TO WHAT EXTENT AND IN WHAT WAYS DO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FACILITATE LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR INTERPRETING STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS?

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I would like to dedicate this work to my parents and family members who did not get any formal education but taught me so much more than any book could have done.

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Abstract

Conference interpreting is a highly competitive and selective profession where careers are built on skills and reputation. Students, graduates and new practitioners experience a gap between the end of their intensive guided studies and their engagement in the impermeable landscape of professional practice. This lonely experience in this no man's land induces an identity crisis and a need for further professional development that has not yet been investigated.

This study explores whether the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) within a Social Learning framework offers a collaborative approach to support the transformative trajectory of interpreting students to becoming professional interpreters engaged in the market, and to potentially bring the interpreting profession to value, nurture and care for newcomers.

This qualitative study is based on the longitudinal investigation of the reported experience of participation in two case studies, selected for their potential to operate as CoPs: (i) the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreting Studies (AS) and (ii) the Virtual Classes (VC), between the academic years of 2013 and 2016.

Underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, this research adopted a hermeneutical phenomenological approach that focuses on the centrality of individual perceptions of real world experience in the data collection and analysis. A six-step thematic analysis model was applied to analyse the data corpus made up of two questionnaires, ten semi-guided interviews and four focus groups.

The results of that analysis indicate that the AS is a social learning space that operates as a CoP, whereas the VCs are not, but rather represent a network of tutors. The originality of this study resides in the observation of a dynamic rather than static experience of participation in a CoP; it identifies three temporal phases that represent developmental participation stages: before, during and after participation in the AS and the VC.

The data identifies that the added value of participation in the AS is multilayered. It first encourages agency which contributes to setting a horizontal (non-hierarchical and integrated) egalitarian dynamic participation within and across boundaries between students, ambassadors and Professional Interpreters Newly Engaged in the Interpreting Market. It then inspires motivation, trust and togetherness which enable learning and identity transformation within a community by caring, giving and sharing. The custodian of the community is the course leader functioning as the social artist that leads and sustains the community over academic cycles of participation as an act of service.

The absence of negotiation of meaning with all participants in the VCs leads to a traditional skill-based interpreting practice approach that does not spark further collaborative initiatives, thus demonstrating the importance and value of negotiation of meaning when designing for the emergence of CoPs.

This study invites the interpreting education profession to go further than the current apprenticeship model, and activate the concept of learning as social participation. The formal integration of alumni to a horizontal CoP every academic year offers regularity in the life cycle of the community and value creation to all participants. It sows the seeds for a CoP mindset that sustains beyond participation and so has the power to transform the ethical values of the interpreting profession. Finally, these findings are transferable to all professional courses (but not only) within and beyond Higher Education.

Table of Contents

List of acronyms

AC	Ambassador Coordinator
AIIC	Association Internationale des interprètes de Conférence
AS	Ambassadors' Scheme
AUSIT	Australian Association of Interpreters and Translators
CIoL	Chartered Institute of Linguists
CIUTI	Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et interprètes
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DG SCIC	Directorate General Service Commun pour les interprètes de Conférence
DPSI	Diploma in Public Service Interpreting
EMCI	European Masters in Conference Interpreting
ITI	Institute of Translation and Interpreting
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
MACI	Masters Conference Interpreting

MAI	Masters Interpreting
MKO	Most Knowledgeable Other
NRPSI	National Register for Public Service Interpreters
SIGTIPS	Special Interest Group for Translation and Interpreting for Public Services
TA	Thematic analysis
The EU	The European Union
The UN	The United Nations
VC	Virtual classes
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Introduction

Interpreting is a distinctive, challenging and competitive field of professional practice. The journey from novice to professional is complex and multilayered. This research investigates whether social learning spaces such as communities of practice enhance the development and outcomes of two groups of interpreting professionals at different stages of their professional journey, and operating in two distinctive contexts:

1.   The Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreting Studies[1]: the scheme initiated by the researcher offers interpreting graduates from London Metropolitan University the opportunity to collaboratively pursue their professional development with the support of the university. This involves free access to the interpreting suite to continue their practice, opportunities to meet their peers to support one another when they wish, and participating in interpreting related events including mock conferences or scheduled classes.

In addition, ambassadors may wish to attend a training course called *Advanced Conference Interpreting (EU/UN context)* to continue developing their training, receive supportive feedback and network. For those who decide to join the course, they offer 30 hours of their time to support student interpreters enrolled in the MA Conference Interpreting at London Metropolitan University instead of paying for the course. The networking and engagement between the students and ambassadors mainly take place face to face and sometimes online. This research will specifically look at the level of formal and informal engagement of ambassadors and students, explore whether it represents a social learning experience (and possibly a community of practice) that influences their professional journey, and identity transformation.

2.   Virtual Classes for Interpreting Studies[2]: a network of MACI course leaders based outside the UK have engaged with the London Met MACI course leader[3]. This independent initiative follows on from the virtual classes scheme originally initiated by DG SCIC. Each virtual class is bilateral and involves London Met and one partner university. Virtual classes are delivered in a synchronous mode, using video

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[1] See A1 for a full description of the AS.
[2] See A2 for an example of an agenda that describes activities carried out during VC
[3] The course leader is the researcher and participated to all virtual classes;

conferencing facilities. The purpose of virtual classes is to optimise the interpreting practice of students by sharing resources such as speeches and feedback. They take place formally at set times. They are organised by tutors. Resources (speeches in different languages), interpreting practice and feedback to interpreters are delivered by all parties involved in the virtual class.

This research specifically looks at the dynamics among interpreting students from participating universities during classes and once the class is over. Did students continue their practice informally once the class was over? Did they form networks? What happened within the networks?

The reported experience of interactions of both groups takes place over three academic years, from 2013 to 2016. This means that one cohort of students on the MA Conference Interpreting can be observed over three distinctive stages of their professional development:

1.   As students on the MA Conference Interpreting that took part in virtual classes

2.   As Ambassadors on the AS Scheme

3.   As professional interpreters newly engaged in the interpreting market.

The following chapter offers an insight into the complexity of the professional contexts newly graduated interpreters face at the onset of their transitional journey; it defines the intricacy of the skills interpreters need in order to perform well. Finally it offers a background to understand why interpreting graduates tend to feel isolated, as they compete for the top end of the employability market and try to gain professional recognition from their peers and employers.

Chapter 1: Setting the Scenes / From students to graduates, from graduates to practitioners: mind the gap

1.1 Engaging in a complex landscape of practice: a challenge for students and graduates

Interpreting is not a new profession (Setton & Dawrant, 2016). Over centuries, interpreters have acted as cultural and linguistic bridges, either formally or informally, sometimes remunerated for their work but not always (Van Hoof, 1962); they have enabled conversations, negotiations and other forms of communication between individuals, representatives of organisations and institutions and all kinds of groups from different origins (Pöchhacker, 2016). Hermann (2002, p.12) points out that interpreters have been traced back to the 4th century BC when 'highly advanced civilizations came into being, distinguished essentially by their languages'. Evidence of their work can be found across the ages as their presence has been recorded in paintings and photographs (Pelea, 2019, p.97). Interpreters have always been essential for trade, diplomacy, and the day to day running of services such as justice (Van Hoof, 1962).

One may assume that as interpreters have played such a key role in facilitating communication between peoples for centuries, the profession should be as organised as other key professions, for example, medical doctors. However, this is not the case (Downie, 2016). When interpreting graduates and students engage with the landscape of professional practice, they are faced with a very diverse, complex and competitive reality that does not facilitate the shaping of their professional identity, nor their professional engagement.

To start with, the end users of interpreting services confuse interpreters for translators (Hale, 2007). This is reinforced in many languages such as modern Russian and other Slavic languages as the terms 'interpreter' and 'translator' merge into one (Pöchhacker, 2015. p.198). However the work interpreters do is very different from that of translators. Van Hoof (1962, p.5) compares translation to an X

Ray that provides a very precise rendition of the original, whereas interpreting provides a radioscopy of the original[4].

Students and graduates come across 'a great deal of terminological confusion between the various terms used' (D'Hayer, 2012, p.238) to describe their work as an interpreter. They include 'business interpreters', 'ad hoc interpreters', 'liaison interpreters', 'escort interpreters', 'diplomatic interpreters', 'mediators', 'advocates', 'bilingual workers' depending on the settings of the work. This highly confusing landscape of practice that portrays numerous settings, working conditions, codes of conduct, rates and identities, makes it very challenging for students and graduates to identify one's way and identity in this fragmented profession (Mikkelson, 1996; Pöchhacker ,1999, 2016; Tipton and Furmanek, 2016).

Conference interpreting students and graduates are aware interpreting does not always refer to conference interpreting settings; but they may not have experienced it in practice. They will come across multiple settings that offer a very diverse approach to the profession affecting working conditions, the status of the interpreter, the rates the end users are ready to pay, and the code of conduct the interpreter abides by (Corsellis, 2008). This often applies to community or public services such as healthcare, schools, local government services or the national justice system (Rudwin, 2018; Corsellis, 2008).

Finally, interpreters often are undervalued as they face the common belief that whoever can speak different languages can interpret (Kalina, 2015).

As a consequence, graduates who are no longer supported by universities and not yet guided by the profession often feel alone and isolated. They feel cut out of the profession and unable to develop or validate their professional identity, with the guidance and trust of established interpreters (Rudwin, 2018). As a result, they may make mistakes that could damage their reputation at the outset of their professional journey, especially in the context of interpreting where word of mouth contributes to

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[4] A radiography is an off-line, 2D static examination technique, while radioscopy is a dynamic 3D examination technique with the potential for on-line examination and process control.

make you or break you. The junior interpreter could then end up in an even worse off situation (Setton and Dawrant, 2016).

1.2 A competitive mindset: conference interpreting careers are based on skills and reputation

1.2.1 Conference interpreting requires the acquisition of complex skills

Conference interpreters interpret 'speeches delivered in one language into another at formal and informal conferences and in conference like settings, in either the simultaneous or consecutive mode' (AIIC[5] 1984; Pöchhacker, 2013a in Diriker, 2015 p.78). To achieve just that, 'interpreters must show rigour, discipline, excellent mastery of their working languages (Kalina, 2015), cultural awareness (Kalina, 2015), meticulous preparation, cognitive adaptability and team spirit, among other things' (Orlando, 2021. p.203). This requires excellent stress management (Jones, 1998, Kurz 2001) and the ability to process a high cognitive load fast (Gile, 1997) thanks to excellent memory and analytical skills (Gillies, 2013, 2019). Interpreters need to be excellent linguists, but also knowledgeable (Kalina, 2015) to research the background information of each meeting (Van Hoof, 1962; Setton, Dawrant, 2016. p.12).

1.2.2 Conference interpreting is not a protected title: building trust on reputation

However, conference interpreting is not the only profession that requires a high level of skills and reputation. Other professions do too; for example medical doctors, lawyers or engineers (Gentile, 2013). The difference is that it is unlawful to claim to be a doctor if one has no medical qualification, experience and credentials (Setton and Dawrant, 2016, p.358). Members of the public trust the professional credentials of a doctor as their professional status is regulated. Some doctors may have better reputation than others, but that would be from personal choice; one will not question

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[5] AIIC: Association Internationale des interprètes de Conference

knowledge nor skills as doctors have been vetted by a medical professional body that has the authority to do so (Rudwin, 2018).

But they may do so with interpreters, for the simple reason that the status of the interpreter is not a protected title[6] (Mikkelson, 2013). In the absence of certification, the conference interpreting market appears to be divided into different categories that reflect the level of skills and reputation of conference interpreters (Gentile, 2013). Students and graduates are somewhat aware of some of these categories, but they are mainly familiar with the international institutions interpreting market. During their time at university, students and graduates are connected with interpreting services of international institutions that offer support to universities where they study[7]. As students, they have had opportunities to interpret and get feedback from staff conference interpreters during virtual classes (Biernacka, 2018). They are fully aware that to work there, the next step is to pass a challenging accreditation test often compared to obtaining a "driving licence" (Duflou, 2016). This reputable accreditation represents a landmark in the professional landscape of practice. It reflects the top end of the market that often inspires students to commit to their studies in the first place.

However, Setton and Dawrant (2016, p.359) point out that 'outside the international institutions, conference interpreting is not recognised as a profession with a protected professional title (...). It is then difficult to differentiate 'professional interpreters' from 'non professional interpreters' (Pöchhacker, 2016). In particular, the private sector remains entirely unregulated (...). The result is free-for-all grey markets'. In this context, graduates find themselves alone trying to understand the rules of the jungle made of agencies, untrained conference interpreters undercutting the market[8], and clients who are unaware of the differences between translation and interpreting, let alone trained and untrained conference interpreters (Flerov, n.d.). Some areas of the private sector are well guarded by established professional conference interpreters

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[6] There are some exceptions:Sweden https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=map_complex&profession=8015 and some provinces of Canada: British Columbia https://stibc.org/about-stibc/title-protection/ and Quebec https://www.thelanguagebureau.com/certification-guide/protected-title/. For a full review

[7] Study visits, pedagogical assistance programs, EU bursaries, access to resources from EU institutions (https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/interpretation/training-assistance-universities-and-study-visits-eu-institutions_en: Accessed on 2nd June 2021); MoU with the UN (https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/mou-network: Accessed on 2nd June 2021) dummy booth practice at the International Maritime Organisation.

[8] Also referenced as 'grey market practitioners' (Setton and Dawrant, 2016, p.359)

who have managed to keep to AIIC standards working conditions and abide by its code of conduct. Trying to join them is excessively challenging for a graduate who will need to be recommended by one of the established practitioners before they are trusted. That first step is one the first key challenges a graduate will face. Then, trust will have to be further established with colleagues who will make up their own mind about the skills and professional behaviour displayed by the newcomer in the booth. A conference interpreter interprets for a client but is also assessed by colleagues who may depend on a high quality interpretation so they can take their interpreted version (relay) to interpret themselves (Jones, 2015). In this context, the junior interpreter has to perform as well as the established experienced interpreter as the interpretation is assessed per language specific booth and not per person (De Fortis, 2015). This fosters a competitive mindset that aims at distancing oneself from inexperienced graduates but also from unqualified, unskilled and unprofessional interpreters.

However, building that trust to gain access to an established circle of professional interpreters may take a very long time, especially in the eyes of motivated graduates who try to find the door that provides access to the first interpreting assignment, especially when in certain regions like the UK, the number of interpreters may outweigh the number of interpreting assignments (Setton and Dawrant, 2016). In this context, there are two trends; the first one is to accept lower rates, which graduates know they cannot do at the risk of undercutting the market and damaging their potential reputation. The second is to continue developing interpreting skills and networking in the hope that they gain the trust of colleagues who may refer them to a reputable agency or colleagues working in a team of interpreters for specific assignments.

The lack of structure to support the engagement of graduates entering the interpreting market prevents graduates from exposure to authentic interpreting assignments where they could be gently introduced to the challenging work conference interpreters do, with the support of experienced conference interpreters by their side.

1.2.3 Professional associations: a missed opportunity to nurture students and graduates

To further compensate for the lack of certification, the conference interpreting profession has opted for credentials based on a selective admission process to professional associations. Gentile's global questionnaire on the status of conference interpreters (2013, p.71) demonstrates that 'membership of a professional association is an important factor which marks the difference between professionals and amateurs'. It is even more relevant for established conference interpreters towards the end of their career who did not graduate as conference interpreters[9], simply because there was no course available at the time, or none available in their language combination or in their region. Compared to graduates, these experienced conference interpreters are at the other end of the spectrum. Their membership is used to prove their professional status. One may wonder how they feel towards the newly qualified generations who wish to enter the market, and whether this has an impact on the protected access to professional associations, especially in the context of the development of remote interpreting that requires an aptitude to use new technologies (Kalina, 2015).

The well known professional association for conference interpreters - AIIC - is undeniably the most selective too. The Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (AIIC) brings together conference interpreters worldwide into one professional association. It was founded in Paris on the 11th November 1953 following the Nuremberg trial and the United Nations systemising the use of simultaneous interpreting (Pöchhacker, 2016; Thiery, 2015). As the number of interpreters then increased, the need to get organised motivated some interpreters led by Constantin Andronokof, De Gaulle's interpreter (Nolan, 2020 p.143) to create what is now known as AIIC. His ambition was for:

> AIIC to be a central organisation to which professional conference interpreters all over the world, both freelance and staff, would belong directly, and which would define the ethical and material conditions under which conference interpreters would operate, as members of a new profession.(Thierry, 2015. p.14)

AIIC remains a landmark in the landscape of professional practice that stands for quality, excellent working conditions and ethics[10]. Accessibility is based on

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[9] Gentile's questionnaire (2013) reports that 38% of conference interpreters do not hold a qualification in translation (from 56 years of age) and interpreting, against 61% who have (between 18 to 45 years).

[10] AIIC at a glance: https://aiic.org/site/world/about/aiicataglance (Accessed: 2 June 2021)

recommendations and assessment of skills by other members. Downie (2016, p.48) argues that the world has since evolved and that even though AIIC membership is still considered to be 'a gold standard', this 'guild model' is now missing the point :

> What we need is not legal protection, but community - not a castle with a drawbridge, but something more akin to a business incubator and support network.

AIIC is not the only professional association conference interpreters may wish to join. Other professional associations may be more flexible on admission criteria but they all seem to miss a specific factor. Students and graduates represent the future of professional practice. They are very motivated to pursue their professional practice. Student memberships are a good start, but that is not enough. Graduates need to evidence a certain number of days of professional practice before they gain full membership. To do so, they need to feel welcome in a nurturing community that allows them to observe interpreters at work, interpret with them in authentic settings, and be entrusted to work under the guidance of mentors. Duflou (2016, p.8) reminds us that 'learning by doing, i.e. gaining experience by participating in real-life assignments, is the only way for beginners to acquire what is needed to become a competent professional'. Graduates need to be integrated and protected by a community of established interpreters who will listen to their new ideas, help them strengthen their skills and develop confidence in building their professional identity, working together for the interest of the profession. Add information on professional development here

1.3 Conference interpreting graduates are in a no man's land: an identity crisis

Conference interpreting graduates are desperate to start working and get their first interpreting assignment. However, on the one hand, they have not yet had an opportunity to build their reputation based on the demonstration of their skills. On the other, they have not yet fully developed their professional identity. They are no longer students but not yet fully fledged conference interpreters. They find themselves in a transitional period of their professional development. What is missing is the trust of professionals in the field who open doors to welcome them into a safe place where

they can observe, contribute and grow together for the benefit of the profession and professionals. Instead they are in a no man's land, surrounded by silos of professional and non professional interpreters who compete with one another to access conference interpreting assignments with working conditions that continuously need to be argued, negotiated and priced according to professional standards.

1.3.1 Surviving a never ending selective stressful process

Fighting to 'get in' is not a new experience for conference interpreting graduates. The selective process started when they chose the reputable MACI program that bares a quality label (Orlando, 2016), such as EMCI[11], AIIC listed courses[12], CIUTI[13], UN MoU network[14] and cooperation programmes with European institutions[15]. The quality labels offer a professional benchmark that already at this stage introduces the concept of reputation based on selection.

To start with, candidates underwent an admission test that aimed at selecting the best suited students in terms of language proficiency, verbal (communicative) skills, general knowledge and personal quality (Moser-Mercer, 1994; Jones, 1998; Pöchhacker, 2016; Setton and Dawrant, 2016). Once they went through the first admission loop, they may have felt that the first selection was enough to secure a comfortable ride as a learner on the course. But this was not the case (Guichot de Fortis, 2011).

Interpreting studies are extremely demanding and require determination and resilience. To start with, their linguistic skills which had been their forte for many years were no longer considered to be exceptional. Languages are often connected to a deep sense of identity. When students get feedback that challenges their languages, this often has an impact on their morale, especially when they come from

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[11] European Masters in Conference Interpreting https://www.emcinterpreting.org/
[12] AIIC Schools Directory: https://aiic.org/site/dir/schools
[13] CIUTI https://www.ciuti.org/about-us/our-profile/
[14] MoU network: https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/mou-network
[15] Directorate General Interpretation:
https://ec.europa.eu/education/knowledge-centre-interpretation/universities_en

a multilingual family setting and the question of the quality of their mother tongue arises.

Then, they continuously compared one another. Jiménez Ivars and Pinazo Calatayud (2001) discussed how an interpreting performance or a public speaking exercise in their A or B languages can generate feelings of threat for students, especially at the beginning of their studies before they develop enough coping strategies to overcome a potential lack of self esteem.

The continuous assessment of students by peers and professional interpreters considered experts in the field, requires students to develop coping strategies and resilience. This experience influences the 'self-concept' (Shavelson et al, 1976, p.411 in Arnaiz-Castro and Perez-Luzardo, 2016, p.64) interpreting students psychologically construct, based on the personal assessment and feedback from 'significant others' (Vygotsky,1978). Arnaiz-Castro and Perez-Luzardo (2016) further demonstrate that interpreting students are at risk of experiencing medium to high anxiety, which is tightly connected to the construct of their self concept, and influences their learning.

