Snapshots of waveforms in multitrack digital recordings: a help for the assessment of simultaneous interpreters

- End of the 90's: the start of digital recordings.

- Before: assessment systems were based on recordings made by cassette recorders, inside booths or in labs.

- In labs: original+interpretation in the same track.

Did not offer the visual feedback of the ones today.

The field of assessment in interpreter training

- In the 90's: for the selection of candidates.
- Now again: a volumen edited by Pöchacker: *Aptitude of interpreting.* Benjamins.
- Some urgent issues to be addressed: under researched.
- Definition of SI: deliver in real time: difficult to assess.
- How do we do it?: TV+classroom: with two pairs of headphones: give feedback and improvement: very demanding.

Assessment: Present and past

- Pöchacker (2004: 175): "Lasting tradition of training by apprenticeship" established by the first generation of teachers.
- In the 80's with the influence of language teaching this approach was questioned.
- Assessment: an integral part of the training process. Maing a judgement about the students learning in order to identify their strength and weaknesses in order to improve.
- Pöchacker (2004: 187): From language testing and educational assessment.
- Campbell and Hale (2003: 221): "Interpreting was still in its infancy and the new kid on the block could benefit from the solid source of knowledge available in the field of research".

Wrong assessments in interpreting

- Translation: BUT interpreting quality includes aspects that cannot be expalined by simply comparing the source and target language.
- Riccardi (2002: 116): "Interpreting is someting evanescent".
- Why?: Assessing a performance of simultaneous interpreting is more complicated than it seems. Very complex mental activity. Therefore sometimes made in a holistic and subjective manner.
- Rely on the professional experience of the teaching staff: subjective and intuitive. It is much more complex than measuring body weight.

How to do a proper assessment

- Daniel Gile (1995b: 151): the fidelity of the speech, the quality of output, quality of the voice, the prosodic characteristics, the terminology.

- Scarcity of assessment criterias: Institute of Linguists has one but general and not for conference interpreting.

With users

- With interpreting users: Kurz (from 1989 until 2001). Results depend on age, gender, experience with interpreting, etc.
- Bühler: accent, voice, fluency, logical cohision, sense consistency, completenes, grammar, terminology and style.
- Value? Questioned by Kalina (2005: 776)
- Conference interpreters have higher expectations than users.

The prosodic characteristics of the delivery

- An experiment: five students recorded

- Assessment:

1. Waves: reading + predictions.

2. Audio was compared.
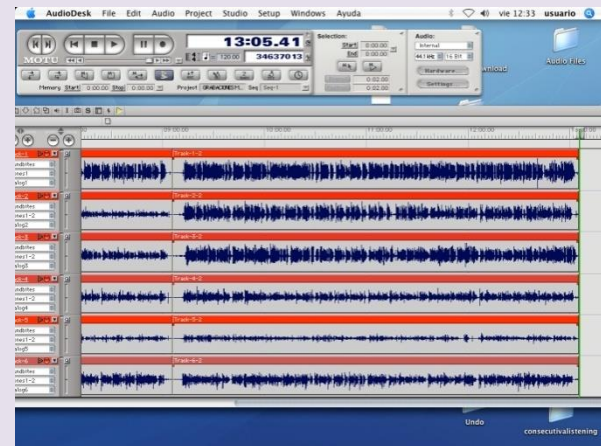
Waveforms

- In the past: 1996 to check time-lag by Maria Durham+Suprasegmentals of SI by József Bendik, 1996.

- What do we see? Pauses: information missing. Volume: bad control of voice.

- Important: Bühler: voice and fluency.

- Mac: motu and audiodesk 2.0461

Listening to the audio

- Predictions were right

- The waves support audio recordings.

Furthermore

For self assessment: students watch the waveforms that they produce while they interpret.

Requires split attention therefore for advanced stages since it is very demanding.