances" and was "considered a viable technique" (*Ibid.*). All the following studies have compared performances of interpreters working in traditional consecutive interpreting and in the hybrid mode, using various indicators and recording devices, and with samples ranging from 2 interpreters to 24 (for more details on the different methodologies used, see Chitrakar 2016 and Svoboda 2020), and all have found an enhanced accuracy and completeness in the interpretations in the new mode (Ferrari 2002; Camayd-Freixas 2005; Hamidi 2006; Hamidi/Pöchhacker 2007; Hawel 2010; Orlando 2014; Chitrakar 2016; Mielcarek 2017; Özkan 2020; Svoboda 2020).

Among other evidenced benefits of the mode are “diminished interpreter fatigue” and “increased mental stamina” (Lombardi 2003: 8); a reduction of the memory load allowing a higher focus on production and an increased endurance (Caymad-Freixas 2005); “closer source-target correspondence” or “fewer prosodic deviations” (e.g. pauses, acceleration) (Hamidi/Pöchhacker 2007: 288); a better quality of expression (Hawel 2010); a higher comfort, a better fluency of delivery (Orlando 2014); fewer additions, fewer gaps, fewer repetitions, fewer examples of conceptual approximations, fewer examples of substantial meaning shifts and distortions, as well as an improved overall level of information details and “higher output quality in terms of preserving the message integrity of the source speech” (Chitrakar 2016: 140), fewer deviations (Mielcarek 2017), reduced stress and “deeper understanding of the source text” (Özkan 2020: 58) or a significant decrease of the number of “relevant omissions” (Svoboda 2020: 72).

As for the shortcomings of the method, caveats about poor communication with the public were noted, as most studies pointed out a reduced audience contact and interaction during the simultaneous part of the task. This can be explained by the fact that, in general, interpreters performing in the simultaneous mode, often from booths, do not try to establish eye contact or rapport with an audience. Despite the reported reduced rapport, the audience surveyed in the Hamidi/Pöchhacker (2007: 281) study found the performances in *Simultaneous-consecutive* “better”, “more fluent and understandable” and more lively, and the interpreters less tense. This finding, though, was not confirmed in Svoboda’s study (2020: 75) in which two-thirds of the audience surveyed preferred interpretations in conventional consecutive. However, as Orlando’s (2014: 48) study suggests, the lack of rapport could be overcome if professionals who choose to perform in *Simultaneous-consecutive* are made aware of this risk and trained accordingly to interact more with their audience as a consciously pursued strategy.

#### 1.4 Contemporary observations with a view to future directions

Why and in what circumstances would an interpreter decide to use this new technique? Braun (2019) notes it could be used in situations that “have traditionally required consecutive interpreting” or “where simultaneous interpreting is not possible (due to a lack of equipment) and with interpreters who mainly work in simultaneous mode and/or are dissatisfied with what they perceive as the shortcomings of the consecutive mode”. Based on Gile’s (2001) study where overall accuracy in simultaneous “was clearly superior to consecutive”, and on the findings evidenced in the studies mentioned in section 1.3 above, one could posit that using the hybrid mode could be beneficial in contexts where high accuracy is paramount, for example in court, legal and police interpreting settings (Svoboda 2020). The Directorate General for Interpretation at the European Commission concurs with this contention and states on the website of its Knowledge Centre on Interpretation that the “technique, which is actively developed, taught and researched by several interpreters, appears to be interesting for settings that are highly demanding in terms of accuracy and completeness” (DG Interpreta-

tion/SCIC 2020). Following up on the work and findings of Lombardi (2003) and Camayd-Freixas (2005), and discussing whether consecutive or simultaneous interpreting would be preferable in court assignments, Hale *et al.* (2017: 77) report suggestions made by Mikkelson (2010) to use recording and mix both modes:

Mikkelson (2010) also mentioned one method which combines the two modes, a method so far used sparsely but which is gaining increasing attention: the use of a recording device (currently either an MP3 player or a “digital pen”), linked to an interpreter’s earphone, which records a question or answer. This allows a turn-by-turn consecutive interpretation, based on the recording: the interpreter listens to the recording while interpreting, thus obtaining a second hearing of the utterance and enhancing precision.