Finally, Kurz (2001) highlights that student interpreters experience more 'feelings of insecurity, fear of failure and heightened stress', during the skills acquisition process (Moser Mercer, 2000) compared to their professional counterparts as they have not yet integrated coping mechanisms to their practice. This was evidenced in physiological tests that demonstrated that whilst interpreting, student interpreters' pulse rate was much higher than professionals (Kurz, 2001).

The climax of the stressful selective process reached its peak with the final assessment (Jiménez Ivars and Pinazo Calatayud, 2001), considered to represent the last loop students need to go through before they officially join the profession and its market. Traditionally they are practical and carried out before a panel of experts from the field. There, under pressure, students had to perform consecutive and simultaneous interpreting and obtain a consensus agreement from the panel that includes representatives of the international institutions, that they have what it takes to safely interpret in the field[16]. The final exam is mapped on the accreditation test

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[16] EMCI extract from the description of the final test: 'Students must demonstrate sufficient competence to be able to join a team of professional conference interpreters.'
https://www.emcinterpreting.org/emci/examinations

from international institutions, which is often compared to 'passing a driving test' (Duflou, 2016).

1.3.2 From a prescriptive identity to a loss of identity

For students who finally passed the final exams and obtained their qualification, it is now the beginning of their journey into the unknown. Their identity as candidates, then as students on the MACI course was predefined. They knew what direction to take and even though it was disheartening at times, it acted as a motivational factor to meet the numerous criteria that predefined the progress in their skills, techniques, behaviour, qualities and ambitions.

However, once graduated, it is as if there is a void with no one willing to show the way to their transition to junior professionals, support their professional development, or trust them for a first interpreting assignment.

For graduates wishing to take the international institution accreditation test, it takes quite a long time before they are called to do so as institutions prioritise certain language combinations. There again, a natural selection process occurs based on language combinations and the needs of the institutions.

In the private market, newcomers are considered the new competition. Graduates struggle to meet established interpreters in a professional context and learn from observing them to build their confidence and practise under their guidance. This is a contrast with their experience of learning acquired so far.

1.3.3 Deliberate practice: who with?

As graduates find themselves in this no man's land, they put effort in developing their visibility on the market to access their first interpreting assignment. This often comes at the expense of the intensive regular interpreting practice they experienced during their studies. As they feel isolated and struggle to enter the professional market, they lose the drive to practise their skills, especially when there is no one to listen. Tiselius (2013) compares interpreters to musicians who need to engage into regular 'deliberate practice' with the help of other musicians so as to develop 'expertise'. She appeals for further research in this field applied to students and graduates as 'very little is known about intra-individual development' (p.98).

It is this context that the Ambassadors' Scheme and the Virtual Classes were initiated and selected as case studies for the purpose of this research.

1.4 Defining the research context and questions

1.4.1 Interpreting studies: an apprenticeship model with a gap

Scholars in the field of pedagogy in interpreting agree that interpreting studies are based on the apprenticeship model (Pocchacker, 2004; Orlando, 2016; Setton and Dawrant, 2016) whereby practising professional interpreters transmit their skills, knowledge and expertise to the newcomers in the profession (Pöchhacker, 2016, Orlando, 2016, Herbert, 1952, Van Hoof, 1962). This is reinforced in the 'novice-expert' paradigm (Moser-Mercer, 1997b, 2000) that contrasts the two developmental key stages of conference interpreters, i.e. the 'novice interpreter' versus the 'expert interpreter'. The research study aims at understanding the skill acquisition process to enhance excellence as an outcome of interpreting education which aims to 'produce interpreters who are able to work immediately and reliably on the market' (Sawyer, 2004, p.56). The use of the verb 'produce' suggests a factory line whereby the quality of the final product depends on having the right machinery and processes in place that have been put together and conceived by a team of knowledgeable experts that are looking at the production line from above. In this context, learning is external to the learner and is assessed by a team of experts that look at the functionality of the product. This demonstrates a power imbalance between the omniscient experts and the 'final products', i.e. the supposedly fully fledged conference interpreter. This selective approach creates a competitive mindset based on fear and mistrust.

The apprenticeship model adapted to interpreting studies leaves aside a fundamental aspect of the model that has evolved over the years; that is the theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Similarly to interpreting, Lave and Wenger observed professionals at work that were at different stages of their professional development (ref Chapter 2, p.29), also learning from masters in the field. However, they noticed that learning was not simply taking place from observing masters at

work, learning was collective and social within a 'community of practice'. In this context, the apprentice to master binary relationship is downplayed for the benefit of a learning trajectory through the different stages of the professional development, whereby an apprentice learns from other apprentices who are at a slightly more advanced stage of their professional development. Through trial and error, they learn from each other and with each other. The master is still important, but not as an individual. This dynamic approach encourages a continuous adaptation to the changing world as the community continuously engages into a reflective mode that makes their practice relevant. This social learning aspect offers a safe place that allows a continuous focus on the interest of the community that serves the world it lives in. Dawrant (2004, p.77) clearly states:

> Given the importance that apprenticeship has played throughout the history of interpretation, it is surprising that this form of education [community of practice] has been neglected in discussions of training and the implementation of programs.

Setton and Dawrant (2016, p.75) make an attempt at revising the traditional apprenticeship model applied to interpreting studies and state that 'apprenticeship should be more than teaching by mere inspiration' and that 'a more intrusive coaching approach wherever appropriate'(p.75) would be welcome, adopting 'a more student focused learning' approach and that 'a first step (...) would be to recognise the individual variability of students learning trajectories'(p.75).

1.4.2 Absence of research: Impact of learning as participation in communities of practice - facilitating the transition between professional developmental stages for conference interpreters

The 'practisearcher' (Gile, 1994; Orlando, 2016) Duflou (2016) investigated how newly EU accredited conference interpreters (more precisely the Dutch booth) integrated the community of established conference interpreters and bridged the learning gap. Her research argues that:

> interpreting competence is situated (...) and includes not only cognitive, but also embodied and social components. An examination of the opportunities for learning offered by participation in the practice shows that, for EU interpreters, situated learning is a necessary complement to formal conference interpreting

training in that it allows them to become familiar with the shared repertoire of knowledge and skills required to cope with their task.(Executive summary XXI)

Duflou's research seems to be the only example of a community of practice approach to facilitate the inclusion of newly accredited EU interpreters who are transitioning to integrate a group of established professionals. Duflou (2016, p.315) concludes:

> In the light of the comparison between the opportunities for learning afforded in a training versus the workplace environment, it has become clear that these situated components of competence can be acquired only by participation in the practice of EU interpreters. (...)

However, to the researcher's knowledge, there has not been any studies that have explored the experience of participation in communities of practice as a framework that potentially enhances learning and facilitates the transitional professional journey of conference interpreting students, into graduates, and then junior professionals.This is a gap which this research has sought to address.

1.4.3 Defining the research questions and context

In the context of the two selected case studies, the research explores the following three aims and research questions:

Aim 1 Explore how learning in a formal or informal network or potential community of practice such as the AS (Ambassadors' Scheme) and the VC (Virtual Classes) enhances the outcome of interpreting education/training.

> **RQ#1**. How do interpreting students perceive the benefits of joining networks such as the AS and the VC within their formal and informal learning experience?

> **RQ#2**. How do interpreting students use the network environments to enhance their formal and informal learning? What was the impact on their learning?

RQ#3.How do networks such as the AS and the VC influence the interpreting students' perception of self and peers within networks?

Aim 2 Establish identity and boundaries of AS and VC during and after in relation to a CoP model as defined by Etienne Wenger (2002)

RQ#1.How do interpreting students involved in the AS and the VC perceive their identity and their belonging to a group/network/CoP?

RQ#2. How do interpreting students involved in the AS and the VC perceive the network/group/CoP they belong to?

RQ#3. Does their perception of belonging, identity and role within the AS and VC evolve over time (before joining, during the academic year, moving out of formal academic year structure)?

Aim 3 How do the AS and VC compare as potential CoP?

RQ#1. How does the environment (virtual versus face to face) influence the community/network?

RQ#2. Who facilitates the network/community? What is their role? How does it influence values and practices?

RQ#3. Do the community/network as potential CoP bring any added value? How is it measured?

The following chapter aims at exploring the concept of Communities of Practice within a Social Learning Framework so as to identify whether in the context of the AS and the VC, it could offer a collaborative supportive approach to bring the interpreting profession to work towards a common interest and support the transformative trajectory of interpreting students to professional interpreters.

Chapter 2: Communities of Practice within a Social Learning Framework: how does learning occur?

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is twofold; first it offers an understanding of what Communities of Practice are and how learning occurs in a social learning environment. Then, in the light of the two case studies, it offers some reflections and raises questions on the way the Community of Practice model may enhance learning for interpreters, specifically in the transitional professional context students and graduates experience in becoming actively engaged conference interpreters.

2.1 What are Communities of Practice?

2.1.1 A Community of Practice model is situated within a Social Learning Framework

2.1.1.1 Apprehending learning: from behaviourism to cognitivism to constructivism

A theory does not stand alone. It is always integrated into a wider framework. The theory of Community of Practice is no different. It stems from the Social Learning Framework/Theory (SLT) that was initiated by Bandura (1963, 1977). It establishes that learning is fundamentally a social process where people learn from observing 'others' behaviour, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviours' (Bandura, 1977, p.22 in Smith, 1999) and that by definition, such observations take place in a social setting (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991 p.134 in Smith, 1999).

To gain further insights into the origins of the CoP theory, it is important to understand how the social learning theory emerged. SLT led by Bandura (1963, 1977) has often been compared to a bridge between the behaviourists - a tutor led transmissionist approach whereby students learn by responding to a stimulus based on either fear or reward (Watson, 2019 in Bates, 2016, p.22) - and the cognitivists (Dewey, 1958, 1963) who strongly believe in a learner centred approach within a social context

where students should be encouraged to have a personal interest in the subject matter. As a matter of fact Dewey coined the phrase 'intelligent action' which is enabled when the three attitudes - 'open mindedness, absorbed interest and a mature approach' - are linked together (Dewey 1958, 1963 in Bates 2016, p.42). Bandura believed that learning happens by observation, imitation and modelling, which is later used as a guide for action. This is then complemented by Vygotsky (1978) and social constructivism. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is a collaborative process between the learner and the people one learns from (family, friend, teacher and peers), also called 'Most Knowledgeable Others' (MKOs). Knowledge and thoughts are constructed through social interaction (Bates, 2016). In this specific context, Vygotsky developed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as:

> the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

Vygotsky believed that individuals learn best when working together with others during joint collaboration, and it is through such collaborative endeavors with MKOs that learners learn and internalise new concepts, psychological tools, and skills (Bates, 2016, p.47).

It is the element of social interaction in the ZPD that is of interest to the theory of CoP (Lave, Wenger, 1991). Lave and Wenger (1991, p.49) move away from Vygotsky's concept of 'learning as internalisation' at a personal level, and embrace the concept of learning as occurring with 'increased participation in communities of practice; the whole person then is acting in the world'.

2.1.1.2 Moving on to Situated Learning

According to Fuller (2007, p.17), Lave and Wenger (1991) moved further away from the cognitive perspective on learning - 'learning is associated with changes in "mental state", which occur when the individual mind processes information', and from the behaviourist perspective - 'learning is associated with observable changes in a person's behaviour.' Beckett and Hager (2002) cited in Fuller (2007, p.17) refer to these two key trends of learning as the 'standard paradigm of learning'. Lave and

Wenger's new approach on theorising learning not only differs from the 'standard paradigm of learning', it also brings a new dimension to the observation of learning that Becket and Hager (2002), cited in Fuller (2007, p.17), describe as 'the emerging paradigm'. It emerges as an alternative theory of learning to that of the dominant behaviourist models (Kimble, 2006).

Lave and Wenger (1991) invite a focus on 'participation in social practice' as a condition for all learning (Fuller, 2007, p.17). Learning is no longer formal (Cox, 2005, p.4), explicit and measurable with exams as described in the standard paradigm of learning. Learning is a social process; it is collective and relational (Fuller, 2007). As a result, learning is unintentional and situated within authentic activities, context and culture (Cox, 2005, p.530). Learning is an ongoing process (Kimble, 2006). 'Learning is more than simply acquiring knowledge, it is about identity change' (Cox, 2005, p.531).

This new conception of learning offers an opportunity to reconsider the concept of learning as it is no longer restricted to skills and knowledge acquisition validated by a panel of experts during a grand finale interpreting exam. Learning is not about competing with one another, it is an ongoing collective and relational process which may be informal (Cross, 2007), invisible (Hattie, 2009, 2016) and even unintentional.

In this context of learning, the virtual classes' case study offers a valuable angle for this research as it explores the collective efforts formally made by course leaders to bring together interpreting students from their university with London Met's students in order to share resources and practise interpreting together using new enabling technologies. Is this form of learning a social learning experience? And in what way? It explores whether a formal virtual class between London Met and a partner university may trigger the motivation for students and perhaps even staff to continue their engagement informally and form a potential community of practice that meets regularly for a common purpose.

Furthermore, as this new perspective on learning supports identity change, the AS case study offers an opportunity to explore whether the scheme operates as a community of practice and if so, whether learning as participation in a CoP contributes to support students and graduates as they gradually embrace their new identity in being/becoming confident conference interpreters (Duflou, 2016).

Initially inspired by the cognitive apprenticeship model, Lave and Wenger (1991, p.50) define learning as situated in a social practice such as tailoring, midwifery or tanners. According to Lave and Wenger (1991, p.50), 'the theory of social practice emphasises the relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning and knowing'. Within social practice, learners participate in communities of practitioners. Traditionally, in the apprenticeship model, apprentices 'learn the specifics of practice through observation and imitation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.95). However, in a CoP, newcomers or novices who find themselves at the periphery of the CoP do more than simply learning from observing their more experienced peers; they participate in the practice as a way of learning. They gradually engage in activities and socially interact with peers who are slightly more experienced than they are; they both absorb and are being absorbed in the 'culture of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.95). As they gradually learn from participating in the practice within the community, they move away from the periphery and slowly progress towards the core of the CoP, helping newcomers and still learning from more experienced members of the CoP also referred to as 'old timers' or 'experts'. This gradual and interactional process of learning is described as 'learning as Legitimate Peripheral Participation' (LPP) in communities of practice (Lave, Wenger, 1991, p.31). The LPP provides a framework to understand the phenomenon of the continuous participative flow of newcomers to the community who gradually become experts in their practice:

> Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts and communities of knowledge and practice. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.29)

As a result:

> A person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a social cultural practice.(Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.29)

The experience and opportunities for participation in the practice offer a chance to broaden the meaning of 'curriculum'. The focal point of the curriculum is on the learning rather than the teaching. As the peripheral participation offers learners an

overall understanding of the practice, they are then able to set for themselves strong learning goals that relate to the practice rather than follow a 'set of dictates' that may have been set up within the context of 'strongly asymmetrical master-apprentice relations' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.93).

This is a far cry from the motivation to learn as described in the standard paradigm of learning, whereby:

> Learning is preoccupied either with the mind and the ways in which learning results in changed mental states or behaviour and how changes in behaviour can be brought about through the formula of stimulus-response. (Fuller, 2007, p.19)

For Lave and Wenger (1991), 'participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world' (1991, p.51).

The intention of Lave and Wenger (1991) was not to use LPP as an intentional pedagogical strategy, but rather as an analytical viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning. This highlights how the concept of 'community of practice' was first used intuitively to describe the phenomenon of LPP.

Chapter 1, section 4.1, highlighted that interpreting studies are based on an apprenticeship model with the novice-expert paradigm binary dimension. However, many interpreting studies and employers agree to say that there is a gap between the end of studies and the beginning of a professional career (Sayaheen, 2019). To bridge that gap, the main focus of universities and international institutions recruiting interpreters has been to increase the number of contact hours to provide more interpreting practice and to develop further resources for interpreting practice. The virtual classes were actually set up with this purpose in mind, reinforcing the novice-expert paradigm, whereby resources and feedback are provided by masters in the field. However, in the context of social learning and learning as a trajectory through a community of practice, the gap identified at the end of interpreting studies could simply be a consequence of the skills based approach in both the apprenticeship model and the novice-experts binary approach. The Ambassadors' Scheme was initially designed to break the loneliness of interpreting graduates (D'hayer, 2014b). It was created unintentionally, as a result of an unplanned

conversation with a graduate who bumped into the course leader as she was going out for a coffee. The graduate was on her way to meet other interpreting graduates who regularly met in their usual cafe by the university to practise interpreting.

Could this mean that the status of 'ambassador' is an invitation to revisit the novice-expert paradigm and introduce the concept of 'in between stages' that support the gradual transformative development of graduates into professional interpreters? Could the social experience of participation in the AS facilitate learning and gradual identity transformation as defined by Lave and Wenger? What motivated graduates to get organised and meet regularly in their well known cafe to practise interpreting when resources such as speech banks[17] and the technology[18] offer a great opportunity to practise interpreting in the quiet environment of one's home?

In the 1990s, Lave and Wenger were not the only ones to engage in the concept of communities of practice. Brown and Duguid (1991) were also exploring CoP in the world of work rather than education. However, both Brown and Duguid (1991) and Lave and Wenger (1991) share the viewpoint that CoPs are external or outside the constraints of the organisation or classroom, 'self generating and existing primarily for the benefit of their members' (Kimble, 2006, p.221).

This point of interest raises the question that perhaps universities may be too complex organisations to be the right home for a CoP. Which is the best home for a CoP that supports interpreting graduates as they transit through their professional identity? The research outcome of the AS will hopefully shed some light on this very important factor.

2.1.2 Communities of Practice: what defines them and how do they work?

Primarily, the theory of CoPs' main focus is on learning as social participation:

> [Participation] refers to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities. (Wenger, 1998a, p.4)

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[17] Speech banks include the Speech Repository set up by DG Interpretation (https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/sr) and SpeechPool, a crowdsourcing initiative set up by Sophie Llewellyn Smith (http://speechpool.net/en)

[18] Between 2013 and 2016 the main connecting platforms were Skype (https://www.skype.com/en) and Google Hangouts (https://hangouts.google.com/)

The concept of CoP evolves (Hara, 2009). From an intuition inspired by learning through apprenticeship (Lave and Wenger, 1991), it has developed into a more robust concept (Wenger, 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). However, understanding what communities of practice are, trying to define what they do, why they are successful or not, and how they evolve, has never been a straightforward venture (Kimble and Hildreth, 2004; Kimble, 2006). One may even state that the challenge in defining what CoP are, has been the weakest point of the theory (Kimble, 2006). Wenger himself acknowledged that he was still searching for the true definition of CoP:

> I remember a person telling me, "you have to be patient with me. I am still trying to understand what communities of practice are". And my reaction was like, "Well me too. I'm still trying to understand what it is that we are trying to state here!" (Omidvar and Kislov, 2014, p.5)

In all his works (Wenger, 1991, 1998, 2002, 2009, 2015, 2020), Wenger continuously revisits the concept of CoP, trying to give meaning to what they are and what they are not, how they evolve, what triggers a CoP to exist, how to grow CoP organically and cultivate them, and what the added values of CoP are.

2.1.2.1 Definitions adopted for this research

Learning

For the purpose of this research, a number of definitions have been adopted and guide this reflective process. The first one is learning.

Figure 1 below encapsulates the four key components of a social theory of learning that characterise social participation. This approach to learning differs from a skills based approach. This is the approach of learning that is of interest in this research.

Figure 1 . Components of a social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998. p. 5) [19]

Community of Practice

Wenger's definition of CoP (2002) has been adopted.

> Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. (Wenger et al, 2002, p.4)

It is also the definition that is being referred to by many scholars in the field (Pyrko, Dorfler and Eden, 2016, 2019). With this short concise definition come three crucial characteristics that when combined, form a CoP (Wenger 2002). They are:

2.1.2.1.1 a Domain

Wenger et al (2002) define the domain as the area of shared interest that shapes the identity of the CoP. There, members need to commit to the domain and demonstrate a shared competence that contributes to its development.

> A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. (https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/ 2015)

2.1.2.1.2 a Community

Wenger et al (2002, p.4) define a CoP's community as a group of members who 'engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information to pursue their interest in their domain and their learning'. For Wenger, the essential

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[19] This figure was uploaded by Jill Willis

ingredients that define a community as it is intended in a CoP model is the fact that members 'interact regularly and learn together'.

> In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other; they care about their standing with each other.
> (https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/ 2015)

2.1.2.1.3 a Practice

The third essential component for a CoP to exist is 'practice'. For Wenger (2002, p.4), practice is tightly connected to the concept of 'practitioners' who share a practice, which they co-develop through sharing experiences, stories, tools, and ideas for tackling issues.

