

Report by Paweł Korpala on the [FTI Research Methods Winter School 2015](#) by the winner of the 2014 Summer School Scholarship Grant Faculté de Traduction et d'Interprétation, Université de Genève, 19-21 January 2015, Geneva

In January 2015 I participated in the FTI Research Methods Winter School 2015 organised by Faculté de Traduction et d'Interprétation, Université de Genève. When I was applying for the FTI Research Methods Summer School, I did not see myself walking around Geneva's old town covered in snow but well... they say we should always expect the unexpected. Since the summer session of the course was cancelled, I patiently waited a few months more to participate in the FTI Research Methods Winter School.

The main objective of the FTI winter school was to provide young researchers with the necessary skills to carry out their own empirical research project. As a researcher working in the field of cognitive and psycholinguistic aspects of conference interpreting, I was pretty sure that a course in research methodology was something that I really needed. And now, with hindsight, I can say that I was perfectly right. Participation in the workshop was a perfect opportunity for me to develop my skills and broaden my knowledge which helped (and still helps) me carry out my Ph.D. project by means of providing me with a better understanding of the research methods used in Interpreting Studies. What I really liked about the winter school was its primary focus on the process of interpreting. At the stage of choosing the school from which I would benefit the most I had the impression that a lot of them focused solely on translation and, thus, turned a blind eye to the process of interpreting.

The whole workshop comprised 8 hours of seminar-style presentations and 16 hours of workshop-style exercises. Only five participants were accepted to participate in the course which created a very personal and informal atmosphere, perfect for stimulating discussions. The opening session started with a warm welcome by Prof. Kilian Seeber who gave a presentation on principles of good research. The participants were introduced to the main methodological notions such as collecting data and ethics in research. Then Sophie Hengl gave a presentation on writing a good research paper which I personally find to be very useful and eye-opening. How to structure a paper? What should we include in the introduction? Should we reveal the results of our empirical study in the abstract? I reckon a great many researchers asked themselves these questions at least once when analysing the results of their studies. During the afternoon session we learned how the four basic scales of measurement differ from each other. Around 5 p.m., tired after the first day of intensive training, we had a walk around the stunning UNI-MAIL building and went to the library. This is what you call a scholar's inquisitiveness.

During the second and the third day of the workshop the following sessions were held:

- Qualitative research, observation and introspection;
- Practical session: analysing surveys, designing surveys;
- Practical session: cause and effect;
- Quantitative research, quasiexperiments, experiments;
- Practical session: designing experiments;
- Practical session: analysing experiments;
- Practical session: visualising data.

Since all the topics were very relevant, it is difficult to pinpoint the most thoughtprovoking sessions and discussions which helped me prepare the final outline of my Ph.D. thesis. The session on designing experiments led by Dr. Alexis HervaisAdelman was the core of the workshop for me. Although the notions of inferential statistics and null hypothesis falsification are not the easiest ones to digest, Dr. Alexis Hervais-Adelman used several examples to illustrate them. The session on analysing and designing surveys transpired to be one of the most engrossing ones for me. It could seem that designing a survey questionnaire is not a complicated thing to do. In fact, nothing could be more wrong. During the session we learned how to ask relevant and precise (!) content and biographical questions as well as we discussed which scale of measurement would be the most appropriate in each case. Precision was the key word of the workshop and I am happy that the trainers instilled this message in me and my academic career. In the course of the workshop we also had an opportunity to discuss potential sources of common method biases and how they might skew the results of our empirical work. Again, a very useful lesson learned!

Apart from the seminar-style sessions, every day we worked on several problems in pairs or in small groups. We did some exercises on identifying scales of measurement, classifying variables and features of various measures of central tendency. We also designed our own questionnaire and experiment. Every exercise was followed by a fruitful discussion during which we received constructive feedback on our work. Such exercises extended beyond mere classroom activities as they fostered communication between the participants and made it possible for us to get to know one another by solving a given problem together.

What I particularly liked about the workshop was stimulating discussions with other participants. The trainers were open to suggestions and slight modifications of the programme in order to adjust it to our ad hoc needs. Thanks to quite a small number of participants, no one felt intimidated or overwhelmed; everyone was given ample opportunity to provide specific examples to illustrate a problem, back up somebody's claim or sometimes to argue with a given point and to present one's own view. One of the most interesting problems which we tried to solve during the whole workshop was how to operationalise the quality of an interpretation. Every scholar working in the field of empirical research on translation and interpreting knows how complex it is to provide a comprehensive operational definition of the translation/interpreting quality. At some other point we diverged from the main topic to discuss the ethics of making research-related assumptions based on participants' gender. Seemingly off topic, the discussion was very thoughtprovoking and also very much justified in the context of ethics in research.

The afternoon session of the last day of the workshop was dedicated to the participants' presentations of their Ph.D. projects which were followed by discussions. I am really happy that the organisers decided to include it in the course. First of all, it was a pleasure to me to listen to fascinating presentations given by my colleagues. It was such a great feeling to see that the interpreting research community is full of young, innovative and creative scholars, passionate about their academic endeavours. Then, I had a chance to present my project, share my doubts and ask for advice. I received a very constructive feedback from both Prof. Kilian Seeber and Dr. Alexis Hervais-Adelman which made me realise that I was pursuing in a good direction. The trainers also offered help and suggested changes which would improve the quality of the final paper.

Workshops and courses are not only about the learning process. What we gain by participating in such international events and working in a multicultural group is much more than academic knowledge. We get to know one another, we share our beliefs and yet again we experience how diverse the world is. If I could change anything in the format of the FTI Research Methods Winter School 2015, I would turn it into a 4-day course. First of all, I would add some (short) individual sessions with the trainers to address personal needs and discuss the issues which were not covered due to time constraints. What is more, I would place slightly more emphasis on the social event(s). That would create a more personal bond with the trainers and other participants.

I am strongly convinced that participation in the winter school organised by the University of Geneva provided me with methodological awareness and, in turn, boosted the quality of my Ph.D. project. Such awareness was necessary for me to be able to critically read the experimental literature and to conduct the empirical study on my own. Since I am doing empirical research into interpreting and in my Ph.D. project I am going to touch upon the question of psychological stress experienced by conference interpreters, I could not choose a more relevant workshop. The training team comprised of scholars with experience in research on conference interpreting, psycholinguistics, experimental psychology, neuroscience and behavioural psychology. Constructive feedback from experts such as Prof. Kilian Seeber, Dr. Alexis Hervais-Adelman and Sophie Hengl served as a great contribution to the quality of my research in which I have combined two fields of studies, both being close to my heart: conference interpreting and psychology. It helped me to be critical of the methodology I am applying in my research. The trainers used a lot of examples from my field of interest (i.e. stress in interpreting) for which I am extremely grateful! I am convinced that the FTI Research Methods Winter School 2015 enabled me to gain expertise on the principles of methodologically sound research and helped me carry out my own Ph.D. project. I would like to recommend the future sessions of the FTI workshop to other interpreting scholars.

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