This then raises the question of whether the decision to use *Simultaneous-consecutive* depends on the type of source text to be interpreted. As reported by Pöchhacker (2016: 183), in a comparative study of traditional consecutive and *Simultaneous-consecutive* conducted at the University of Vienna (Hiebl 2011), the participants were given the choice between the two modes to produce a rendering of three speeches with different levels of information density. When surveyed after their performances, participants clearly preferred the hybrid mode when the source speech was fast and dense, a sentiment echoed by the participants in Özkan’s study (2020: 73). These findings, in relation to density and pace, echo Ferrari’s first impressions and motivations to perform in this mode. As Ferrari himself reported, he decided to try it because

[he] was assigned at very short notice to interpret for Vice-President Kinnock at a press conference in Rome. The very thought of having to take notes from Mr. Kinnock’s fast, dense and witty speeches, and having to reproduce them in front of a hundred people in my home country literally terrorised me [...] In my despair, I thought of a possible way out of such a frightening prospect [...] I could record [the] speeches [...] and play them back into a headset, [...] performing a simultaneous from the original input. (Gomes 2002)

The studies carried out so far have evidenced several advantages in using *Simultaneous-consecutive*. As for disadvantages, a lack of rapport with the audience seems to be the main drawback, but Gillies (2019: 227) lists another potential obstacle: “[The mode] require[s] the interpreter to get permission to record the original in advance. In some contexts (ministerial bilaterals, negotiations, etc.), such recordings would be unthinkable!”. This was also a potential drawback mentioned by Lombardi (2003) and Camayd-Freixas (2005) for court interpreting. Further, Gillies identifies another shortcoming in this mode, this time relating to the length of target speech: “The interpreter cannot adhere to the generally accepted norm that a consecutive should only take around three-quarters of the time of the original speech (Jones 2002: 5) and will most likely also have to interpret some redundant parts of the speech (Hamidi/Pöchhacker 2007)” (*Ibid.*). In his 2020 study of the performances of eighteen students of conference interpreting, Özkan noted a similar issue and found it had an effect on the fluency of interpretations in the hybrid mode.

As already pointed out, more research would be needed to understand the full potential of *Simultaneous-consecutive*, to make recommendations on the type of equipment to be used, or to suggest contexts and situations where it could provide a clear benefit. However, in light of the ongoing growth of technological solutions and greater use of technology in all communication situations, it could be a real asset in a practitioner's toolkit, "though it is dependent upon having interpreters who are trained and proficient in this mixed mode" (Hale *et al.* 2017: 77). This is echoed by Gillies (2019: 227) who states that it could be better understood and used more often "if a generation of interpreters learn to use [the technique] as part of their studies, something that doesn't happen systematically yet", or by Downie (2020: 148) who believes that "we haven't learned how to use it properly" yet. This brings us to the issue of how *Simultaneous-consecutive* could be integrated into the formal instruction of trainee interpreters, as an illustration of how practice can inform research, research can inform training and, in turn, training can inform practice (Orlando 2016).

## 2. Introducing *Simultaneous-consecutive* into the curriculum of an interpreting course

Given the results indicating a generally higher reported level of accuracy and comfort in the hybrid mode in the afore-mentioned studies (and therefore the potential appeal in using it), and given the need for interpreters to be exposed to and trained in contemporary approaches that incorporate the use of technology, it is a little surprising that few attempts have been made to systematically study training in this mode in interpreting programmes. The only known formal pedagogical initiatives offered in universities are those developed by Navarro-Hall of the Middlebury Institute, "who was at the forefront of promoting and training in this mode of interpreting" (Gillies 2019: 225) at least in the USA, and by Orlando at Monash University, in Australia (Orlando 2015: 147). Training workshops and PD courses targeted at practitioners have also been organised through professional associations, e.g. by trainers like Navarro-Hall (Orlando 2015: 141) or El Metwally (Goldsmith 2018: 344). Despite the small number of examples, we propose to consider, in this section, how *Simultaneous-consecutive* could be introduced in interpreter training curricula.

When performing in this mode, even if the simultaneous interpretation is facilitated, the difficulty lies in the various tasks to be completed at the same time: starting the playback, listening and understanding, addressing the audience, reading notes, and operating the recorder if necessary. That is why performing in this mode requires specific training, as for the other two modes. This brings us to the issue of when instructors should consider introducing activities relating to such training in the curriculum, and so far, different methods have been trialled.