> A community of practice is not merely a community of interest – people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems — in short a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction. A good conversation with a stranger on an airplane may give you all sorts of interesting insights, but it does not in itself make for a community of practice. The development of a shared practice may be more or less self-conscious.
> (https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/ 2015)

This practice is social (Wenger, 1998, p.47). It includes and facilitates a spectrum of tacit and explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967, 1998). Furthermore, it includes 'implicit relations and tacit conventions (...) which are unmistakable signs of membership in CoPs and are crucial to the success of their enterprise' (Wenger, 1998, p.47).

In the context of CoP, the term 'practice' is what brings members together. However, in the context of interpreting studies, it may easily be confused with 'interpreting practice', meaning practising the skills of interpreting. As a result, in this research the term 'interpreting practice' will only refer to practising interpreting skills.

2.1.2.2 Essential underpinning elements to the CoP framework

As the concept of CoP evolves, Wenger (1998a) is keen to 'establish the intellectual foundations of his work' (Kimble, 2006, p.225). Wenger 'elaborates some of the terms from his earlier work (e.g. identity and participation), abandons others (e.g. LPP) and introduces some new ideas (e.g. dualities)' (Kimble, 2006, p.225). The following terms are essential as they contribute to underpinning the CoP framework.

2.1.2.2.1 Negotiation of meaning

Wenger (1998a) considers CoP as an opportunity to explore meaning inspired from the experience of everyday life. As participants interact in the CoP, they engage in a process which Wenger refers to as 'negotiation of meaning' (p.52). Even though what participants do in a community of practice may seem to be repetitive, every situation is new.

When interpreting ambassadors meet regularly for their weekly interpreting practice, they may feel they repeatedly listen to speeches, interpret into another language, and provide feedback to one another; but actually, according to Wenger, every meeting is new and generates new situations, new conversations, new observations generated by their experience. Together, members interact and negotiate the meaning of their experience of togetherness, potential disagreements, new ways of practising their skills, opportunities to support one another or expressing their discouragement when trying to find their first interpreting assignments; this is what Wenger refers to as negotiation of meaning. In the case of the AS was designed to offer a safe space where ambassadors engage with one another to initiate, encourage and facilitate this process of negotiation of meaning that might not have otherwise happened if interpreting graduates had been left alone and isolated in their quest for further professional development and sense of who they were becoming as professional interpreters.

> In this sense, living is a constant process of negotiation of meaning. (Wenger, 1998, p.53)

Wenger (2008) defines negotiated meaning as 'the process by which we experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful' (p.53). This approach emphasises how communities of practice offer an opportunity to engage with others in a continuous questioning of the practice situated in the world we live in. The negotiation of meaning 'conveys a flavour of continuous interaction, of gradual

achievement and of give-and-take' (Wenger, 1998, p.53). As 'meaning is not pre-existing', it is continuously negotiated (Wenger, 2008, p.53):

> Meaning exists neither in us, nor in the world, but in the dynamic relation of living in the world. (Wenger, 2008, p.54)

In this context, it invites interpreting students and graduates to situate themselves in the wider context of the interpreting profession and the way it interacts with the world they live in. The AS and VC case studies will explore whether the experience of participants within a potential CoP such as the AS of the VC encouraged a negotiation of meaning approach that contributed to shape the potential community, and whether the experience of negotiating meaning made a difference to participants as they embrace their new identity and engage in the interpreting profession.

2.1.2.2.2 Participation and Reification

For the negotiation of meaning to happen, Wenger emphasises that a duality of two processes needs to exist: 'participation' and 'reification' (Wenger, 1998a, p.55): 'Participation involves acting and interacting, and reification involves producing artifacts (...) around which the negotiation of meaning is organised.' (Smith, Hayes and Shea, 2017, p.212)

Wenger (1998a, p.55) defines participation as 'a process of taking part' which suggests both 'action' and 'connection'. He describes participation as:

> The social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises. Participation in this sense is both personal and social. It is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging. It involves our whole person, including our bodies, minds, emotions and social relations. (Wenger, 1998a, pp.55-56)

By participating, members of communities recognise each other. This is referred to as the process of '*mutuality*' that contributes to forming the identity of members in the community. Together, they 'shape each other's experience of meaning' and can 'recognise something of themselves in each other' (Wenger, 1998a, p.56). This process of '*participation*' and '*identity formation*' is essential and influences '*shaping the practice of the community*' (Wenger, 1998a, p.56).

However, Wenger differentiates 'participation' from 'engagement'. He asserts that 'participation' is broader than 'engagement' in the practice. Participation is continuous and 'is meant to capture this profoundly social character of our experience of life' (Wenger, 1998a, p.57). In the case of interpreting ambassadors, they may engage in interpreting activities once a week but they do not cease to be interpreters when their interpreting activities are over. The social aspect of their participation shapes their identity and contributes to the negotiation of meaning of the reality they live in.
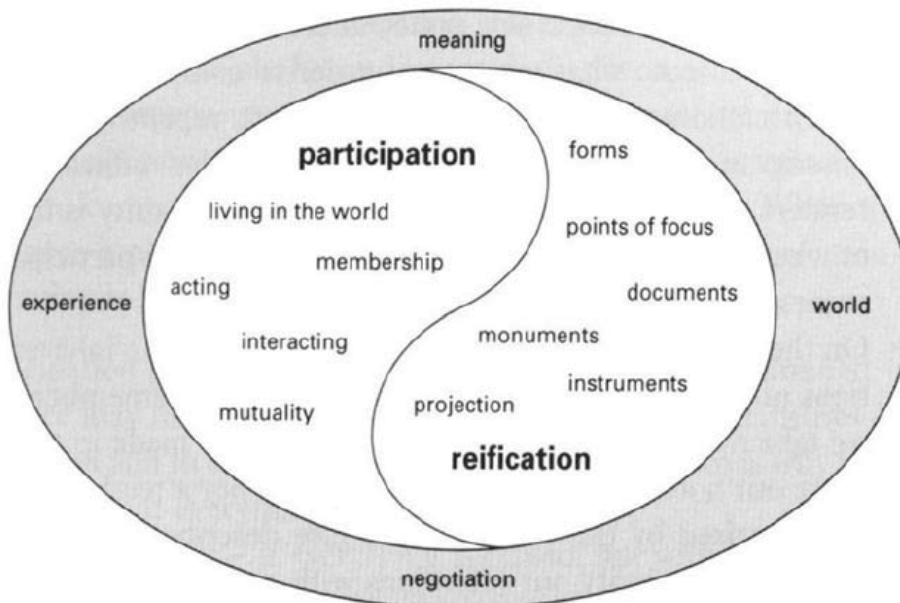
Figure 2. The negotiation of meaning as a duality of participation and reification (Wenger, 1998, p.63).

As the above figure illustrates, reification complements participation and is defined as follows by Wenger (1998a, p.58):

> the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into "thingness". In doing so, we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organised.(1998a, p.58)

Wenger (1998a, p.59) claims that the process of reification is 'central to every practice' and covers a wide range of processes such as 'making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing, as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding and recasting'.

Both participation and reification form a duality and contribute to the negotiation of meaning. If participation prevails over reification, the community does not get enough ground to record the anchoring life events; when reification prevails over participation, then the lack of shared experience will affect the process of making decisions, finding solutions or negotiating meaning to move forward. Wenger, White and Smith (2009, p.57) quoted in Smith (2017, p.212) argue that learning in a CoP 'requires both participation and reification to be present and in interplay'. Smith (2017) and Kimble (2006) argue that this new duality of participation and reification demonstrates that communities of practice can now be considered as a tool for *Knowledge Management*, specifically in the corporate world. Furthermore, Kimble (2006) argues that participation plays a crucial role in the creation of knowledge in the core while reification has a particular importance for interactions at the boundaries of the community. Even though this concept has been significant in the development of CoP in the world of business, it is also relevant in the context of interpreting where the duality of participation and reification offer an opportunity to observe and analyse who does what, and why, during the AS and the VC.

2.1.2.2.3 Mutual Engagement, Joint Enterprise, and Shared Repertoire

According to Wenger (1998a, p.72), three characteristics of practice represent the source of coherence of the community. They are intertwined and presented in the diagram below:

- Mutual engagement
- Joint enterprise
- Shared repertoire
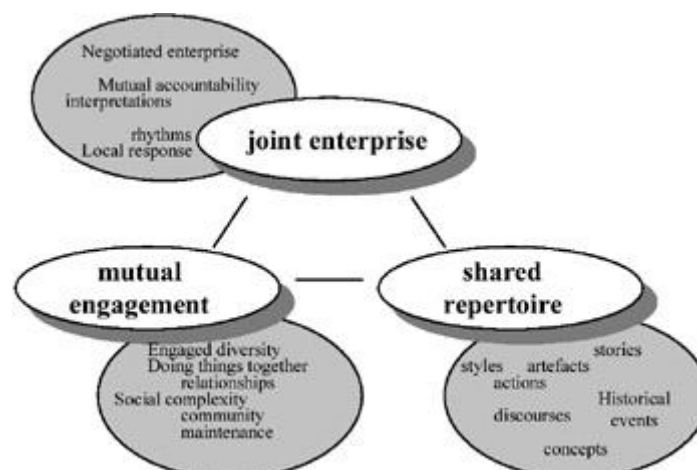
Figure 3. Dimensions of practice as the property of a community
(Wenger, 1998a, p.73)

a. _Mutual engagement_

What makes a community of practice is the mutual engagement of participants (Wenger, 1998a). This is observed with the first steps towards membership to the CoP. For the AS, this starts with the graduates' decision to join and commit to the scheme as ambassadors. Mutual engagement involves ambassadors 'engaging in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another' (Wenger, 1998a, p.73). The community brings together members with diverse views and identities, all committed to the shared domain of the community. For the community, diversity is a source of strength to mutually engage in the practice. Being accepted as a member with your own diversity brings the feeling of inclusion; it encourages mutual engagement and creates a sense of belonging. Their practice is what defines them and brings them together. It is not always straightforward and requires 'community maintenance' (Wenger, 1998a, p.74) that is often under-appreciated but requires constant dedication. Mutual engagement is understood to be about 'interacting and establishing norms, expectations and relationships' (Smith et al, 2017, p.212).

Mutual engagement also contributes to considering 'learning as partnership' (Wenger, 2009, p.5). Members of the CoP have to recognise each other as 'peers' that 'form their mutual commitment to learning' (Wenger, 2009, p.5). This suggests members need to trust one another substantially. Wenger (2009, p.5) refers to the value of this trust as the 'value of practice-oriented trust'. It involves taking risks such as 'personal vulnerability' to engage with knowledge and practice. Practitioners may then become 'less guarded with one another as they recognise each other as co-practitioners' (Wenger, 2009, p.6). This feeling of authenticity may be described as a form of togetherness:

> Over time, trust becomes a property of the social learning space, not merely of individuals toward each other. (Wenger, 2009, p.6)

To foster trust Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015) make an important distinction between 'power-full' and 'power-free' spaces. They suggest that 'an atmosphere of trust is often associated with a more comfortable power-free space'

(Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015,p.128), especially at the onset of the CoP but that a 'power-full space' is an opportunity to invite members to openly express and articulate ideas that involve power. When issues of power are openly discussed, members get to know one another, they engage and are able to foster the drive and enthusiasm of members to move forward in their learning. This is a difficult balance to achieve and can only be done if the social learning space is designed for such a level of interactions.

> Communities of practice are developed via the cultivation of trust and mutual respect – two characteristics that can be easily undone. (Hara, 2009, p.11)

b. Joint enterprise

The second characteristic of practice that ensures the coherence of the community is all about joint enterprise that includes the 'collective process of negotiation', the 'negotiated response' to the community's situation and the 'mutual accountability' that results from this process (Wenger, 1998a, p.78). It is the mutual engagement in practice that allows the joint enterprise to occur. It is the collectively negotiated response to a situation the community understands and includes a wide spectrum of opinions. 'Their understanding of their enterprise and its effects in their lives need not to be uniform for it to be a collective product' *(Wenger, 1998a, p.79).*

In this context, the joint enterprise of the AS is continuously renegotiated every year as ambassadors leave the scheme on a yearly basis. The process could be threatening to the survival of the community as members come in as one whole group and leave after a year. The challenge would be for the joint enterprise to be negotiated over the boundaries of time. The commitment to the practice would have to remain such that the mutual engagement bridges over the natural cycles of participation in the community, that is during the participation transition time that occurs at the end of each academic year and the beginning of the next.

To summarise, joint enterprise is understood to be a 'collective understanding of what the community is about, its purpose'. *(*Smith et al, 2017, p.212)

c. Shared repertoire

The third characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence is the development of a shared repertoire, that is the creation over time of 'resources for negotiating meaning' which reflects both 'reificative and participative aspects'

(Wenger, 1998a, p.83). For the Ambassadors' Scheme, this can be reflected in all materials created during the participation in the scheme (e.g. speeches, glossaries), but it can also be the way participation takes place, the mindset of ambassadors in approaching certains aspects of their engagement. For virtual classes, it can be information relating to the technology and the best ways to interact online. Wenger (1998a) refers to this aspect as 'shared beliefs' adopted during the negotiation of meaning. Smith et al (2017, p.212) describe the shared repertoire as 'using the communal resources, such as language, artifacts, tools, concepts, methods and standards'.

The concept of Communities of Practice is fairly complex and the characteristics that shape the CoP are explicit. The CoP's conceptual complexity contrasts with the simplicity of the terms 'Community' and 'Practice' that are commonly used in everyday language. This is why it is important to identify what CoPs are and what they are not.

2.2 What Communities of Practice are not

'Not all communities are CoP' (Wenger, 2002, p.41), and not everything we call practice such as ' interpreting practice' generates a CoP.

2.2.1 Not all social learning spaces are communities of practice

In their most recent works (2020), Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner continue to explore the definition of CoP; they revisit the concept of '*social learning spaces*' as a new theoretical framework to widen the study of social learning in settings that one may be tempted to call CoP but in fact are not theoretically CoP.

They acknowledge that the concept of CoP has been used to describe two levels of social interaction. One refers to the concept of communities of practice as described in the above definition.

> It has been used to refer to a history of social learning over time, which has resulted in establishing a repertoire of practice and a regime of competence by which members recognise each other in terms of their ability to engage in their practice. (Wenger-Trayner& Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.31)

The second use of the term CoP 'refers to a certain mode of learning interaction in which people engage with each other as learning partners' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner 2020, p.31)

This explains how the term CoP has been used to describe some form of social interaction in settings such as a conference where participants who belong to the same field of expertise wish to convey the idea that they together form a community sharing the same 'practice'. This was illustrated during the ORCIT[20] Conference in Thessaloniki (2016) where a section of the conference was labelled *Community of Practice* to promote two academic papers that presented opportunities for interpreters to practise their interpreting skills https://orcit.eu/video-archive2/2016).

But as Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020, p.31) explain, 'they were calling the meeting a community of practice for lack of a better word'.

Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020, p.32) interestingly draw a list of key characteristics that they define as characterising communities of practice in opposition to other forms of social learning spaces. They are:
- 'Identification with a shared domain
- Commitment to plying, developing and improving a shared practice
- Longevity and continuity as a social structure
- Definition of a regime of competence over time
- Recognition of membership and construction of identity based on the regime of competence'. (Wenger- Trayner. B.E, 2020, p.32)

This list of key characteristics is essential when drawing conclusions from the data analysis of the two case studies. It will greatly contribute to defining whether the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreting Studies and the Virtual Classes operate as CoP or perhaps as Social Learning Spaces but not necessarily as CoP.

Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020, p.32) acknowledge that Social Learning Spaces may be conducive to a CoP and that they share 'fundamental characteristics often associated with CoP'.
- The focus is on people and their participation

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[20] ORCIT: Open Resources for Conference Interpreting Online: https://orcit.eu/video-archive2/

- Members drive the learning agenda

- Learning is rooted in mutual engagement

- This engagement pushes the participants edge of learning

- Meaning and identity remain central but are based on caring to make a difference rather than competence in a social practice. (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.32)

It can be argued that many group formations exist with the social learning framework, some of them being fairly close to the Community of Practice theory:

- The Community of Interest (Brown, Duguid, 1991)

- The Community of Inquiry (Dewey, 1938), (Swan, K., Garrison, D. R. & Richardson, J. C. (2009).

- The Community of Place (Kemmis, 1992)

- The Community of Action (Zhacklad, 2003)

The main difference between the various communities is the emergence of intention, the method of initial group creation and the temporal evolution of both the goals and the method of group creation (Henri and Pudelko, 2003). Henri and Pudelko (2003, p.483) argue that 'the community of practice emerges from collective activity (...) and is the result of the involvement of individuals in the actions of professional practice'. Many of these community models allow their members to focus on the outcome such as the desire to change an aspect of society, a place. Once their objective is reached, the community may cease to exist.

On the contrary, Communities of Practice exist as they bring together members who have a vested interest in a practice. They understand that from their belonging to the community as practitioners, they learn together, share their knowledge and create new knowledge for the benefit of their practice. The community of practice and its members develop a strong sense of identity and belonging which is essential to the features of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998a).

Even though these different models of communities exist within a social learning framework and as such have many similar features, they are different. In the world of interpreting, and especially when focusing on the AS and the VC, it is important to find out whether the group formations belong to the community of practice theory, or at least within the social learning theory. CoPs offer a framework that focus on the

relevance of practice continuously kept alive and revisited by the community. CoPs offer continuity in comparison to the communities mentioned in the list above that may stop once the focus of interest is over. Continuity is essential to make changes, especially in the context of a competitive profession such as interpreting and CoPs offer a framework based on longevity. For the VC, the ambition is that the experience of participation in the VC will be a catalyst to motivate participants to informally connect to gradually know each other, build trust and become aware that rather than competing with one another over different language specific markets, they can explore what brings them together, develop their strength together and adopt a mindset that transforms the competitive interpreting profession into a more collaborative and caring space.

The AS has run for a number of years and presents elements that lead to believe it is able to continue functioning beyond one academic year. If there is continuity, what motivates and shapes the community? How does the experience of participation contribute to potentially developing a collaborative mindset that supports the professional development of students and graduates into the profession? Will this change of mindset potentially transform the interpreting profession into a more collaborative space that integrates rather than prevents the integration of newcomers? CoPs require a commitment to the domain over time and can be powerful enough to make changes in a landscape of practice.

However, the other forms of communities mentioned above should not be forgotten when analysing the data that will be provided in this research.

2.2.2 Not a project team, nor a task force

Probst and Borzillo (2008, p.345) point out that Communities of practice are not 'project teams', 'operational teams' and 'purely informal networks'. The role of participants differs. Unlike in CoP, roles are formally allocated or even defined. For teams, there is a 'contractual formality that determines the role and responsibilities of each participant in achieving a series of operational objectives over time' (Probst and Borzillo, 2008, p.345).

Teams are held together by a specific task. Once the task is over, the team disperses (Team BE/Wenger-Trayner, 2011). In a CoP, the task does not define the CoP. It is the commitment of their members to the collective learning that motivates their membership in the CoP:

> It is the ongoing learning that sustains their mutual commitment. Members may come from different organizations or perspectives, but it is their engagement as individual learners that is the most salient aspect of their participation. The trust members develop is based on their ability to learn together: to care about the domain, to respect each other as practitioners, to expose their questions and challenges, and to provide responses that reflect practical experience. Team BE/Wenger-Trayner (2011)

2.2.3 More than 'pure networks'

Wenger et al (2011, p.8) provide a clear definition for both CoPs and networks which they view as 'integral aspects of the social fabric of learning'. Even though networks and CoP are social constructs, they operate differently. Wenger-Trayner (2011) explains that:

> not all networks are communities of practice: a community of practice entails a shared domain that becomes a source of identification. This identity creates a sense of commitment to the community as a whole, not just connections to a few linking nodes. Team BE/Wenger-Trayner (2011)

In a network, members pass on a multitude of information on many topics, whereas in a CoP 'members share a common interest in developing practices in a specific field. Networks do not aim at improving members' know-how on one specific domain.' (Probst and Borzillo, 2008, p.336).

Networks refer to a set of nodes that represents 'connections among people' (Wenger et al, 2011, p.9). The main purpose of networks is then to use 'connections and relationships as a resource in order to quickly solve problems, share knowledge and make further connections' (Wenger et al, 2011, p.9).

Differences between the different formations of communities and structures are captured in the table below (Wenger and Synder, 2002. p.42) and offer an insight into the nature of boundaries, purpose and membership, and duration. They are essential

when understanding the nature and purpose of such social learning formations, especially when identifying values and purpose, or even when integrating them in the design of (extra/post)curriculum initiatives.