Using an experiment undertaken in the Monash University four-semester interpreting Master's course, where consecutive is taught before simultaneous, Orlando (2015: 148) suggested that an appropriate moment could be "between

consecutive and simultaneous”, “in the second half of the second semester” but only when trainees “have already experienced split-attention exercises”, “seeing the hybrid mode as perhaps a step towards [advanced] simultaneous”. In regard to the selection of source texts, it was found that using easy and short speeches (such as narratives or informative texts) enabled trainees to reflect more easily on the challenges posed by simultaneous interpreting, and to identify the various tasks the new mode entails. However, Orlando (2015: 148) also noted at the time that “at this stage it is difficult to know what works and what does not, but future developments and projects will help determine sound pedagogical strategies”.

After the trial of that earlier introduction of the mode in their curriculum, the present authors have now opted for using the mixed mode towards the end of the last semester of their four-semester course, only when students have become fully competent in interpreting simultaneously. The rationale being that their advanced command in simultaneous allows trainees to focus more specifically on the coordination of the operations required by *Simultaneous-consecutive* when the mode is introduced to them: what type of notes to take (if any), starting the recording playback, using their ear sets, establishing rapport with the audience while interpreting, all at once. This coordination effort, coupled with their lack of experience in simultaneous interpreting, was a strong concern expressed by trainees when the mode was introduced earlier in the course.

Another option would be to use the hybrid mode as a pedagogical instrument for training in other tasks. In their recent two volumes dedicated to conference interpreting training, Setton and Dawrant (2016a: 277) note about *Simultaneous-consecutive* that “pending further studies on its applicability in professional practice, this can be a useful training tool”. To them, the benefits of the hybrid mode lie in the possibility it offers to unbundle the various elements into play in simultaneous interpreting, and to focus on one or another more exclusively.

With a discourse model already installed in their minds and visual recall clues in their notes, students will not have to listen as hard as they would if the speech were coming to them ‘fresh’. This should release processing capacity for deverbalization and chunking technique, and some self-monitoring. (Setton/Dawrant 2016b: 264)

Therefore, following their idea that simultaneous interpreting training be taught gradually and scaffolded over five stages, they suggest (2016a: 277) rather to use the mixed mode when focussing specifically on coordination and during what they term *SI with Training Wheels* activities:

Students sit in their booths and watch a 5-7 min passage of the SL [source language] speech on video while taking notes as though to deliver the passage back in consecutive – but then, instead of students delivering the consecutive, the same passage is immediately played again to be done in SI, using the notes for support.

Such a procedure is indeed likely to facilitate students’ metacognitive knowledge of simultaneous interpreting components and ability to reflect on their performance, as well as “concentrate on applying proper SI technique to process units of sense as they come in” (Setton/Dawrant 2016b: 264). However, this model of use

of *Simultaneous-consecutive* does not expose students to two important tasks that the mode requires of them: the coordination of recording and playback operations, which is one of the key logistic activities that the (trainee) interpreter needs to manage when working in this mode, and the interaction with an audience.

More findings from initiatives in the training area would be needed to determine the moment at which it would be best to start training in this mode. Except for those mentioned above, there are few examples of courses that have implemented training in *Simultaneous-consecutive*, and little data in the interpreter training literature informing us of pedagogical initiatives or recommendations about it. This might be because this unusual mode is still unknown, not well understood, or perhaps not even registered by either users of interpreting services or by fellow interpreters when this mode is actually being employed. However, on the basis of the positive initial reactions (albeit small number of) reported from those who used it both in professional and educational environments (Caymad-Freixas 2005; Orlando 2015), we believe that *Simultaneous-consecutive* and its pedagogical value could find a place in interpreter training curricula and practice.

This sentiment was recently echoed by the Chief Interpreter at UNOG, Marie Diur (2019), during her presentation at the conference on 100 Years of Conference Interpreting, where she suggested that training institutions could change their curriculum to respond to various contemporary challenges. She went on to even question if it was still relevant to provide traditional consecutive speech interpretations when one could simply record a speaker on their smartphone and interpret simultaneously from the playback of the recording, i.e. choose *Simultaneous-consecutive*. Despite its controversial nature, the question is indeed pertinent for interpreting programmes: should long consecutive still be taught the way it has been for decades when there are fewer and fewer assignments requiring it (Pöchhacker 2016; Gillies 2019), or could such training be complemented by training in the hybrid mode?