Table 1: Distinctions between Communities of Practice and other structures

	What's the purpose?	Who belongs?	How clear are the boundaries?	What hold them together?	How long do they last?
Communities of Practice	To create, expand and exchange knowledge, and to develop individual capabilities	Self-selection based on expertise or passion for a topic	Fuzzy	Passion, commitment, and identification with the group and its expertise	Evolve and end organically (last as long as there is relevance to the topic and interest in learning together)
Formal Departments	To deliver a product or service	Everyone who reports to the group's manager	Clear	Job requirements and common goals	Intended to be permanent (but last until the next reorganization)
Operational Teams	To take care of an ongoing operation or process	Membership assigned by management	Clear	Shared responsibility for the operation	Intended to be ongoing (but last as long as the operation is needed)
Project Teams	To accomplish a specified task	People who have a direct role in accomplishing the task	Clear	The project's goals and milestones	Predetermined ending (when the project has been completed)
Communities of Interest	To be informed	Whoever is interested	Fuzzy	Access to information and sense of like-mindedness	Evolve and end organically
Informal Networks	To receive and pass on information, to know who is who	Friends and business acquaintances, friends of friends	Undefined	Mutual need and relationships	Never really start or end (exist as long as people keep in touch or remember each other)

Note: Adapted from *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*, p. 42, by E. Wenger, R. McDermott, and W. Synder, 2002, Cambridge, MA: Harward Business School Press.

However, is there such a thing as a 'pure' network or a 'pure' community of practice? May one lead to the other? Is it in the interest of learning to encourage one rather than the other? Could the AS and the VC be considered as networks or CoPs? Could they evolve as networks and transform into a CoP or vice versa? Would the structure influence learning? Would the nature of the group depend on its specific stages of evolution? Are networks and CoPs complementary?

2.3 What triggers the formation of a Community of Practice?

2.3.1 Cultivating CoP

Understanding how Communities of Practice work, how they evolve and what triggers their formation, has evolved. Initially, they were considered to grow organically. Kimble (2006) reminds us that initially, CoP grew 'in the wild' (Hutchins, 1996, cited in Kimble 2006, p.230) outside formal organisations. Wenger and Snyder (2000) actually describe CoP going as far back as ancient times such as classical Greece or the Middle Ages. Wenger et al (2002, p.5) state that 'communities of practice are everywhere' and that 'we all belong to a number of them -at work, at school, at home (...)'.

The first phase of the CoP theory was based on learning as a trajectory into a community of practice through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave, Wenger 1991). At that stage, the theory was inspired by the apprenticeship model; Lave and Wenger (1991) observed social structures that already existed. In 1998, Wenger initiated the second phase of the theory, which focused on the idea that 'if people learn together, the result is a community of practice'. In this stage of the theory, Wenger moves away from the apprenticeship model context and observes CoPs in the context of knowledge management in large corporate organisations. In an interview with Omidvar and Kislov, Wenger explains the instrumental shift of the CoP theory:

> The concept of community of practice which was originally an observational concept, an analytical concept, then became an instrumental concept because managers were not happy to just say, "oh, this is a noise perspective on knowledge in my organisation". They also asked, "What do I do if I need to improve my business?" They wanted something much more instrumental than just a good analytical concept. (Omidvar and Kilov, 2014, p7)

This is how Wenger, McDermot and Snyder (2002) introduce a new dimension to the CoP: CoPs can be 'cultivated' and can operate as instruments to improve knowledge management in organisations. Webber (2016, p.7) actually lists 5 reasons why organisations needed CoPs:

- Accelerating professional development across the organisation
- Breaking down organisational silos
- Sharing knowledge and building better practice

- Hiring and building a better team

- Happier, more motivated people. (Webber, 2016, p.7)

This is quite a move from the initial observational and analytical stages of the theory, trying to understand how learning was taking place in existing CoPs. At this stage, the instrumental nature of the theory predicts the benefits of the CoP on participants and on the organisation it is part of.

Wenger (2002) designed a *quick start-up guide* that offers an insight on how one may create a CoP. It somehow feels like a DiY response to a pressing need to implement innovative structures that enhance knowledge management.
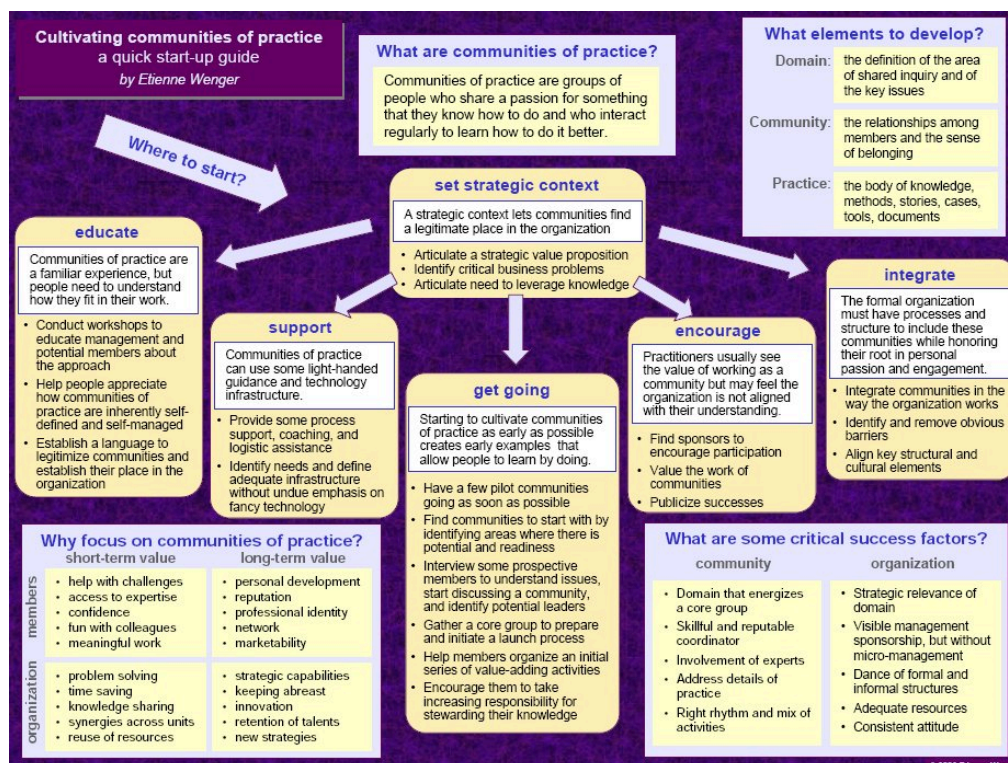
Figure 4: Quick CoP start up guide[21]

Wenger, McDermot and Snyder (2002, p.51) establish 7 principles based on their experience:

1. 'Design for evolution

2. Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspective

3. Invite different levels of participation

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[21] Available at: https://wenger-trayner.com/quick-cop-start-up-guide/ (Accessed: 1 July 2021)

4.	Develop both public and private community spaces

5.	Focus on value

6.	Combine familiarity and excitement

7.	Create a rhythm for the community' (McDermot and Snyder, 2002, p.51)

This may seem like an easy-to-follow guide to build CoPs 'on demand'. However, Wenger et al (2002, p.51) offer a word of caution and remind us that CoPs are organic and that 'designing them is more a matter of shepherding their evolution than creating them from scratch'. Their aim is to help these communities gain 'aliveness' (Couros, 2003).

The concept of cultivating CoPs applies to the two case studies that offer two potential models of CoPs that could be cultivated for the benefit of the learning enhancement of interpreters, either face to face like the AS or virtually like the VC. Will the data analysis lead to conclusions that relate to Wenger's et al (2002) 7 principles, allowing the 'shepherding' of organically grown CoPs, or even to their cultivation from scratch?

Even though the conditions for a community of practice to exist are clearly stated, the enablers that make a CoP work are not always fully understood. However, two of these enablers stand out: the role of the 'social artists' also referred to as 'community coordinators or leaders' (Wenger et al, 2002, p.80), or 'system convenors' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014. p.116) or 'brokers' (Wenger, 2002; Garfield, 2018, 2020); and the relevance of building trust (Kubak et al, 2014, p.84).

2.3.2 Making the invisible visible: the key role of social artists

For Wenger (2009), a special person plays a key role in the success of creating a safe social learning space for the CoP to evolve successfully. He names this special person 'a social artist':

> Among the many factors that account for the success or failure of the process, I have seen again and again that one of the key ingredients is the energy and the skills of those who take leadership in making it all happen. I call the people who excel at doing this 'social artists. (Wenger, 2009, p.10)

The definition of a 'social artist' is challenging to pin down. Wenger (2009) describes what social artists do as an art, *a 'social art'*:

> The name may be surprising but is quite apt. Artists create beautiful pieces of art that inspire us: songs, paintings, movies, sculptures, poems, dances. The presence of this art shapes the world around us and enriches our lives. Similarly social artists create social spaces where meaningful learning can take place. When these social learning spaces work well, they are magnificent pieces of art - social art - that chan*ge* the way we experience the world and ourselves. (Wenger, 2009, p.10)

Wenger describes social artists as *'unique'.*

> The key is the ability of social artists to use who they are as a vehicle for inviting others into inspiring social spaces. The intensity of their passion is the powerhouse of their artistry. The livingness and spirit inquiry are contagious. They infuse social learning spaces with their soul, their humanity, their restlessness, their optimism, their courage and their own focus. (Wenger, 2009, p.11)

Social artists vary in their approach, their identity and their actions. However, they all have a very important purpose, they lead. Their leadership style varies and is described as 'subtle and less visible' (Wenger, 2009, p.10) perhaps because there aren't 'good frameworks and language to appreciate their contributions' (Wenger, 2009, p.12). Their approach is passionate because they care. They understand how to invite participants in open learning spaces that they have managed to create so as to facilitate *'learning citizenship'*, that is 'the behaviour required for productive social learning spaces as a substantial commitment that cannot be imposed, and which requires a willingness to participate' *(*Wenger, 2009, p.10*)*. They use their instinct, vision, aspiration and passion to manage and overcome the hurdles that relate to 'navigating the complex politics of communities'. They are able to transform the challenges into meaningful learning opportunities.They are not easily discouraged even though their task is challenging and demanding. They find creative ways forward when leading the community forward in unknown territories of collaboration.They are able to negotiate boundaries and create social micro-climates (deChambeau, 2014) or micro-climates of trust (Kubiak et al, 2014). Wenger (1998a, p.110) had already tried to name the person that negotiates boundaries as a 'broker'.

The term 'brokering' was actually pinned down to refer to the negotiation of boundaries, very often in the context of organisations (Garfield, 2020).

The recognition of the role of social artists differs slightly from the role of the 'community coordinator' or 'community leader' that was initially described in Wenger (2002, p.80) in the context of cultivating communities of practice. There, the community leader was described as a person who was able to 'identify important issues in the domain, informally link members', and contribute to shaping the CoP (negotiation of boundaries with formal organisations; manage and evaluate how well the CoP is doing). These descriptions are task led and portray the coordinator as the person who has to fulfil these specific tasks, rather than referring to the way personality traits play a role in the success of the CoP. It felt far more like a job description, which relates to the developmental stage of the theory that aims at cultivating CoPs. This trend is still current in the field of knowledge management in business where the terms 'community leader', 'community practice manager', 'community facilitator' or 'community champions' have also been adopted (Garavan et al, 2007; Garfield, 2018). In this context, CoPs have become a 'commodification of the idea of community of practice, leading to the reinvention of communities of practice as a managerial conception'. (Cox, 2005, p.9)

When the CoP theory evolves (Wenger-Trayner, 2015) and introduces the concept of personal trajectory within a landscape of practice, the social artist's role is also recontextualised and renamed 'system convener' defined as the 'term we are using for people who forge new learning partnerships in complex landscapes' (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Like the social artists, they lead:

> Whatever their official job title, they share an ability to see the potential for learning and action in a landscape beyond their immediate scope - and they act on it. They seek to reconfigure social systems through partnerships that exploit mutual learning needs, possible synergies, various kinds of relationships, and common goals across traditional boundaries. (Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p.100)

The potential presence and role of social artists in the context of the Ambassadors' Scheme and Virtual Classes will be key to observe. Wenger (2009) highlights the unique characteristics of social artists which he says he cannot fully describe but

recognises when he sees them (Wenger, 2009, p.10). The research data analysis will aim to establish whether the presence of a key person comparable to the social artist had an influence on the success or failure of the community of practice. In the same way, did the absence of a social artist stop the community of practice from forming? If social artists are unique in the way they lead and create open learning spaces to encourage learning citizenships, what can be learnt from their initiatives either online, face to face, or both? The *social artists* and *system conveners in complex landscapes* are still fairly mysterious and often working in isolation, finding ways to promote and facilitate their mission, their vision is still to be refined within the community of practice theory. The data collected for this research could highlight further elements that would offer some precision on the determining role they play[22].

2.4 Value added by CoPs

2.4.1 The Value-Creation Framework (VCF)

More often than not, universities operate as large top down institutions and tend to measure success and impact of learning with grades and statistics (Warner, 2016). As a result, the theoretical framework established by Wenger et al. (2011) - 'cycles of value creation in communities and networks' - has been essential to measure the added value and value creation of CoPs, but also networks in such organisations. Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015) offer further guidance on the various forms of added value that emerge from the different levels of engagement that occur from learning partnerships. The framework was renamed 'value creation framework' and offers two main functions that are essential if CoPs are to be integrated and supported by universities that may decide to host potential CoPs and networks such as the AS or the VC.

The first main function is to retrospectively discern the added value of a CoP. This approach is far less time consuming and subjective than the analysis of 'storytelling'

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[22] As this PhD thesis is drawing to a close, Etienne and Bev Wenger-Trayner define the role of system convenors in their new book '*Systems Convening, a crucial form of leadership in the 21st century*' *(Available at:* *https://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/21-08-31-Systems-Convening-Full-PDF-version-corrected.pdf. Accessed 2nd December 2021)*

that provided 'systematic anecdotal evidence' (Wenger, 2002,p.167) of the added value of CoPs (Wenger, 2011, 2015, 2017, 2020).

The second main function of the framework would be to use it as a starting point to consciously think about what value could be generated through doing so. Culver and Bertram (2017, p.369) conclude their research by recommending that the framework can even be used as 'a planning tool for those wishing to set up social spaces'. Furthermore, they promote the experience of using the framework as a reflective tool:

> Not only did the VCF support our attempt to assess the value created through participating in CoPs by mapping certain outcomes onto various community activities, but it also facilitated the promotion of value creation by encouraging participants to reflect on their experiences in the CoPs and to formulate value creation stories relevant to their learning and identity formation. In addition, the VCF provided a means for reflecting on the value that was collectively produced and realised (i.e. the CoP's learning history, the CoP's vision and goals, or the status, recognition and identity of the CoP). (Culver and Bertram, 2017, p.368)

It could be considered as a generative tool to cultivate a CoP. Mackness (2012) actually suggests that the value creation framework 'should be adapted to suit different communities of practice' and that 'indicators of value creation may be unique to the community'. She suggests 'the framework should hopefully become a tool for reflection both at the individual and collective level – a dynamic tool for reflecting on learning capability and optimizing learning'.

In the context of this research, the value-creation framework will be used retrospectively to inform the findings of the data analysis. It will not be used to assess the success or failure of the AS and VC as potential CoPs; but rather, it will be used as an indicative framework to understand whether some types of added value are present in the AS and VC, and how relevant their presence or absence is. Universities that host potential CoPs, networks or social learning spaces such as the AS or the VC need to understand the potential value creation of such communities to decide whether to support such social learning spaces, make them more visible (Wenger, 2002, p.167) or even facilitate their presence to enhance 'trust' or 'quality of relationships' (Wenger et al. 2011, p.8).

2.4.2 How does the Value-Creation Framework measure the added value and enhance value creation?

Wenger et al (2011) have put together a '*value-creation matrix*' that guides the analysis of stories (grounded narrative) and provides indicators to assess how the added value indicates the potential success of CoPs (aspirational narrative). It is the combination of the 'anecdotal evidence' (stories) (Wenger, 2002) and the 'cumulative effect of a set of indicators' that 'provide robust evidence' (Wenger et al. 2011).
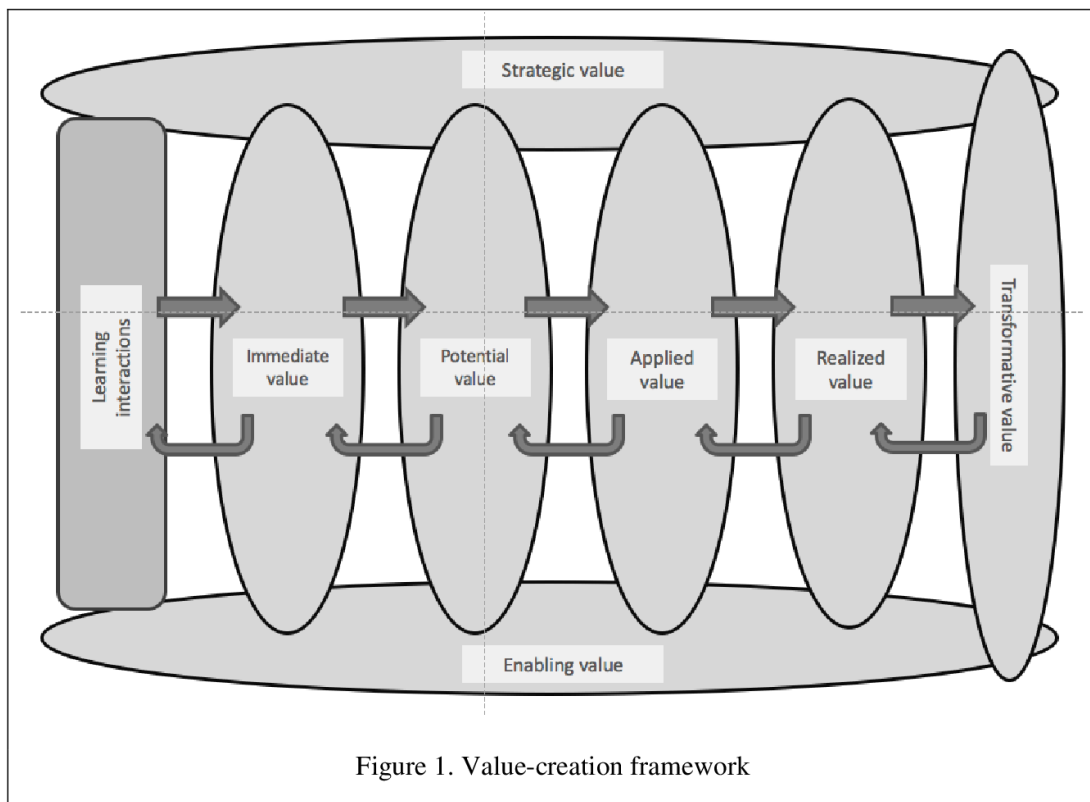
Figure 1. Value-creation framework

Figure 5: Value-creation framework (Wenger-Trayner et al, 2017)

The significance of producing a flow of added value can be summarised as follows (Wenger 2020):

1.   The *immediate value:* gained from the experience of participation (conversation, interaction with peers). The notion of immediacy goes beyond the "*temporal notion*" and includes short term and long term dimensions. It sets '*the emotional tone and the personal experience of learning*' (p.83)

2.   The *potential value:* '*it represents what should be remembered , individually and collectively*' (p.87). It could be materialised with '*knowledge products*' such as blog posts and documentation that capture what has been done and learnt. In this context '*potential*' relates to proving useful when put into practice.

3.   The *applied value*: as a result of what has been learnt when engaging with others, one changes one's practice; it is about creatively applying what has been experienced in the practice.

4.   The *realised value*: As a result of this '*chain of events',* the performance improves. However, it is not always easy to measure what has been learnt as learning is '*diffuse and complex*' (2020, p.97).

The four types of added value above apply to the individual or group of individuals that have worked collaboratively in a shared social context.

The types of added values below apply to the wider organisation, to the community of practice as a whole, including the different levels of participation, hence involving the experts, the observers and the *legitimate peripheral participants* involved in other ventures.

5.   The *strategic value*: the way conversations and initiatives are organised and offer a strategy to the steering of the group.

6.   The *enabling value*: this is not always visible. It is about identifying and implementing what the community needs to do to function well in a self-sufficient manner.

7.   The *transformative value*: the learning generated produces transformation in practice beyond improvement in performance. It generates new insights, concepts, visions.

The VCF offers a language that will be used to evaluate the added values and value creation when telling the stories of the AS and the VC as potential CoPs, networks or even more generally as social learning spaces.

2.5 Unresolved issues and limitations of CoPs

The theory of communities of practice has evolved a great deal since Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed a new 'situated' theorisation of learning (Fuller, 2007, p.20). However, there are limitations in the theory, how it is understood and applied.