### 3. Perceptions of the *Simultaneous-consecutive* mode: from practitioners to trainees

#### 3.1 Practitioners and their audience

As mentioned earlier, the first official attempt to use the hybrid mode in a professional setting was undertaken by Michele Ferrari, in 1999. As he reported, the audience that attended his first performance was impressed and intrigued, and he described the experiment as a success: “I received compliments from many people, including a couple of journalists, who said they had never heard such an accurate and lively consecutive before” (Gomes 2002).

Positive comments echoing the above were also made by the audience surveyed in the 2007 Hamidi/Pöchhacker study who expressed their overall preference for performances in *Simultaneous-consecutive*. However, other studies evidenced the public’s slight preference for traditional consecutive (Sienkiewicz 2010; Svoboda 2020) for reasons mentioned above, namely a lack of naturalness or rapport with the audience.

As for the views expressed by practising interpreters about this mode, they have usually ranged from ambivalent to positive. For example, the interpreters tested in the Hamidi/Pöchhacker (2007: 288) study “easily adopted” the technology-assisted mode and “considered it a viable technique” that they could imagine using in real assignments. Hiebl (2011) reports, for her part, that interpreters surveyed after the experiment she conducted expressed their preference for the traditional consecutive and some scepticism about using the mixed mode in professional practice. However, she also registers the interpreters’ overall positive opinion about the mode itself. Four recently graduated professional interpreters were the target informants in Orlando’s (2014) study of the hybrid mode using a digital pen. These informants’ responses to the amenability of the *Simultaneous-consecutive* mode using a digital pen were all favourable:

All declared that they felt more confident in the [*Simultaneous-consecutive*] mode, that they provided a better performance, and that they preferred interpreting in this mode. All also added they would use it in future professional settings, provided they engage in or invest in more (self-) directed training with the digital pen and its features. (Orlando 2014: 52)

Compiling comments and experiences from a wider range of professional interpreters, Orlando (2015: 139-141) presented testimonies from professionals (freelancers on the private market or staff interpreters in institutions) who performed in the hybrid mode, as well as their varied impressions. Most of them found the experience of trialling *Simultaneous-consecutive* a very interesting one and saw it as a valid option for themselves in providing interpretation in consecutive settings, provided they received training to learn how to work effectively in the mode. Similar responses were also expressed by interpreters in other studies (e.g. Hamidi 2006; Hamidi/Pöchhacker 2007; Özkan 2020).

Years later, though, it is difficult to explain why *Simultaneous-consecutive* has not gained the status that could have been anticipated from these positive impressions. Gillies (2019: 224) makes the following observation:

It seems likely that the limited number of days worked in consecutive, coupled with a lack of confidence in 1) the new technology and 2) one’s own ability to use it successfully at all times (and particularly under pressure), have combined to hamper the spread of [...] simultaneous consecutive [...].

### 3.2 Eliciting responses from trainee interpreters on the amenability of *Simultaneous-consecutive*.

The following sub-section presents perceptions of the mixed mode of twenty-five trainees from Monash University’s Master of T&I Studies who were surveyed at the end of their course, after having been exposed to *Simultaneous-consecutive* over a period of three consecutive weeks (three 3-hour workshops), at the end of their final semester in conference interpreting. Interpreting students in that course are trained in consecutive interpreting (for dialogue or speech interpret-

ing) throughout the four semesters of their training. Simultaneous interpreting is introduced in small steps in the second semester and practised fully in the third and fourth semesters.

Given that so far, to our knowledge, no trial had been carried out on how to train interpreting students to work in *Simultaneous-consecutive*, we decided to undertake an informal study to address this apparent gap. Its sole purpose was to familiarise advanced trainee interpreters for them to work in the mixed mode over three weekly interpreting workshops, and then to collect their impressions and perceptions on its amenability and usability. No comparative study of their performances in traditional consecutive or in *Simultaneous-consecutive* was carried out.