2.5.1 Multi layered understanding of CoPs can lead to misunderstandings.

The definition of CoPs has evolved over the years. However, Fuller (2007) argues that Lave and Wenger (1991) did not devote enough attention to defining CoPs which as a result, 'has given others the latitude to use the concept flexibly' (2007, p.20). As mentioned in Chapter 2, section 1.2, Wenger himself confesses that over the years, he is still trying to understand what CoPs do. For lack of a better word, it is tempting to hold on to the superficial meaning of the term 'community of practice' that appears to describe any gathering of people that has come together for the day to discuss something of common interest. As a result, the phrase comes up again and again in conferences to capture a feeling of togetherness and enthusiasm over an event[23].

On the one hand, one should celebrate the intuitive use of this term. This is illustrated in Downie (2016, p.46) who suggests that 'what [interpreting] professionals seem to want is a community of practice, not a closed shop [when referring to professional associations]'. The intuitive definition highlights the contrast between 'closed' and 'open', 'selective' and 'inclusive'. But CoP does not seem to retain more attention than that.

But on the other hand, it contributes to weakening the theory of CoP that appears superficial and too vague, or challenging to apply (Li et al, 2009). As a result, the full potential of value creation of CoPs remains underexplored (Fuller, 2007, p.20).

The term 'community' itself is far from neutral as it carries connotations of harmony and togetherness (Fuller, 2013, p.20). Actually Jewson (2007) argues that the term is 'confused and unhelpful' and refers to everyday language 'connoting harmony, co-operation, unity and altruistic care for others' (p.70). He further states that the concept of community is connected to sociology, popular mythology and social policy principle which leads unavoidably to multiple interpretations of the term, enhancing its positive connotation, which is acknowledged by Wenger (1998a).

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[23] Refer to Chapter 2, section 2.1, p.47

For the layperson, there seems to be a discrepancy between the initial statement that suggests that 'CoPs are everywhere' and 'we all belong to communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998a, p.6), and the complexity of the definition that attempts to explain what CoPs are, how they function and how to integrate them into existing infrastructures. In his latest writing, it is interesting to note that Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020, p.32) specify what 'communities of practice' are more specifically so as to get the freedom to explore a wider context, using more neutral terminology, they speak of 'social learning spaces'.

2.5.2 Challenging integration of CoPs in top-down educational systems and organisations

Koeglreiter, Torlina and Smith (2008, p.164) argue that the CoP litterature idealises the context of CoP whereby 'CoPs are nurtured and are given an opportunity to play a significant role in their organisation'. Eales (2003) cited in Koeglreiter et al (2008, p.164) actually states that 'in reality many CoPs exist informally, and despite developing valuable organisational expertise, they remain small and unrecognised'.

> Instead of becoming a trigger of innovation and improved practices in the wider organisation, they can become isolated from the rest of the organisation, struggling to obtain resources or get specialised support for their activity. Koeglreiter, Torlina and Smith (2008, p.164).

In the context of visibility, and support, the VCF seems essential to articulate value creation and added value of CoPs integrated in top-down structures for them to continue to thrive and invite further participation to develop a collective mindset, informal learning, shared expertise to develop innovation and leadership as 'an act of service' (Wenger-Trayner, 2012).

Hughes et al (2007) argue that CoPs are very often depicted as 'free-floating social entities whose fate is determined by internal processes.'(p.171); however, 'a political economy approach in contrast is concerned with how communities of practice fit within the overall economic, political and cultural systems of different types of

society' (Hughes et al, 2007. p171). There seems to be a lack of understanding in the way a CoP horizontal structure can easily fit in a top-down organisation.

2.5.3 How does one design for the emergence of CoPs?

Furthermore there seems to be some confusion about designing communities and designing for the emergence of communities (Barab and Duffy, 2012, p.59). Quite a lot has been written about the formation of either organic or cultivated CoPs (Wenger et al, 2002). CoPs are developed from a desire to break silos, share knowledge and create new knowledge based on the experience of participation in the community. But what about designing for the emergence of CoPs? It remains an area that requires further development.

In the case of interpreting studies, ambassadors initially were interpreting students. From their experience as students, what contributed to their engagement in the AS? What are the pre-conditions that fertilise the ground for the emergence of CoPs? Are there any formal or informal factors that were purposely (or not purposely) designed with the emergence of CoPs in mind? If so, who initiated this step? Was it done voluntarily or involuntarily? As Barab and Duffy (2012, p.50) state:

> How do we facilitate the emergence of learning environments that engage students as legitimate peripheral participants in a community, so that they develop their "self" in relation to society? (Barab and Duffy, 2012, p.50)

Wenger acknowledged the key role of social artists (2009) in the formation of CoPs. However, if their role is so relevant to the emergence of CoPs, how can social artists be identified and nurtured so as to help a CoP emerge? The character of the social artist includes the ability to create a safe space, negotiate boundaries and invite members in. This pre-CoP stage is crucial but does not seem to be addressed by Wenger and scholars. How does one foster trust? Building trust takes time. How can a potential social artist organise a context that is favourable to the formation of a CoP? What social interaction would fertilise a potential ground for a CoP? In contrast with other terms used to describe this role, the word 'artist' brings a notion of creativity and uniqueness. What is the uniqueness of social artists? Can we further understand whether this uniqueness plays a role in key aspects of the formation of

CoPs, such as building trust, fostering community relations so that members feel the CoP is a safe space to negotiate meaning and learn from the experience of belonging to the community? How can this be applied to the context of interpreting so as to integrate a collaborative approach in a competitive setting?

2.5.4 Participation, identity and power within a CoP

The Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave, Wenger, 1991) represents the journey members of a CoP tend to make as 'new timers' (also referred to as 'novices') who gradually move from the periphery of a CoP to the centre to then become old timers (also referred to as experts), who will in turn welcome new timers. Lea (2005, p.188) argues that this trajectory is unfortunately not always made possible as:

> Making meaning is privileged to the exclusion of others within the academy, and how some members of a community might, therefore, always find themselves excluded and at the margins, never able to participate fully in the community's practices. (Lea, 2005, p.188)

Lea (2005, p.188) argues Lave and Wenger (1991) have been unable to 'explicate how things work around the margin of a CoP', and more specifically the lack of understanding of the 'discourses, genres and practices of what are termed newcomers are integrated into those of the established community'. Lave and Wenger (1991) acknowledge the reproduction of membership is essential for the reproduction of the community but that it may also be problematic. Letting new members may result in new tensions and the demonstration of power by community members. This phenomenon referred to as the policing of boundaries is one example of tensions and power imbalance in CoPs that require further research (Hughes et al, 2007, p.53). There are others such as disagreements, conflicts and struggles which are acknowledged and sometimes valued as ways to stimulate discussions and innovation in a CoP (Wenger, 2015). However, they may also lead to exclusion, discrimation and oppression (Jewson, 2007).

Learning as participating in a CoP (Lave and Wenger 1991) is a key concept tied to legitimate peripheral participation. On the external periphery of the inbound trajectory, occasional observers have been described as 'lurkers' (Wenger, 1998). Garfield (2020) however argues that the term 'lurkers' has a negative connotation and that

actually, regardless of the level of participation, all participants are learners. This specifically applies to online CoPs where members on the outside of the periphery may simply choose to remain at the periphery and still learn from reading posts from other members who are actually more actively participating. The concept of learning as depending on the level of participation is actually questioned by Garfield (2020) who prefers to inject a more positive aspect on learning regardless of the level of participation.

As Wenger developed the CoP framework and extended participation in a landscape of practice (2015), it is then inevitable that levels of participation will vary whether one is actively involved in a CoP and possibly observing another from a distance. It is the experience of belonging and participating at different levels to both that will enhance learning. The transition between learning in participating in a CoP as conceptualised by Lave and Wenger (1991), and Wenger (1998), and participation in a landscape of practice (2015) leaves a gap in understanding how learning as participating evolves. It is clear that the experiential journey through the landscape of practice gradually offers an opportunity to build personal identities, but little is said to understand how one evolves through a landscape of practice. How does one identify landscapes of practice? Wenger remains vague as to how one feels supported and guided through this journey. This is quite in contrast with the role of CoPs in supporting learners through their journey.

This chapter offered a detailed critical review of what learning in social learning framework entails, and more specifically in social spaces such as communities of practice. It provided an insight on the added value and value creation related to participation in communities of practice. But it also showcased the limitations of CoPs and raised questions that are of interest to interpreting studies.

The following chapter establishes what methodology was adopted to collect and analyse the data for the two case studies. It establishes the ethical framework and situates the position of the researcher as an inside researcher.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

The two first chapters provided a contextual background to situate the research questions and understand the nature of the inquiry as defined by the outcome of the critical review of literature relating both to interpreting studies and learning in social spaces such as communities of practice.

This third chapter offers an insight on the rationale adopted when selecting the research paradigm to address the research questions, gather and analyse the relevant data.

It explains how and why participants were selected and offers an insight on the position of the researcher. It explains the ethical considerations that were carefully applied to ensure the credibility of the research outcome and the anonymity of participants. Finally, it describes the data analysis approach that was adopted to generate findings leading to the discussion.

3.1 Working within a qualitative research paradigm

Qualitative methodologies facilitate the understanding of the lived experience of individuals and allow for emergent realities that tend to be socially constructed (Hale and Napier, 2013).

The way the research question is formulated, the nature of the inquiry, the position of the researcher and the context of the research, define the research paradigm the researcher chooses to work with (Richards, 2013). In social sciences, paradigm refers to 'two particular approaches to knowledge - how we seek knowledge and how we use it', and traditionally are referred to as positivism and interpretivism (Thomas, 2013, p.108). The reflection based on the three fundamental questions recommended in Punch (2014, p.17) portray the interpretivist paradigm as the best suited method to guide the quest for the research outcome. The three questions are:

1.   'The ontological question: what is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?

2.   The epistemological question: what is the relationship between the knower (or the researcher) and what can be known (the researched)?

3.   The methodological question: how can the inquirer go about finding out what can be known? What methods can be used for studying reality?' (Punch, 2014, p.17)

3.1.1 Ontology: operating in a multiple reality that is socially constructed - Interpretivism

The nature of the inquiry involves individuals and their personal subjective experience. The three research aims stem from a wish to understand why interpreting students and graduates engage in the Ambassadors' Scheme or connect with peers from the virtual classes, and others don't; what is gained from their experience of participation; and what long term effect it may have on their professional development as interpreters as they transit from being students, to graduates, to professional interpreters. In this context, the inquiry refers to a particular phenomenon that encompasses the subjective understanding of individuals, their personal decisions, their understanding of the professional and personal world they live in. Furthermore, the research aims to further understand variables that influence students and graduates to engage or not in a network or community of practice, either face to face (Ambassadors' Scheme) or remotely (virtual classes) and to understand their influence on their personal construct as newly qualified professional interpreters joining a new profession. Finally, the overarching purpose of the research is to understand whether the experience of participants highlights innovative aspects of learning in social spaces such as communities of practice, and whether CoPs could offer a collaborative and caring space that facilitates the professional transition and identity formation for newly graduated conference interpreters.

Interpretivism offers a multiple reality, in opposition to a single reality. The perception of reality for the participants taking part in the research is captured with two case studies. The narrative of their own experience illustrated with semi structured interviews, focus groups and open questions in anonymous questionnaires offer

participants an opportunity to express perceptions, feelings, ideas, thoughts and actions as heard or observed (Thomas, 2013).

O'Donoghue (2007 pp.16-17) in Punch et al (2014, p.17) capture the essence of interpretivism that resonated the most with the motivation of the researcher and the purpose of the inquiry:

> Interpretivism concentrates on the meanings people bring to situations and behaviour, and which they use to understand the world. Punch et al (2014, p17)

3.1.2 Epistemology: a hermeneutical phenomenological approach

As the epistemological position focuses on the centrality of the human individual in the data collection and analysis (Bloor and Wood, 2006, p.129), the phenomenological approach appears best suited. When thinking phenomenologically, Richard and Morse (2013) state that the researcher attempts to understand, or grasp the essence of how people attend to the world, remembering that a person's description is a perception, a form of interpretation (Boyd, 1993, van Manen, 1990 in Richard and Morse, 2013). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.11) define phenomenology as a 'philosophical approach to the study of experience'.

Hermeneutical phenomenology considers understanding and interpreting as an intertwined process where interpretation continuously evolves (Richard and Morse, 2013). This applies to the data analysis generated by interviews and focus groups of participants of both case studies. Its main focus is to interpret reality by interpreting other people's interpretation of their lived experience. In both case studies, when tutors and ambassadors are interviewed, they revisit their experience of the Ambassadors' Scheme and the virtual classes. By doing so, they interpret what they experienced, which is then captured in the interviews.

According to philosophers Heidegger (1982), Gadamer (1976), Ricoeur (1969) and Van Manen (1990), knowledge comes into being through language and understanding (Richard and Morse, 2013, p.68). This framework illustrates how the data will be analysed and interpreted by the researcher.

Husserl describes the *lifeworld* (*lebenswelt)* concept as including life as it happens, life as we experience it and life we communicate with others. In this research, interviews and focus groups capture the experience of participants, how they choose

to communicate this experience and also how they reflect and interpret their experience. This refers to their lifeworld experience which is subjective. The lifeworld experience is an individual construction of reality and a subjective perspective on its life conditions (Krauss, 2005).

However Georgi (1985) emphasises that gathering concrete descriptions of specific experiences to search for the 'bare bones' of meanings of a phenomenon that relate to all cases (Bloor and Wood, 2006) is highly desirable so as to provide a sense of measurement. This is an essential point that applies to the adopted data analysis approach, which will aim to generalise beyond the individual approach and articulate transferable meanings of what makes an experience what it is (Bloor and Wood, 2006). It is with this concern in mind that questionnaires were introduced in addition to the focus groups and interview methods to offer an opportunity to move away from the subjective influential factors that can affect the way personal experience is captured.

In addition to the benefit of methodological triangulation of data (Denzin, 1989), the questionnaire analysis will then help address the issue of transferability of meanings as described by Georgi (1985).

3.2 Research methods and their designs: a combined approach

Selecting the most effective and appropriate research methods (Silverman, 2014) is essential to collect the relevant data that addresses the research questions in an ethical manner; it encourages a well planned triangulated project (Richards, 2015).

The combination of data collection methods and the sampling size were designed to first gather sufficient data to ensure saturation is observed (Richards, 2015; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), and triangulation of data to validate the reliability of outcomes.

Here is an overview:

1. **Case study 1: participation in the AS**
   - Initial focus groups of students and ambassadors to inform interviews and questionnaires.

- Semi structured interviews of selected Ambassador Coordinators (AC)
- Questionnaire to selected participants - graduates who joined the Ambassadors' Scheme and graduates who did not join the Ambassadors' Scheme (with pilot study[24]).
- Focus group of professional interpreters who participated in interpreting studies as students and/or ambassadors during 2013 and 2016.

2. **Case study 2: participation in the VC**
- Questionnaire to London Met and non London Met virtual class interpreting students (with pilot study).
- Semi structured interviews of partner university tutors who led virtual classes with London Met.

The combination of research methods aims at capturing the different aspects of the observed phenomena, in this case, the lived experience of participants.

3.2.1 Sampling

In the context of qualitative research, purposive sampling (Punch, 2014; Silverman, 2014), inspired by the six questions suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.34), was adopted to guide this qualitative sampling choice and construct a sampling frame for both case studies:

1. 'Is the sampling relevant to the conceptual frame and research question?
2. Will the phenomena you are interested in appear? In principle, can they appear?
3. Does your plan enhance generalisability of your findings, either through conceptual power and representativeness?
4. Can believable descriptions and explanations be produced, ones that are true to real life?
5. Is the sampling plan feasible, in terms of time, money, access to people and your own work style?
6. Is the sampling plan ethical, in terms of such issues as informed consent, potential benefits and risks, and the relationship with informants?' (as presented in Punch, 2014, p.213)

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[24] Pilot studies for the AS and the VC questionnaires were conducted with four participants who had graduated within the researched study period. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the design of the questionnaires and the relevance of the questions with the participants. Participants then took part in the non-pilot finalised version of the questionnaires.

3.2.1.1 Rationale supporting the time frame strategy

The rationale behind the selection of the same three year period (2013-2016) for both case studies is motivated by the following factors:
- The academic experience background for interpreting studies will be similar for the VC and the AS.
- The experience of the internet, technology, social media and tools available to participants to communicate within a group and across countries will be similar.
- London Met students and ambassadors participated in the VC during the same period. This assures a shared experience of VC with non London Met students, reinforcing the reliability of data.

3.2.1.2 The Ambassadors' Scheme

Participants to the case study will include students enrolled on the MACI/MAI at London Met, ambassadors who signed a contract to engage in the AS, and professional interpreters newly engaged in the profession who were either students on the MACI or ambassadors or both during 2013 to 2016 (with the additional year of 2017 for professional interpreters newly engaged in the profession).

The three year evolution allows the observation of a subgroup of participants that evolved across the three academic years as follows[25]:
- Students during the academic year 2013 - 2014;
- Once graduated, they join the Ambassadors' Scheme in academic year 2014 - 2015
- They are now engaged professional interpreters in academic year 2015 - 2016, and even 2017.

This "within-case sampling" approach (Punch, 2014; Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E., 2010) was adopted to explore whether the collaborative learning approach

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[25] Table 5 (see 4.1.1, p.100) provides a detailed account of the number of students and ambassadors participating in the research (2013/2016) presented in the wider context of the AS and the MACI between 2004 to 2021.

as students had an impact on the engagement of participants in the Ambassadors' Scheme in the second academic year. Hence developing an appetite for further experience of potential collaborative learning initiatives such as communities of practice or networks as professional interpreters engaging in the profession in year 3.

The additional academic year (2016 -2017) was added to encourage the participation of professional interpreters with further experience in the profession.

Table 2: Ambassadors' Scheme - Sampling of participants and research methods

Groups observed	Academic year 2013/2014	Academic year 2014/2015	Academic year 2015/2016	Academic year 2016/2017
Sub group evolving over 3 to 4 academic years	Students	Ambassadors	Professional interpreters	Professional interpreters
Ambassadors (questionnaire)	Ambassadors	Ambassadors	Ambassadors	Professional interpreters
Ambassador coordinators (semi structured interviews)	Ambassador coordinators	Ambassador coordinators	Ambassador coordinators	Professional interpreters
Students (focus groups)	Students	Students	Students	

3.2.1.3 The virtual classes

Participants[26] include interpreting students both at London Met and partner universities (a total of 6 universities outside the UK), potentially some ambassadors who attended VC, and tutors that led the virtual class.

Table 3: Virtual classes - Sampling of participants and research methods

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[26] See 4.1.2 for detailed data corpus of VC participants.

Groups observed	Academic year 2013/2014	Academic year 2014/2015	Academic year 2015/2016
London Met students and/or ambassadors who participated in virtual classes with partner universities (questionnaires)	Students	Students	Students
Non London Met - partner university students who participated in virtual classes (questionnaires)	Students	Students	Students
Partner University tutors who led virtual classes with London Met (semi guided interviews)	Tutors	Tutors	Tutors

This coherent approach provides an opportunity to explore the correlation of engagement and participation of London Met interpreting students with non London Met interpreting students during virtual classes, taking into account London Met interpreting students and ambassadors parally engaged in a face to face collaborative approach. This will potentially provide a coherent insight on whether this face to face experience with peers and ambassadors encouraged London Met participants to influence any form of engagement with remote peers they worked with during virtual classes, and whether this resulted in any form of collaboration such as community of practice or network. It also invites an observation on any virtual or face

to face key elements that enhanced or hindered participation between the two universities.

3.2.2 Focus groups strategies

The focus group strategy appeared to be the natural choice as they already were fully integrated in the academic year before the research period started and still are to the present date. The following definition was adopted:

> focus groups are defined as a series of audio-recorded group discussions with differently composed groups of individuals and facilitated by a researcher, where the aim is to provide data (via the capture of intra-group interaction) on group beliefs and group norms in respect of a particular topic or set of issues. Bloor and Wood (2006, p.88)

During the research period, participants were informed that the content of the focus groups would also be used for the purpose of this research.

The focus group strategy offers an informal set up with quite a lot of flexibility for participants to express their ideas spontaneously.

The annual focus groups were organised between 2013 and 2016 as follows:

1. Focus group 1: June of each academic year: focus groups with students on the MA Conference Interpreting /MA Interpreting. This brings together students who have finished their six practical modules and some ambassadors[27]. An informal social space is set up whereby everyone brings cakes, sweets and drinks. It is often associated with an end of exam celebratory time of the year. The aim is to collect feedback, ideas, suggestions on:
   a. the teaching and learning experience on the course
   b. the students experience of the Ambassadors' Scheme as students
   c. their ideas and suggestions for the Ambassadors' Scheme for the next cohort of students, regardless of their participation in the scheme once they graduate

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[27] Invitations are sent to all ambassadors. But traditionally, it has been a space for students, with some ambassadors joining the process.

2. <u>Focus group 2: September of each academic year</u>: focus group with London Met MACI/MAI graduates who have signed up to the Ambassadors' Scheme. The main aim of the focus group is to explore:

   a. their ideas to support new students on the course as ambassadors, and explore what they can offer (often based on their own experience as students).

   b. their ideas to shape the Ambassadors' Scheme to their liking for the year ahead. In this focus group they normally discuss how they perceive their identity as ambassadors, the ways to enhance their interpreting practice together, and possibly the support they can provide one another for employability.

The focus groups served three main purposes:

- Inform the questionnaire for the AS: The June and September 2013 focus groups were used to inform the questionnaire for the Ambassadors' Scheme case study, which was then piloted and finally sent to all ambassadors between 2013 and 2016.

- Empower students (Blaxter et al, 2014) so their voice was heard and valued in the study.

- Explore their experience of the collaborative approach to learning as students on the MACI, and find out whether this acted as a motivation to engage further in the AS or similar initiatives.

In this particular setting, participants saw the researcher more as their course leader and far less as a researcher. The researcher acted as a facilitator who guided and steered the conversation around some key questions. It was a free space for spontaneous intra-group interaction with no right or wrong answers. Students knew that the main purpose was to discuss their experience so as to improve it for the next cohort of students.

During the September focus group, numbers were lower with 6 to 12 participants, compared to an average of 25 to 30 in June. The conversation was slightly more

guided. The role of the researcher was to stimulate discussion. The context was slightly different as participants had already made the commitment to engage as ambassadors to the Scheme.

3.2.3 Questionnaires

The questionnaire design was informed by the data from the focus group. During the pilot study (Bell, 2014; Thomas, 2014) the questionnaires were sent to three participants who were selected to represent the different groups of participants regarding age, gender, languages and cultures. Bell (2014) recommends a list of questions to review pilot studies, which guided the feedback the researcher collected:

1. 'How long did it take you to complete?
2. Were the instructions clear?
3. Were any of the questions unclear or ambiguous? If so, would you say which and why?
4. Did you object to answering any of the questions?
5. In your opinion, has any major topic been omitted?
6. Was the layout of the questionnaire clear/attractive?
7. Any comments?' (Bell, 2014 pp.167-168)

Based on the outcome, the two questionnaires were finalised:

- Questionnaire 1: The Ambassadors' Scheme
- Questionnaire 2: Virtual classes[28]

The design of the questionnaire fits in the qualitative research framework. As such, the questions were designed to provide specific answers to the research questions (Bell, 2014). The initial part of the questionnaire provided quantitative data for the purpose of profiling participants. Then, the questions were designed to elicit self-perception (Hale and Napier, 2013). They were also designed to cross-reference the data generated from the interviews for triangulation purposes and to test the validity of the data analysis outcome.

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[28] Questionnaire results for the AS and the VC are available in appendix 14.

Both questionnaires were divided into three distinctive sections: factual, behavioural, and attitudinal (Hale and Napier, 2013; Punch, 2014). The factual questions bring relevant demographic information. This includes age, gender, and place of residence. The behavioural questions identify what participants do, where they studied[29] and the qualifications they gained. Dichotomous questions were selected as the most suitable design to collect factual data (Thomas, 2013).

Finally the largest section is dedicated to attitudinal questions. They include lists of ready-made opinions in the form of statements, with a request to rank statements in agreement with the participants' opinion, and open questions, using the Lickert scale (Bell, 2014; Thomas, 2013). Multiple choice questions, rank order questions, rating scale questions, matrix or grid questions (Thomas, 2013) were selected to capture data in different formats, enabling cross referencing. The design of the questions was varied to avoid automated answers by the participants; they were forced to think carefully before providing a reply.

The questionnaire offered participants an opportunity to express their true feelings and experiences of the impact of the Ambassadors' Scheme on their informal and formal learning, their sense of belonging to a network or a community, their sense of identity and involvement in the profession, without speaking directly to the researcher who also is the course leader. The questionnaire is a method to collect data and provide understanding; it offers an opportunity to access information that is less likely to be influenced and discoloured by a history of relationships between students and peers or again students and the researcher as a former course leader. Students could hesitate to give thought-provoking or negative feedback about an initiative put forward by a lecturer or tutor. It could be anticipated that students may be concerned with the consequences of their comments and would prefer to say only what is expected of them. As such questionnaires were only distributed to participants after they graduated; they offered a more neutral space and allowed an open honest reflection.

The questionnaire for the virtual classes captures the voices of both the students at London Metropolitan University and those at the universities taking part in virtual

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[29] This information is not published and was only used to inform participation.

classes within this research framework. Though the interviews with the tutors from partner universities were crucial, it was essential to capture the voice of the students anonymously, especially their experience and ideas on the impact of virtual classes on their formal and informal learning, as well as the factors that contributed to encourage or discourage the formation of networks or communities beyond the boundaries of the virtual classes program. Furthermore, depending on the educational, cultural and traditional heritage in the respective countries, student feedback may not be favoured as valuable and valid as the voice of their tutors.

All questionnaires were set up using the SurveyMonkey platform (with licence), allowing more complex and targeted options (Thomas, 2014; Bell, 2014). From the beginning a clear conceptual map was established, starting with a more generic approach while moving on to detailed and specific information (Punch, 2014).

Thomas (2013, p 207) provides simple but efficient advice, which was applied in the design of the questionnaires:

1. 'Keep everything short (questions and number of questions)
2. Be clear about what you are asking
3. Be precise
4. Collect all necessary details
5. Be aware of 'prestige bias'

All questionnaires included a possibility for candidates to write their own personal thoughts if they felt the opportunities were not enough with the options provided. The content of the open questions and these further contributions were coded using the same approach as for the semi-guided interviews and focus groups.

3.2.4 Semi structured interviews

For both case studies, the interviewees were not only well known to the researcher, they shared a life experience with them (virtual classes, ambassadors sessions, discussions and interactions during the academic year). As a result, the semi-structured interviews were designed to capture an experience that by default both interviewee and interviewer had been exposed to; during the experience, the

interviewer was not playing the role of researcher. The interviewer was the course leader who initiated the experience.

In this specific context, it was paramount to adopt the most suitable approach to the interview, the interviewees and myself the interviewer. Roulston's description of the 'reflective interviewer' (2010, p.4) echoed the sense of purpose felt by the researcher when conducting the interviews. It included a strong awareness of the researcher's subjectivities and their implications on the conduct of the interview, the semi-guided approach in order to offer complete freedom of expression to the interviewee and the reassurance required about the specific purpose of the interview.

The first aim was to obtain the data required. But the paramount priority was to create a trusted space to allow an interaction that was aimed to be open, honest and engaging so as to lead to knowledge production as described by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015).

Trust between the interviewee and the interviewer was the decisive factor. To foster trust, the space created during the interview had to be safe, truthful and ethically suitable.

The factor that played the most important role to enhance trust and closeness was the common language adopted spontaneously in the interviews as the official language by many interviewees who used it when addressing the researcher outside the research context. The use of a language for the interview, different from the research language, created a bond outside and inside the interview. It was adopted as a common thread between the inside and outside world of the interview. This was relevant for the virtual classes case study, but also for the interviews of the ambassador coordinators and PINEIM1.[30] As Brinkman and Kvale (2015) state, the inside world of the interview often referred to as the 'context' may be difficult to define in terms of boundaries. When/where does it start, when/where does it stop? For the interviews, though the researcher endeavoured to create a space that encapsulated

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[30] PINEIM3 was carried out as a focus group as it included three participants who had initiated a collective strategy to their professional development; as a result they were all operating as interpreters under the same umbrella.

trust to allow new roles for both interviewer and interviewee rather than trying creating a different space, this interview space offered an additional dimension to pre-existing contexts. Rather than an artificial, odd, limited research context, the interview context offered an additional dimension that enriched both the pre-research, the research and the post-research contexts.

The main approach to the interviews was to engage in a conversation that was shaped by a semi structured journey led by guidelines that were mapped with the research question.

The guidelines for the virtual classes and the Ambassadors' Scheme[31] shaped the structure of the conversation.

3.3 Ethical care

Ethics is an important aspect of research in any field, but specifically in education and social research (Cohen et al, 2000). Thomas (2013, p.41) argues that social research mostly involves direct or indirect contact with people and as such requires ethical consideration. Blaxter et al (2010, p.161) warns that ethical issues are thought to arise predominantly with research designs that use qualitative methods of data collection. She bases her statement on the closer relationship between the researcher and the researched.

3.3.1 Inside researcher: an invitation for reflexivity

According to Le Gallais (2008), when the researcher is directly involved in the teaching of research participants, or when teaching colleagues become research participants, as is the case here, the concept of inside researcher applies. This offers both a rich experience and an opportunity to closely observe from within. It helps clarify and define roles, from the researcher's perspective but also from the participants' perspective.

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[31] See appendices 4 and 5.

However, from the onset of data collection, to the final stage of the data analysis the researcher had to adopt a position that was as objective as possible. It was as if at this specific stage of the research, the outside researcher had to prevail over the inside researcher (Le Gallais, 2008).

Punch, (2014, p.50) points out that there is no such thing as a 'position-free project'. The researcher has an opinion about the research which makes it difficult to be totally objective. I[32] actually participated in the virtual classes and the Ambassadors' Scheme sessions, both as researcher, as organising lecturer but also as an individual. This shared experience of VC and AS with participants cannot be neutral. Theoretically, this could potentially influence the way questions were asked, answers interpreted and conclusions drawn during focus groups and interviews. This is why Cohen et al (2000, p.66) argue that 'establishing good relations between researchers and their subjects (...) leads to feelings of trust and confidence'. However, the position of the researcher is an opportunity for reflexivity (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.10; Roulston, 2010, pp.116-117).

3.3.2 Approval from the London Met research committee

Prior to any contact with participants, and in agreement with the University's Research Ethics Policy, the research committee of the university[33] approved the consent forms and ethical strategies to invite and engage participants in the research. Only then were the participants contacted and invited to take part (Hale and Napier, 2013, p. 46).

All research participants were contacted following the same approach and approved procedure:

    a. In writing (Sarantakos, 2013): an email was sent to all participants.[34] It explained the purpose of the focus group, questionnaire and interviews.

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[32] The use of 'I' at this stage of the research offers clarification on my perspective as a writer: not the researcher, not the lecturer, simply me as an individual.
[33] See appendix 7
[34] See appendices 7 and 8

For focus groups and interviews, a description of the research and a consent[35] form were sent as an attachment. Participants could review, reflect and ask further questions before participation or withdrawal.

b. Orally: at the beginning of the focus groups and interviews,[36] participants were reminded of the purpose of the research, their participation and their right to withdraw at any point of the research.

Participants were given the opportunity to ask further questions at the beginning and at the end, but also during the focus group or interviews, should they wish to do so.

Participants were able to withdraw from the process at any point. Participants were continuously reminded that this was a voluntary contribution (Burns, 2000) that would be used for the sole purpose of the research.

Participants were reminded that the recording of the session will not be published but only used in the context of data collection for the research. The right to confidentiality (Kent, 2000) ensured that no information provided by respondents would be made available at any time (Sarantakos, 2013, p.17).

3.3.3 Protecting participants from feeling under pressure to participate

3.3.3.1 Creating a safe space

As a result, the ethical approach had to be even more robust, ensuring that participants felt protected from feeling pressured to participate (Thomas, 2013). It had to guarantee a safe space so that participants felt they could express their views freely, rather than feeling influenced by what is expected of them.

On the one hand, creating a comfortable physical space to organise the interview was straightforward. The interpreting booth from the interpreting suite provided a

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[35] See appendix 8
[36] See appendices 3 and 4

familiar professional setting that helped to focus on the topic and connect to past experiences in interpreting, which was relevant to the research. This small comfortable space offered privacy and encouraged trust (Duflou, 2016).

On the other hand, some participants were interviewed online as they lived abroad. This was a different dynamic but still offered the privacy and level of trust required to make the interviewee comfortable and not under pressure to answer questions that would be too invasive or threatening. All participants to VC interviews are researchers and very familiar with the ethical setting and change of role in this specific context; providing them with a suitable ethical framework was scrutinised and approved.

3.3.3.2 Preventing potential conflicts of interest

Hale and Napier (2013) suggest:

> (...) if you are an interpreter educator that wants to conduct a study on teaching interpreting students, you will need to carefully consider how to recruit participants so that students do not feel that they have to participate in your study in order to get good grades. (Hale and Napier, 2013, p.47)

As a result, the following ethical measures to promote anonymity, confidentiality and voluntary participation were highlighted:

a. The focus groups took place once all assessments on the MA Conference Interpreting had been completed to avoid any conflict of interest (Hale and Napier, 2013). This way, participants did not feel forced to attend the focus group, nor did they feel their attendance or lack of it would have an impact on their academic achievements.
b. Even though the sessions were recorded, participants from both groups were continuously reminded that their contributions would be anonymised[37] (Cohen et al, 2000, pp. 62-63) and coded so that they would not be identified by name, language combination or opinions (Blaxter, 2014, p163).

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[37] See appendix 5.

c. Consent forms were collected at the beginning of the session.

d. Participants knew each other very well as they belong to the same cohort of students on the MA Conference Interpreting. Interacting with one another and sharing their views to one another was not a new experience. However, questionnaires were added to the research so that individual views could be recorded, avoiding any influence from other members of the focus group.

3.3.4 Non traceability

The researcher felt a strong duty of care for the individual participants who trusted her. This is why non-traceability (Cohen et al, 2000; Punch, 2014) was a main concern to build trust with participants so as to obtain their truthful engagement in the data collection process. A solid ethical shield to reinforce non-traceability (Cohen et al, 2000; Punch, 2014) was implemented especially for the semi-guided interviews and questionnaires of participants who were not London Met based. As interpreting is quite a niche field, one may argue it is rather easy to trace participants. This is why no data is language specific, country specific or university specific.

Both questionnaires for student and graduate participants were designed on a platform called questionnaire Monkey.[38] The online platform provided a link and their contributions were recorded on line[39]. There was no exchange of emails with attachment or saving of documents with personal data on drives. All responses were collected securely online and accessible via a password. This approach secured data and prevented any possible loss of it.

questionnaireMonkey did not collect email addresses[40] or other forms of traces from participants as the option 'Anonymous responses' was selected. Anonymity was then fully guaranteed to promote trust and encourage respondents to fill the questionnaire. From the point of view of the researcher, non-traceability of

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[38] A questionnaireMonkey licence was purchased to benefit from full security.
[39] ESRC Framework for Research Ethics,
http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Data-storage-and-data-security-308 (accessed 6 January 2019)
[40]
https://help.questionnairemonkey.com/articles/en_US/kb/How-can-I-track-the-names-and-emails-of-respondents, Accessed 2 July 2021).

respondents guaranteed that the outcome of the questionnaires could be used to its full potential.

The non London Met participants were not in direct contact with the researcher. The researcher did not have any personal data about potential participants. They were invited to participate via a closed Facebook group called Virtual Interpreting at London Met (https://www.facebook.com/groups/ConnectVirtualInterpreting/).To encourage participation, an email was sent to the course leaders of the concerned universities to remind participants to fill in the questionnaire.

The temptation was to send continuous reminders to course leaders or on the Facebook group, at the risk of overwhelming participants. As Cohen et al (2000) argues, *questionnaire respondents are not passive data providers for researchers; they are subjects not objects of research* (p.245). As completing the questionnaire was paired up with confirmed consent to the research, it was felt that too many repeated reminders would go against the ethical approach regarding the freedom to engage with the research.

3.3.5 Ethics applied to recordings and transcriptions of audio and video materials

The semi structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed[41]. The focus groups were filmed and transcribed. Filming rather than audio recording more than one participant was a conscious decision made for the purpose of speech clarity. When in a group, participants can talk over one another and there is a danger of missing what was said. In addition, it is important to identify whether what one hears is a unanimous and shared point of view or whether it is a side or isolated comment. To maximise neutrality and reliability (Silverman, 2014), audio and video data were transcribed by an independent company rather than the researcher.

3.4 Data analysis: a thematic approach

Braun and Clarke's definition of thematic analysis (TA) as a 'method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (2008, p.57) has been adopted for the data analysis process. Thematic analysis overlaps other forms of data

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[41] See appendix 9.

analysis in a qualitative context, especially for the initial steps of the coding process. This is why the data analysis process was inspired by certain aspects of the Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2016) and Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) , especially during the initial decisions that were made to code data. This comes at no surprise as certain aspects of the research questions refer to psychology, such as establishing identity and understanding the concepts of belonging and role played within a group or network[42].

The data corpus of the research includes a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2008, 2013) made of:
- The qualitative data: focus groups, interviews and open questions in questionnaires.
- The quantitative data: questionnaires to support the qualitative data and used for profiling.

Maguire and Delahunt describe the qualitative researcher as follows:

> 'The qualitative researcher is often described as the research instrument insofar as his or her ability to understand, describe and interpret experiences and perceptions is key to uncovering meaning in particular circumstances and contexts'. (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017)

Even though TA is widely used in qualitative analytic methods, there is no literature that outlines the theory, application and evaluation (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2008, 2013; Roulston, 2010; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). As a result, criticism of TA (Nowell, Norris, White and Moules, 2017, cited in Maguire and Delahunt, 2017, p.3352) targeted 'the lack of focus', and 'its impact on the credibility of the research process'. Even though TA is often referred to as the overarching method for many other qualitative data analysis schools of thoughts (e.g. Grounded Theory, Charmaz, 2016; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), the processes of TA are less systematically documented, hence less widely validated by the research community that often questions the validity of qualitative research, and more precisely the thematic analysis approach.

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[42] Aim 1, RQ3: How do the networks such as the AS and VC influence the interpreting students perception of self and peers with networks?
Aim 2: Establish identity and boundaries of AS and VC during and after in relation to a CoP model as defined by Etienne Wenger?

This has been referred to as the 'anything goes' approach to critique the lack of systematic approach to TA in Braun and Clarke (2006, p.78).

To avoid such pitfalls, it was decided to adopt Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step approach as it offers a well established framework for TA that guides the data analysis process in a systematic and thorough approach.

Phase	Description of the process
Step 1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary) and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Step 2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Step 3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
Step 4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
Step 5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names of each theme.
Step 6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 4 . Six-step thematic analysis procedure - Braun & Clarke (2006, p.87)

Maguire and Delahunt (2017 p.3353) argue that the six step approach is 'arguably the most influential approach', as it offers such a 'clear and usable framework for doing thematic analysis'. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) differentiate two main primary ways in thematic analysis:

1. Iterative or inductive or 'bottom-up' way. This is a data driven approach.
2. Theoretical or deductive, or 'top-down' way. In this scenario, this is theory driven.

As the data is rich and mapped to the research questions, the inductive approach was adopted to give data centre stage and keep an open mind to the emergence of themes (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). This is even more relevant when considering the position of an insider researcher (Le Gallais, 2008) who may already be influenced by the context and shared experience with research participants. Even though the objective is to maintain as much neutrality as possible and not fit in any pre-existing coding frame, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that 'researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitment, and that data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum' (p.12).

3.4.1 Step 1. Become familiar with the data

Like most recommendations towards a successful qualitative data analysis, 'getting an overview of the data' (Javadi and Karea, 2016), 'reading and re-reading the data base' (Grbic, 2013), 'reading and re-reading the transcripts' (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017), is the first step that cannot be ignored (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As suggested in Braun and Clarke (2006), as the researcher who collected the data, transcribed most recordings of interviews and reflected on the content of the interviews, I felt immersed in the data and was 'familiar with the depth and breadth of the content' (Braun and Clarke, p.16).

Reading the transcripts, watching the video interviews and listening to the audio recordings helped to move away from what memory recalls and focus on the content of the interview in a more detached manner.

Taking some distance as an insider researcher is a must to keep in mind the need to be objective. As suggested by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), taking notes and recording initial thoughts on audio or written notes proved essential. Actually, Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) describe this stage as the 'bedrock for the rest of the analysis'.

During this stage, the main aim was not only to immerse oneself in the data, but also an opportunity to check the accuracy of the transcripts against the audio and video renditions of the interviews.

Furthermore, this process allows the shaping of preliminary coding and commonalities between interviews. In the case of the ambassador coordinators, listening to the three interviews rendered their frustration on the lack of commitment of certain ambassadors in the group, as well as the complexity of organising multilingual interpreting practice sessions when not every ambassador was committed to the group. It was also made apparent that their role as ambassador coordinators enhanced their intrinsic motivation to continue their practice as professional interpreters in the making. For virtual classes, listening to all interviews from tutors helped to get an overview of their feelings towards virtual classes and realise there were many commonalities.