### 3.2.1 Protocol

Twenty-five advanced trainees in their final semester participated in this study as part of their weekly interpreting workshops. Both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting are usually practised during these weekly workshops. At the time of the study, trainees were all capable of delivering a long consecutive of approximately 8 minutes, and a simultaneous interpretation of approximately 20 minutes.

*Simultaneous-consecutive* was presented to them first in a theory lecture. All aspects and features of the mode were explained and discussed collectively, and a step-by-step demo was given by their lecturer.

The languages represented amongst the 25 trainees were Chinese (Mandarin), French, Italian and Japanese, together with English. Trainees were asked to perform in the hybrid mode, rendering an English source speech into their other working language. The thematic area of the speech (environmental science) was familiar to them as they had been working on speeches in this area over the previous weeks. The chosen speech was divided into segments of approximately 700 words. After a segment was delivered, only one student was chosen randomly to interpret it in the hybrid mode. Then the next segment was presented, and another student was asked to interpret, and so on.

During the delivery of the source speech, trainees were given the possibility to record the speech using either their own smartphone or tablet, a digital pen (students in this programme are used to working with *Smartpens* for note-taking exercises) or any recording device of their preference.

They were reminded of an important feature conveyed to them in the lecture, namely the need to maintain rapport and eye contact with the audience.

When not interpreting, each trainee was asked to observe the classmate designated for the rendition and to pay attention to their apparent level of confidence, naturalness, and interaction with the audience (measured via sustained eye contact). It is worth noting that during their course, these students have been trained to provide peer-assessment and critical feedback to one another.

This was repeated over a 3-hour session three weeks in a row (9 hours in total), making sure all students in each group had enough practice and had gained a level of confidence in this mode before the last class.

After these three weeks, during their last workshop, the trainees were invited to undertake the same exercise one more time, and a questionnaire about the experience and their impressions was distributed to them. As this questionnaire aimed only to elicit feedback on their perceptions, the accuracy of the interpretations was not measured and no comparison between modes was made.

### 3.2.2 Summary of responses

The first question was about the equipment used. Twenty out of 25 trainee interpreter respondents (80%) chose their own smartphone because of their higher level of familiarity in operating it, 2 out of 25 (8%) a tablet, two (8%) a digital pen, and one (4%) a MP3 recorder.

Two questions dealt with note-taking and notes: whether trainees would take notes and whether these notes were useful. While listening to the speech the first time, nineteen students took notes (76%), six did not (24%). Out of the nineteen who did, four took full notes of the speech (as for a traditional consecutive) and fifteen only noted down numbers, names and key terms, “striking” and/or “important information”, or structural aspects of the source speech. Seventeen reported that they consulted their notes while providing the interpretation and that they considered their notes “useful”. Two said they did not because they were focussing on listening and interpreting and did not feel the need to refer to their notes.

One part of the survey focused on eliciting from respondents what the positive and/or the negative aspects of interpreting in the hybrid mode were. No lists of possible responses to choose from were provided to the trainees; they were free to report any positive and/or negative aspects. To facilitate the reporting, the frequency and type of positive and negative aspects identified have been aggregated in Table 2 below.

Thematic categories of trainees' responses		Responses	
		No.	%
Positive aspects	“A better understanding of the source text” and therefore a (perceived) “better accuracy”	22	88
	Fewer (or no) notes and hearing the speech twice would imply “less stress”, “less pressure” or “more comfort”	12	48
Negative aspects	The “fear of a potential technological failure”	12	48
	Added pressure because of the “coordination load”	8	32
	A potential “poor sound quality” because of the setting or context	7	28
	The quality of the delivery may likely be affected by the quality of the source speech (pace, disfluencies, etc.), which is not the case in traditional consecutive where the interpreter sets the pace and structure.	3	12

Table 2: Positive and negative aspects of interpreting in *Simultaneous-consecutive* according to trainee interpreters.

Two questions dealt with their own impressions when observing one trainee interpreter performing during this session. One question related to the confidence/naturalness shown by the interpreter, the other to their level of engagement with the audience (via the frequency of eye contact). There were two entries for each question. For question one, 16 respondents (64%) indicated “The interpreter was confident / natural while interpreting”, and 9 (36%) “The interpreter was not confident / not natural while interpreting”. For question two, 15 respondents (60%) found the interpreter “mindful of the audience”, and 10 (40%) “not mindful of the audience”.