3.4.2 Step 2. Generate initial codes

As Braun and Clarke (2006) argue, step 2 was initiated only once a good overview of the data with notes representing initial thoughts about the data was complete.

Within the framework of thematic analysis, the coding process was data driven, rather than theory driven (Gibbs, 2018). Not surprisingly, this is also the approach adopted by Grounded theorists and Phenomenologists, the two other theoretical frameworks that inspired the initial step of the data analysis.

3.4.2.1 What is a code, and what is a theme?

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.88) refer to Boyatzis (1998) to define a code as a:

> feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst, hence referring to the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon.

Gibbs (2018, p.54) suggests that 'coding is a way of indexing or categorising the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it'.

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006, p.58) define a theme as capturing 'something about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set'.

These two definitions have guided the approach to coding and identification of themes in this research.

As Saldana (2016) suggests, there is some freedom during this initial stage to adapt and customise to suit the unique needs and disciplinary concerns of the research. This is why this initial phase and the note taking process into short memos inspired by the Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014) as well as the recommendation to think of coding as gerunds to describe *what is really happening* (Roulston, 2010; Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2016) inspired the initial coding stage.

Coding was done manually, using the margin to note down codes that were adopted to encompass a segment of text that brought a special idea to the surface. As Richards (2015) claims, 'coding is the first step to opening up meaning' (p.11). The adopted linear approach[43] is time consuming but effective in allowing the data to reveal ideas. Coding was about learning from the data, especially as patterns and explanations emerge.

Codes were adjusted, collapsed and revised throughout the analytic process. Punch (2014) compares the process of code and theme identification to a filing system where elements that belong together are organised in sections and subsections. In this case, codes were colour coded. Key segmentation of texts was selected to illustrate what the code was about, so as to retain data and context.

In vivo coding[44] (Charmaz, 2014) was adopted at times when participants' special terms preserved their special views. They preserved loyalty to the voice and the shade of meaning of ideas and points of view expressed by participants. The in vivo codes were then processed into themes and were analysed. But they were useful to capture the following points identified by Charmaz (2014, p134):

- Terms everyone 'knows' that flag condensed but significant meanings

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[43] See appendix 9 Data analysis, step 1: example of transcript linear coding. An example is provided (focus group)

[44] Example: 'Meeting colleagues at dedicated times motivates me to keep my goal alive' in appendix 9

- A participant's innovative term that captures meanings or experience
- Insider shorthand terms reflecting a particular group's perspective
- Statements that crystallise participants' actions or concerns.'Charmaz (2014, p.134)

3.4.2.2 Types of coding

Richards (2015, p.106) refers to three different types of coding: 'descriptive', 'topic' and 'analytical' coding. She claims that descriptive coding tends to relate to quantitative coding, that is storing information about the case being studied. However, the other two forms of coding refer to qualitative coding. She is not the only one who classifies codes into different categories for thematic analysis. Wolcott, (1994, 2008) cited in Roulston (2010, p.154) describes coding as potentially embracing three dimensions:

1. Description, to answer 'what is going on there?'
2. Analysis, to answer 'what are the essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them - how things work.'
3. Interpretation, to inform evaluative questions - such as why a system or program is not working, or how it might be made to work 'better'.

One can see some similarities between the two approaches which inspired the coding approach adopted in this research. Furthermore some of the Grounded Theory coding initial approaches which also contributed to the coding process (In Vivo coding, the use of gerund, and reflective memo writing) stem from early qualitative researchers who initiated the Grounded Theory, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), (Roulston, 2010). Even though these approaches may differ slightly, they all share a specific emphasis on 'purposive coding' (Richards, 2015), which is to use the results of the coding 'to develop ideas, to take off from the data and drive enquiry further'.

Identifying codes and themes was supported by memos that captured creative thoughts, ideas and relationships with the research question and aims. Richards (2006) suggests that these memos should also aim at documenting the context of theme identification so as not to lose sight of the overall research process. As a

matter of fact, these memos contributed to the process of memorisation and contextualisation of the research process. Memos were either audio or in the written form. They were dated and associated with the relevant data set and codes. They will contribute to the writing of the data analysis report (Roulston, 2010). Punch (2014) differentiates 'writing to report' (when the research is complete and needs to be reported) and 'writing to learn' (using writing as a way to analyse and to lead the inquiry). In this research, writing was used to encourage the formation of ideas (notes or memos for example), to initiate further writing that aimed at bringing together existing writing into a coherent narrative that addressed the research questions. Gibbs (2018 p.45) encourages the use of memos throughout the research process. He suggests that memos could serve different purposes, some of them were adopted in this research:

1. 'A new idea for a code', encouraging to 'keep a list of codes handy for cross referencing'

2. 'To question the quality of the data', straight after an interview or a conversation when it was felt that external factors influenced the answers provided by a participant.

3. 'To question the original analytic framework', especially when a code or a theme emerge but do not seem to be either relevant, or different enough from a previous code.

4. 'What is puzzling or surprising about a case', to capture any instant emotion, point or question that relates to the coding or themeing of text.

5. 'If you have no clear idea but are struggling to find one'. This was specifically valid when it was felt that an idea or a perception was stemming from somewhere but could not be captured easily with words. The process of writing about it helped identify the code, theme or simply analytical process.

3.4.3 Step 3. Search for themes

The theming process adopted in this research followed the Braun and Clarke (2006) definition of what a theme is (see 5.2.b).

As Saldana (2016, p.199) states, one of the main goals of theming is to discern an 'overarching theme from the data corpus'. The main objective is then to build a

thematic framework 'to classify and organise data according to key themes, concepts and emergent categories[45]' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.220).

Once all transcripts were coded in the margin, and relevant segments of data were extracted and allocated to colour coded codes (see appendix 10), codes that seemed to complement each other were pooled together or kept separated. This was done using a table[46] and a visual map[47] to visualise the initial patterns that were appearing (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The identification of themes was at first spontaneous and intuitive, but it gradually became more focused on the research aims and questions.

This analytical process requires an open mind so as to allow themes to emerge, rather than focusing first on what one wants to find in the data. But it has to be a fairly robust and systematic approach too. This is why the interpretation of codes that somehow seem to belong to a theme and form an overarching theme (Javadi, Zarea, 2016) was continuously contextualised with the coded data, so that the voice of participants should not be lost or deformed. This identification of themes required both excitement and intuition, but also consistency and a systematic approach. This balanced approach involved concentration, focus, creativity, and a continuous reminder of the ethical context so as to remain loyal to the participants who had put their trust in the researcher. This was an important aspect that guided this process.

3.4.4 Step 4. Review themes

At this stage, preliminary themes were identified. But as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, themes need to be refined. This reviewing stage is common to thematic analysis, grounded theory and phenomenology which guided the theoretical framework. It offers the flexibility that makes thematic analysis attractive (Javadi, Zarea, 2016).

All themes were displayed in a table and a mind map to visualise how they related to one another, and whether they could collapse into one another, or be divided into two

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[45] See appendix 10 Data analysis, Step 2: Defining themes from subthemes, codes and quotes

[46] See appendix 11 Data analysis, step 3: reporting themes and subthemes

[47] Appendix 12: Data analysis, step 4: organisation of data into a visual map (stage1)

themes or even sub-themes. This is an opportunity to review the entire data corpus and consider whether themes work well across the data.

Maguire and Delahunt, (2017: 3358) suggest a series of relevant questions, which were used to guide this process:

- 'Do themes make sense?
- Does the data support the themes?
- Am I trying to fit too much into a theme?
- If themes overlap, are they really separate themes?
- Are there themes within themes (subthemes)?
- Are there other themes within the data?'

Furthermore, it is at this stage that the themes appeared to answer some of the research aims and questions and potentially highlighted gaps or lack of themes to answer some of the research questions. This was an invitation to go back to the coding process to see whether certain aspects of the data analysis had been overlooked. On the contrary, some unexpected themes, or themes whose level of importance had not been anticipated, emerged.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that coding is an 'ongoing organic process'. This is highly relevant in stage 4 as reviewing themes felt like being at crossroads. This is a decisive time that requires a thorough understanding of the purpose of the overall data analysis so as to drive the research to a reliable and valid outcome with confidence.

3.4.5 Step 5. Define themes

Once all the themes were visually represented, the relationship between them was questioned. As Braun and Clarke (2006) state, this specific step is about telling the story behind each theme, and understanding how all themes shaped the bigger story. This stage could be compared to the specific book writing stage where all parts of the story need to fit to shape the overall story at all levels of the construct. Any loose ends or unclear passages would tarnish the overall construct and validity of the story. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the test is to see whether each theme can be summarised in one or two sentences. If this is not the case, they suggest themes are not yet refined enough and further work needs to be done. This was a test that was

applied until full satisfaction was gained that each theme was precise, organised, relevant and illustrative of the codes and data it had analytically encoded.

3.4.6 Step 6. Write up

The writing up of the data analysis and discussion aims at telling the complicated story of the data in a way that convinces the reader of the merit and validity of the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

At this stage, themes and their visual representation of how they relate with one another (thematic maps[48]) were established. The objective was to write a 'concise, coherent, logical, non repetitive and interesting account of the story the data will tell' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The main concern was to write the 'story' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) to an audience of readers in this case (PhD assessment), but also to a potential audience of interpreters and educationalists who may be interested in using the research findings to conduct their own research, or to apply to their own fields of work.

Extracts of quotes and raw data have been embedded within the analytic narrative to illustrate the story told by the data. The main purpose was to write an analytic narrative that goes beyond the description of the data, and make an argument in relation to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.5 Aiming at a robust, rigorous, critical process of the research process

The traditional tools to evidence rigour, validity and credibility are well adapted to quantitative research and the search for one reality. Criticisms of the positivist paradigm relate to the difficulty to evidence the validity and credibility of qualitative research (Richards, 2015) which aims to demonstrate different realities. However, Richards (2015), Ritchie and Lewis (2003) and Roulston (2010), argue that the 'quality' of qualitative research is about demonstrating 'excellence' in the research process, that is to demonstrate trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and plausibility.

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[48] These are presented in the next chapter and represent stage 2 of the visual representation initiated in Appendix 12

Here are the strategies used in this research to continuously address the robustness of the research process.

First, it is essential to note the lengthy period of time the researcher spent in the field setting (Roulston, 2010. p.84). Even though the data analysis covers a period of three years for both case studies, the researcher has been working in the same environment for the last 17 years. The VC with London Met and the AS are two initiatives set up by the researcher. As a result, the exposure to the research environment has been so long that she is by now extremely familiar with the settings. This is an asset that should allow greater confidence in the research outcome and its impact on other universities with similar courses, on the interpreting profession, and on community based learning as a whole.

The second point relates to the transparence in the research process and the audit trail provided to evidence the different steps of the research: ethical approach, contact with research participants, mapping of research questions with methodology, [49]use of questionnaires and multiple interviews to triangulate data, memos and notes to document the coding process and the final report writing process (Roulston, 2010; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

In addition, the research process was presented to the translation and interpreting colleagues and practitioners, to challenge its validity and credibility. The first presentation aimed at validating the mapping of the research question to the research methodology. The second was carried out to validate the data analysis process (coding and theming). Following each presentation, which was filmed, changes and amendments were made. This process referred to as 'member checking' by Richards and Moorse (2013) and Richards (2015) was challenging but extremely useful to gain objective views from peers who were not involved in the research but were familiar with the two case studies.

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[49] See appendices 3 to 12.

Thirdly, the main concern through the inductive approach to this inquiry has been driven by a continuous conscious objective to ask analytical questions of the data (Richards and Moorse, 2013). Richards (2015) argues that to be valid, the data has to be sound and strong. This is why the coding and theming processes follow the specific Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step approach. The handling of data collection, storing, and transcription processes is well documented, consistent and systematic (Richards, 2015).

Then, my position as an insider researcher (Le Gallais, 2008) encouraged me to adopt 'reflexive good practice' (Biggs, 2018 p.130) that guided each step of the research, e.g. being explicit about the broader values and commitments I brought to my work, or continuously addressing my integrity as a researcher by being transparent about the decisions I made about the research processes.

Finally, methodological triangulation provides an opportunity to access and analyse the different perspectives of participants (Roulston, 2010), discern commonalities so as to reach reliable conclusions (Richards and Morse, 2013). The process of triangulation is used as 'a strategy that adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry' (Denzin and Lincoln, (2000a p.5), cited in Silverman (2014, p.92).

This chapter provided an insight on the philosophical approach that underpins the research. It clearly established the research methods, tools and ethical care that were adopted to conduct the process of data collection.

Turning next to Chapter 4, the data analysis of both case studies gives centre stage to the voices of the participants and offers the reader a structured and evidenced storyline about the experience of participation and its influence on learning, identity transformation and engagement in the professional landscape of practice.

Chapter 4 Data analysis

This chapter presents the data analysis (Wolcott, 1994; Roulston, 2010) for each case study. The findings of the Ambassadors' Scheme will be presented first, followed by the findings of the second case study - the Virtual Classes.

The objective is to tell a trustworthy and meaningful story (Nowell et al, 2017) built on the codes, subthemes and themes obtained from the data analysis.

This chapter will lead to the discussion chapter that will present a comparative analysis aiming at identifying how the findings of these two case studies compare in the light of the research question and aims.

4.1 Overview of the data corpus.

The data corpus is made up of two clusters of data, one for each case study. All references to the coding of participants are available in Appendix 6.[50]

4.1.1 Case study 1:the Ambassadors' Scheme

Academic year	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	18/19	19/20	20/21
Number of Ambassadors	12	4	6	9	8	17	14	15	16	12	8	7

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[50] Appendix 6. Coding of participants as reported in Chapter 4 - Data Analysis

Number of students	18	19	26	27	38[51]	26	22	26	28	15	16	18

Table 5: overview of the number of students and ambassadors participating in the research (2013/2016) presented in the wider context of the AS and the MACI between 2004 to 2021.

As the Ambassadors' Scheme was initiated in 2008 and is still running at present, it is relevant to contextualise the number of participants to the research (A total of 46 ambassadors for the research period 2013/14 to 2015/16), in the wider context of its existence. The number of students and ambassadors was higher compared to the most recent years. This is partially explained by two factors:

1. In 2012, the MACI was added to the postgraduate interpreting portfolio of courses and attracted a high number of students who so far had not had access to conference interpreting education in London, mainly because of their language combination and their desire to study part time.
2. Professional public service interpreters were affected by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)'s decision to implement a new recruitment system that was not in their favour. As a result, many decided to join the MACI to then work as conference interpreters.

The data corpus consists of:

- Questionnaire[52]: 33 respondents
- 3 semi guided interviews of Ambassador Coordinators (3 participants)
- 1 semi-guided interview and 1 focus group PINEIM[53](4 participants)
- 3 focus groups
    - 20/05/2014 (20 students for the 2013-2014 academic year. Written notes)

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[51]The increase in student numbers in 2012 coincided with the opening of the MA Conference Interpreting at London Met. This impacted the larger number of ambassadors in 2013/2014.

[52] See appendix 14 to have access to the questionnaire analysis

[53] PINEIM: Professional Interpreters newly Engaged in the Interpreting Market

- 25/09/2014 (7 participants - ambassadors for the 2014-2015 academic year. Video recorded)
- 24/10/2015 (7 participants - ambassadors for the 2015-2016 academic year. Video recorded)

4.1.2 Case study 2: the Virtual Classes

The number of participants to each virtual class was not recorded as it is difficult to assess how many participants there are in total, those visible on camera and those that are taking part but cannot be seen. But on average, one can say that each virtual class attracted about 15 to 20 students at London Met and between 10 and 15 students with partner universities. This is an estimate. Classes were always carried out in English, paired up with languages relevant to the language combinations agreed by both partner universities prior to the virtual classes.

The data corpus consists of:

- Questionnaire[54]: 33 respondents (31 respondents from London Met and 2 from partner universities).
- 6 semi guided interviews for tutors leading virtual classes (6 participants)

4.1.3 Data trail

The approach to data analysis was carried out as explained in Chapter 3. Appendices [55]provide evidence of transcription, linear analysis of transcripts, the conversion of quotes from text into codes, sub-themes and themes[56]; then a first attempt at visual representation, and the analysis of questionnaires. The write up of this chapter represents the final stage of data analysis. It includes a visual representation at the beginning of each section that encapsulates the themes and subthemes which are then explored individually.[57] Each theme and subtheme is

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[54] See Appendix 14 to have access to the questionnaire analysis.
[55] See Appendix 9 to access sample of linear coding.
[56] See Appendix 10 to access a sample of the conversion of quotes from text into codes, subthemes and themes. Appendix 11 offers a sample of the overview of the themes and subthemes.
[57] See Appendices 12 and 13 to access the visual maps that represent the dynamic participatory journey of participants for both the virtual classes and the As.

visually represented by a heading or subheading and illustrated with references to codes (in italic) and extracts of data that keep the participants at the very heart of the storyline.

The data captured the experience of participation throughout the participant's dynamic journey in the AS and the VC. Themes and subthemes offer an overview of the dynamic journey of the participants which is characterised by three temporal milestones that apply to both case studies:

- Before participation,
- During participation and
- After participation.

Traditionally observations of the participatory experience in communities of practice naturally evolve around the level of participation and engagement, traditionally referred to as peripheral trajectory participation (Lave, Wenger 1998, 2002). As a result, observations of phenomenons in CoPs tend to be fairly static, representing a snapshot in the life of a CoP.

In this specific context, the study offers a lifelong experience of participants engaged in the AS or the VC, from the pre-participatory stage to the post participation stage. This experience of participation over a long period of time provides a rich insight to the research aims[58].

> As a trajectory through a social landscape, learning is not merely the acquisition of knowledge. It is the becoming of a person who inhabits the landscape with an identity whose dynamic construction reflects our trajectory through the landscape. (Wenger, 2015, p.19)

4.2 The Ambassadors' Scheme Case study - A Community of Practice that minds the gap

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[58]Aim 1: Explore how learning in a formal or informal network such as the AS and the VC enhances the outcome of interpreting education/training.
Aim 2: Establish identity and boundaries of AS and VC during and after in relation to a CoP model as defined by Etienne Wenger.
Aim 3: How do the AS and VC compare as potential CoP?

4.2.1 Before joining the Ambassadors' Scheme - Converging towards a common interest (practice)
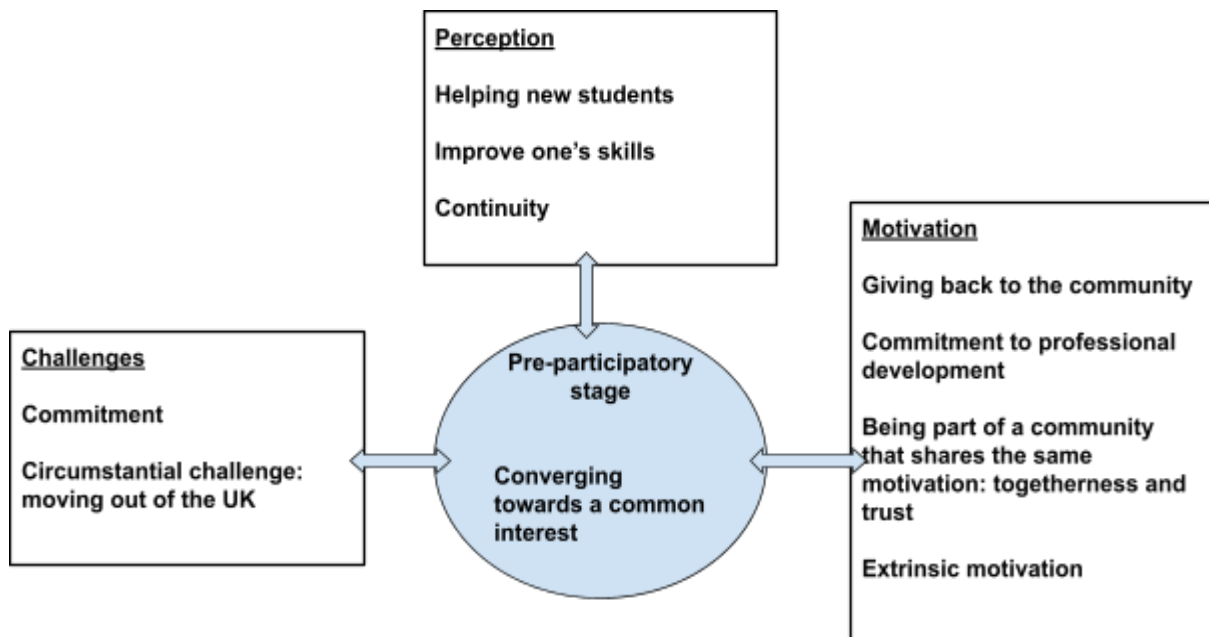
Figure 6: Before joining the Ambassadors' Scheme: *converging towards a common interest*

During the pre-participatory stage, all participants share a common status: they have passed all their exams and are about to graduate. They are thinking of the next stage of their professional development. The Ambassadors' Scheme offers an opportunity to go further in their professional development. The data offers an insight on their perception of the scheme, their motivation to engage and the challenges they may encounter. The themes and subthemes present what facilitates, encourages or hinders a gradual convergence towards a common interest. It illustrates the initial spontaneous process in defining a common domain, their practice and how to form a community.