Finally, participants were asked if, based on their experience of the mode, they would “consider using *Simultaneous-consecutive* instead of the traditional consecutive mode during a real assignment” and why. Notwithstanding the effect of possible positive bias that such a question may have, eighteen of them (72%) responded “yes”, six “no” (24%) and one did not respond (4%). The majority of the positive responses were justified by the higher accuracy the mode allows (88%). Three participants insisted that they would use it only if they first obtained permission from the client; and four said they would do it if they practised more beforehand. Five justifications for the negative response mentioned the high risk of relying on technology. One thought that the interpretation in the hybrid mode would always be longer than in traditional consecutive and that clients expect “something short and concise”. These comments echo the caveats mentioned by Hamidi (2006) or Gillies (2019).

### 3.2.3 Discussion

The responses collated from these trainee interpreter respondents about to enter the Te-l market indicate an overall positive perception of *Simultaneous-consecutive*. Approximately three-quarters of the cohort declared they would be ready to work in the mixed mode as it appears to them to be less stressful and more comfortable than traditional consecutive, and because they feel they have a better grasp of the content of the speech and can produce a more accurate rendering. Should they decide to do so, they would first ensure they obtain consent from their clients. They would choose equipment they are familiar and at ease with (e.g. their smartphone) and that they can rely on, which would alleviate the pressure and concern caused by a potential technological failure that half of them identified as a realistic fear that they have. Three out of four of them would likely still take notes, even if the notes reflect only few specific elements or the macro-structure of the speech.

The twenty-five participants were trained in this hybrid mode for three consecutive weeks before the study (a total of nine hours) and gained familiarity when performing in it. Some of them, though, felt they would need to receive more hours of training before feeling really confident to use it. This is likely to lead to the reduction of the coordination load mentioned by a third of them as a negative point. A small number of them expressed concerns about the lack of leeway the interpreter would have in this mode (during the simultaneous phase), especially with low-quality source speeches or unclear speakers.

In regard to responses relating to the audience's perception of interpreters working in the mode, it is interesting to note that about two-thirds of the participants reported that their fellow trainee participants (64%) appeared confident and natural when interpreting, which is encouraging as they practiced for only three sessions before the study. Finally, the fact that more than half of them (60%) were reportedly able to maintain rapport with the audience during their delivery corroborates one of the findings of Orlando's study (2014): if properly trained and made aware of this communication component, interpreters working in *Simultaneous-consecutive* would be better equipped to interact in a sustained way with their listeners.

These findings allow us to extrapolate that if guided practice was implemented in an interpreting curriculum, with a scaffolded pedagogical progression covering more than nine hours, users of the hybrid mode could be better prepared and become confident enough to opt for the technique much more often than has been the case over the last ten years. For this to become a reality, interpreting programmes globally would have to consider Gillies' (2019: 227) advice and ensure that "a generation of interpreters learn to use [it] as part of their studies in a more systematic way". This could also be an endeavour undertaken by professional associations as part of a professional development short course.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this article, we have reviewed the nature and status of the hybrid mode of interpreting, *Simultaneous-consecutive*. In an attempt to provide a better understanding of it, we have gathered recent findings and showed that, despite clear advantages that have been evidenced for many years (especially in regards to accuracy and completeness), and some positive impressions from audiences and practitioners, this hybrid mode is still not widely used in professional settings. It also appears that it has attracted only limited interest in interpreter training programmes.

In light of the various challenges conference interpreters have to face and of the widespread use of digital and technological solutions in communication situations, it is advisable for interpreter training programmes to review the content of their curricula, and *Simultaneous-consecutive* may become a desirable component of their syllabi. As highlighted in this article, the small number of initiatives that implement this mixed mode in teaching or that carry research on its use in training means that this hybrid mode and its full potential is still comparatively under-studied. In the interest of our discipline and of the profession, and to bridge the gap between practice and research through training in a cyclical way (Setton 2010; Orlando 2016), we hope that the tentative findings and reported experiences that have been outlined in this article will stimulate the community of interpreter trainers and researchers to explore the possibilities offered by this intriguing mode further.

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