4.2.1.1 Perception: how do participants perceive the Ambassadors' Scheme before they engage?

Both groups of participants report being well *informed* about what the scheme is about and what it entails. They refer to the informative meetings and

documentations[59] they have officially been provided with by the course leader. But their main perception is influenced by their experience of the scheme as former students. Their perception emerges in two folds; *helping new students* and *improving their skills*. Furthermore, they perceive the scheme as offering some *continuity* to their professional development:

> 'I understand it's kind of a programme to support newcomers, new students, and at the same time you have facilities, you can use the facilities, and improve your skills as well. That's how it seemed.' (Focus group 25/09/14)

4.2.1.1.1 Helping new students

From their personal experience on the course, participants describe their experience of the course as 'one year of intense practice (...) pretty intense and nerve-wracking' *(Focus group 25/09/14)*. Participants who now identify themselves as *'ex-students'* *(Focus group 25/09/14)* empathise with current students who are about to embark on a similar journey; they understand their challenges and know the value of their additional support to new students. Their main perception of the scheme therefore relates to helping new students on the course. Support can be very practical such as providing information on how the course runs:

> 'having any questions answered that they have about the course and how the course runs, because there are so many things when you first start the course, despite the fact that there's lots of information available, there are still things which are not entirely clear about how assessments work, exactly what goes into things like the presentations that we have to give and things like that, so it's useful for them on that front.' (AC2)

But it also relates to emotional support, sharing experiences on how to overcome challenges.

> 'And also about sharing practices. As most of us are ex-students, trying to offer the new students all the support throughout the course they're going to go through and be there for them, and share our experience of what we encountered during our course and be there for them.' (Focus group 25/09/14)

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[59] All students are provided with a description of the AS in June of each academic year. See appendix 1. This is an opportunity for the focus group that brings together the end of year festivities, feedback on the AS from the student perspective and ideas for the following year as potential ambassadors.

Participants foresee the scheme as an opportunity 'to provide advice, and also to point them [students] in the right direction, and in a way I think it is to provide some kind of support and assistance on your [the Course Leader] behalf' (Focus group 25/09/14). They describe the scheme as a *mentoring scheme* which illustrates their perception of their current role and identity. This is confirmed by the questionnaire where 100% of participants either agreed (57%) or strongly agreed (43%) that one of their motivations to join the AS was that 'it would be useful to new students' (Question 24).

4.2.1.1.2 Improving one's skills

In addition to supporting students, participants perceive the scheme as a *dedicated platform for ambassadors.* The scheme is referred to as *'*a program that [in] return [for supporting students], allows ambassadors to continue practising and have access to the interpreting suites, booths' (focus group September 2014). This is an opportunity participants value as they know that even though they have now passed all their exams and are about to graduate, they still need to develop their interpreting skills and their practice. If they no longer feel they are students, they neither feel they are professional interpreters yet.

> 'Well I needed to progress. After just a year I didn't think I was quite there yet for, for, certainly for the Institutions (international institutions), and (I) also recognised that the key need [is] to practise.' (AC2)

This is confirmed by the questionnaire that confirms that 100% of participants agreed (of which 72% strongly agreed) they wanted 'to continue practising interpreting with others.' (Question 24)

4.2.1.1.3 Continuity

This gap between being a student, graduating and starting as a newly qualified interpreter is perceived as worrying and scary. Participants see the AS as an opportunity to bridge that gap and perceive in it a sense of *continuity.* This not only means continuity in their professional development, it also entails continuity in their relationships with peers, the university, and contact with the interpreting profession.

'And I knew that coming to the university at least every couple of weeks would first of all give me practice but secondly maintain my contacts with fellow students and with tutors. And that … you hear about opportunities that way as well. And … so that was important.' (AC1)

The AS is referred to by some other graduates as 'a nice way to build a community', feeling 'connected' with peers, 'networking', 'learning from each other' and 'sharing knowledge' (Focus groups September 2014)

Whilst studying under pressure, participants reported the importance of the supportive environment generated on the Master's course by staff and peers. They perceived it was connected to their professional transformative journey. The experience on the course is perceived as deeply entrenched in their learning and influences their motivation to pursue their professional development in a safe and familiar environment.

'I kind of felt that it was too soon to be left completely on my own, - [laughs] yes – you know, that [I] really valued the contact, maintenance of contact, with the profession, with the course, with the university, with the whole atmosphere; I felt being left on my own suddenly was going to be very strange and quite difficult actually, I thought I really and also I thought I need more, I need more input, I need more for my interpreting, I need more practice, and I need, I still need to definitely improve.' (AC1)

This is confirmed by the result of Question 24 of the questionnaire where 80% of respondents felt that 'they wanted to stay in touch with the university and continue practising interpreting and developing their skills'.

4.2.1.2 Motivation

The motivation of participants may be described as intrinsic - *giving back to the community, committing to professional development* - or extrinsic - *access to the advanced conference interpreting course, access to interpreting facilities*. However, both are clearly interwoven.

4.2.1.2.1Giving back to the community

The participants' perception of the scheme strongly impacts their motivation. Their motivation is deeply rooted in their perception of the scheme as students that benefited from the scheme, but also from their perspective of ambassadors to be. Their strong desire to *help new students*, *improve their own skill*s and enjoy *continuity,* feeling c*onnected to their peers, staff at university,* and the *course* express their perception of what the scheme is. Their perception of the scheme is a motivational factor to potentially engage in it. Their experience of the scheme as students influences their perspective and motivation to contribute.

> 'What motivated me really was giving back to the community. We can call it that way. I saw how much the ambassadors of the previous year had done for us, how much our professors had also worked on that, and I wanted to give back somehow of the time that had been invested in me to the other students.' (AC2)

Giving back to the community stems from a positive previous student experience, hence acting as a motivational factor to make sure other students benefit from the same positive experience. But *giving back to the community* also stems from the desire to improve the experience of new students compared to one's own personal experience. This is the case with language specific logistics:

> 'In my year, for example, there were only three of us with my passive [language] and due to other commitments, it was really difficult to get together to practice, while the [language] groups in my year, there were numerous groups, so they always had someone they could practise with, and practice in our profession really does make perfect or as close to perfection as you can get. So not having that extra practice was a problem that I felt and that I didn't want anyone else to feel in the following years, so that was what motivated me.' (AC2)

Their personal experience as students may have felt like 'a hard time in actually practising with other people and getting peer to peer feedback' (AC2) and as a consequence it motivates their engagement in the scheme 'ensuring that nobody went through what I had had' (AC2). *Improving the situation for peers* and *having someone to practise with,* especially *someone with the required language combination* are motivational factors clearly expressed by participants during the interviews but also in the questionnaire (Question 24):

- 43% of respondents confirmed they wanted to join the scheme because they 'felt they could be useful to new interpreting students';

-       72% stated they wanted to join the scheme because they 'wanted to continue practising interpreting with others'.

4.2.1.2.2 Committing to professional development

Participants perceive their progression through their professional development journey challenging, especially as they identify the professional interpreting landscape as *competitive*. They know their commitment to their professional development has to be sustained over time and that they need to *keep up a momentum*. However their sense of loneliness comes across as a potential threat to their *learning* even though *'a strong will power'* exists. The AS motivates them to *structure their practice:*

> 'I have quite a strong willpower, but still being alone, you know, it's very, very difficult to sit down and say, OK, I'm going to take the [audio] today and every week I'm going to practice, so this [joining the AS] is a way of doing that.' (Focus group 25th September 2014)

Engaging in the AS is perceived as a framework that enhances the motivation to commit on a regular basis, regardless of any other constraints such as a busy lifestyle.

> 'I would say for me personally as well, well, I finished a year ago and even though you say I'm going to keep on practising, in the end you know you don't do as much as you want or as much as you can, just because you're alone.(...) so being committed to the programme, to the Ambassadors' Scheme is like forcing sort of myself to be out there and to practice without a choice.' (Focus group 25th September 2014)

This perception is reinforced by the result of the questionnaire (Question 24) that demonstrates that 53.85% of participants 'strongly agree' that 'joining the scheme meant they could commit to interpreting practice at a dedicated time despite their busy lifestyle'. A further 30.77% of participants agreed.

On the one hand, participants value the regular engagement in the AS as enhancing their motivation to commit to their professional development over a period of time. On the other hand, they consider *the community* of students and peer ambassadors as essential to their *learning.* This includes 'consolidating all the techniques and all the

strategies learnt during the year' (Focus group 25th September 2014), strengthening their knowledge and *practice*, especially at this transitional stage of their professional development.

This asserts why *giving back to the community* of students that are starting the course is identified as 'really good, it is really useful … and helping with my practice' (AC1) and their *learning.*

> 'Personally, I'm currently finding it [engaging in the AS] really useful as a way of reconnecting with basics and coming back to the things which I need to work on, and it's quite easy to forget that, that practice needs to be structured and that you need to work on individual things, so the process of giving advice to people who are starting out is very useful, because it shows you things that perhaps you'd forgotten to pay attention recently. So it's useful from... yeah, it's mutually beneficial.' (AC2)

Peer ambassadors are *someone to practise with*. They *share language combinations to practise* and can consequently offer *language specific peer to peer feedback.* However, even though language combinations are different, peer ambassadors are reassuring, they are *familiar faces*. They *provide speeches* and *'*say your tone sounded like that, you know, feedback' (Focus group 2015*). Practising interpreting with peers* is contributing to *learning from peers*.

As ambassadors *no longer have the pressure of exams,* they 'look at things very differently' (Focus group 2015). They understand the next step is to build *confidence* and skills to accept their first interpreting assignment.

> 'Providing help to new students and ambassadors" is "helping myself" so "when the first job does come along, you are not so rusty that you can't even turn the mic on.' (AC2)

The motivation to join the AS to build confidence is confirmed by the results of the questionnaire (Question 28): 57.14% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that building confidence was central in their motivation to join the AS, while only 7.14% disagreed.

4.2.1.2.3 Being part of a community that shares the same motivation: togetherness and trust

Ambassadors are all *ex-students* who belonged to the same cohort. They are 'pleased with what they have achieved so far in the course*' (*Focus group September 2014*). They know how they had to *go through the same struggle* to pass all exams and graduate. Somehow, even though they have individually graduated, this shared experience amplifies a sense of collective achievements and creates a bond.

> 'In the busyness of everyday life, it is the sense of community, you know, we're all in the same boat, we represent different languages, and I think overall from our perspective we have created a very good mood. The networking amongst people [students] was amazing. I've never really bonded with anybody as much as I have with such a large group that I've ever done, so I think we need to keep at it.' (Focus group 22th October 2015)

They have experienced the added value of *togetherness* and *trust* as students and now realise they are ready to start a new journey as a *community*. At the heart of their motivation lies the strong desire to 'surround yourself [oneself] with people who aim in the same direction to keep the momentum going and get the drive.' (Focus group 2015). *Togetherness breaks isolation and enhances learning.* Engaging in the AS as a *community* is a launchpad they believe will contribute to their professional development as young professionals.

> 'Each year, you know, it [the cohort of students] goes, but this is a great platform to make a difference there. We can keep the community. We can keep familiarising each other, get to know each other, and then know each other for like decades, that's a great platform. We didn't have this at all before [we joined the course], so from my perspective, this kind of solidarity is going to lead to something. I don't know what exactly, a class act or whatever.' (25th September 2014)

As young professionals in the making, they understand that interpreting assignments often come from other professional interpreters. This is why they see their engagement in the AS as an opportunity to form a community 'to get to know each other, not only as colleagues or ex-students, it is more than that.' (Focus group

September 2014). It is a pool of trusted colleagues they know and have worked with, that can form teams of interpreters during an interpreting assignment.

The collective experience of 'going through the same struggles' (Focus group 2015) to move forward in their professional development and the mutual '*incredible support*' (Focus group 2015) provided within the community is very motivational.

> 'It's very motivational to keep going, but it's also feeling the support of everyone who is in the same boat, who is doing the same, and it's like, OK, it's difficult, but it's difficult for all of us and we're all doing it together'. (AC2)

The engagement in the AS may simply be a way to support self organisation as a self employed interpreter that needs to practise:

> 'I've been self-employed for years and then I am around the house now looking should I practice or should I hoover and all that, and you always have distractions and I found that this year that I'm coming here [in the interpreting suite] I am finding now there is nothing I can clean...' (25th September 2014)

But peer support and the sense of togetherness are also key to motivate one another and enhance interpreting performance in a more authentic context:

> 'Being together with the other ambassadors, you know, I need the adrenaline of being in a booth and I actually need some people with me, otherwise it puts the performance downward. For me, the other way around is when I'm at home I'm more relaxed and I think I don't actually perform that well, whereas when I'm here it's a simulated event. It's as close as possible to reality, so I need that.' (AC3)

Actually, graduates reported that when they interpret together, there is an element of 'comparing oneself to the other person' (Focus group September 2014), and this can stimulate a strong desire to perform even better: 'I really need to do a lot better than this' (Focus group September 2014).

4.2.1.2.4 Extrinsic motivation

Giving back to the community, committing to professional development and *being part of a community that shares the same motivation* are all intrinsic motivational factors. However, one extrinsic motivational factor needs to be mentioned, even though it was only openly mentioned by one participant who happened to belong to the ambassador coordinators group: access to the Advanced Conference Interpreting course.

Once engaged as ambassadors, participants can benefit from free access to the interpreting facilities to practise interpreting. Furthermore, ambassadors are provided access to the Advanced Conference Interpreting course, of a total value of £900 which they do not pay if they provide a dedicated number of hours to support new interpreting students.

> 'As I said, in my case probably, it was the fact that I would be given free access to the advanced classes. That was what attracted me; not about what I wanted to give back, but what attracted me, that was it, because I wanted to take the EU test, but then life happened and it's taken a bit of a step back, but that was the main incentive which was like, OK, if I do this, I will also get something in exchange, which is pretty good.' (AC2)

One may argue that this agreement allows ambassadors to tangibly measure the added value of the help they provide. However this was only mentioned by participant AC2 who stated that even though his motivation was mainly intrinsic, he was also taking a stance 'from an entrepreneurial point of view*'.* He declared*:*

> 'If you take those £900 and divide them by the 15 [number of hours to be given to support new students], OK, that's quite a large sum of money for one hour. It means you actually have to produce content, as in something valuable, that people can take away.' (AC2)

Access to the Interpreting Suite to carry on interpreting practice may be considered as an extrinsic motivational factor too. However, *benefitting from the technical environment* is embedded into the motivation to practise interpreting since without a technical professional environment there is no interpreting practice. This is confirmed in the questionnaire (Question 24) that reports that 100% of participants wanted to *make the most of the technical facilities such as the interpreting suite, to continue practising interpreting*.

4.2.1.3 Challenges

4.2.1.3.1 Commitment

At this pre-participatory stage, graduates need to make a decision whether to engage in the Ambassadors' Scheme or not. Participants who did engage did not report any challenges. They seemed caught up in the motivation to engage in the AS to continue their professional journey in a supportive environment. However, one participant (AC2) brought up the challenge of commitment. For this participant, engaging in the AS was perceived as a true commitment to the scheme and to colleagues. The participant felt caught up between the strong desire to commit to the scheme for the benefit of professional development but expressed concerns regarding *balancing earning money with volunteering for the AS.*

> 'Something which I saw in the second year (in the scheme) is that then you have to deal with actual work. Bills have to be paid and unfortunately as much as you want to, because as I say I'm a great believer in the scheme, but this year I just found myself unable to dedicate time to something when I could actually make money from my other work, which had to be made, and it's something which many people don't realise.' (AC2)

It is worth noting that this participant reported this concern whilst participating in the scheme for the second year, and not the first year.[60]

4.2.1.3.2 Circumstantial challenges: moving out of the UK

Participants who joined the AS reported very few challenges at this point of pre-participation in the scheme. However, data from the questionnaire of participants who did not join the scheme help identify what stopped them from doing so.

Answers to question 8 report 36% of the total number of respondents declared they did not join the scheme. From these 36%, 66.67% reported they did not join the scheme as they had to leave the UK (Question 9). However 100% of respondents who did not join the scheme *kept in touch with other students from their cohort* (Question 10). Their main motivation to stay in touch was to *keep friendships alive*

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[60] Ambassadors officially stay on the scheme for one year but can stay for a second year at the discretion of the course leader. This is an exception rather than a normality.

(100%), to keep in touch with other interpreters (81.82%), to continue professional development with someone who had experienced the challenges of my own training (45.45%), and to continue learning from exchanging with someone I trusted (36.36%) (Question 11)*.*

The outcome of the questionnaire illustrates that even though 36% of respondents did not join the scheme, the main challenge was circumstantial - the geographical location of the scheme and the face to face interaction mode of the scheme (Question 9). However, the respondents who did not join the scheme (non AS participants) still placed a high value in networking with their former peers in order to be in touch with professionals they trusted and friends. These motivations are quite similar to those of participants who remained in the UK and were about to engage in the scheme.

One could argue that had they been able to stay in the UK, they would have considered joining the scheme, especially as Question 12 further highlights that respondents who left the UK did keep in touch, mainly by email (81.82%), social media (Facebook: 54.55%; LinkedIn: 18.18%) and phone (45.45%) and Skype (36.36%). Respondents felt *connected to individuals (54.5%)* rather than *a group of colleagues willing to share time and expertise (18.18%) (*Question 15*).* However, when participants connected with peers, they did report it had an impact on their learning (64.45% - Question 16), such as *improving language skills*, *exchanging ideas from interpreting practice*, *gaining confidence in self and skills, learning about oneself as a new interpreter joining the profession, and working as a team (Question 17).*

When asked what *aspects of the course encouraged them to connect with peers from their cohort*, they reported *togetherness,* with an *emphasis on teamwork* as essential:

> 'During our course there was a strong emphasis on teamwork and collegiality. This chimed with my own views on networking and mutual support, and my own needs (I began the course as a tired PSI[61] interpreter who had become professionally lonely, but I found the course revitalised my work). Interpreting is fundamentally a sociable activity, but we often find ourselves working as lone professionals, so teamwork takes effort and intentionality, which the course and Ambassadors provided.' (Anonymous comment in the AS questionnaire)

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[61] PSI; Public Service Interpreting

Non AS participants report that sharing with others has been essential: 'We exchanged ideas, experiences and visions' (Anonymous comment in the AS questionnaire):

> 'During the Interpreter's Professional Environment module - I realised how important it is to be connected with other interpreters - this is probably the best way to get jobs especially in Conference Interpreting as it is still quite a niche market... more specifically I understood that a colleague with a different language combination would be more likely to suggest a client or recommend me for a job since the competitive element is no longer an issue...' (Anonymous comment in the AS questionnaire)

Participants report that the role of the course leader and tutors seems to have been instrumental to the motivational mindset of students when engaging in a collegial approach to their practice:

> 'I would like to add that the passion and the commitment of Danielle and all the other tutors really act as a further motivation to do well during the classes and professionally.' (Anonymous comment AS Questionnaire)

However, the questionnaire highlights that 81.81% of non-AS-participants *did not practise interpreting with peers from the same cohort* (Question 13). Only 18.18% mentioned practising interpreting with peers from the same cohort sometimes and no one reported practising regularly (Question 13).

These figures demonstrate that although non-AS-participants seemed to be motivated in a similar way as AS-participants, they were able to network with their peers from the same cohort rather than forming a CoP. This impacted on their learning but was not conducive to a collective interpreting practice to enhance interpreting skills. Further research could provide more detailed information on the nature of the network and the added value on their professional development.

4.2.2 Stage of participation: added value for ambassadors and students

Let's now move forward in time, the stage of participation. Participants are officially registered on the Ambassadors' Scheme as *ambassadors*. They include three participants who agreed to take the role of *ambassador coordinators* (AC). Both

groups will be collectively referred to as *ambassadors* unless the data offers a clear distinction between the two groups of participants.

In this new section, the data identifies the added value the scheme has brought to ambassadors and students. Their shared experience whilst in the scheme is presented as follows:

- the enablers and experience of participation in the scheme,

- the role and identity of participants,

- the challenges participants encountered,

- and finally the formal and informal learning they gained.

Furthermore, the data offers an insight on the perspectives of the participants' experience of the functioning of the scheme from four angles. They are:

-        The perception of the ambassador coordinators (AC)

-        The Ambassador Coordinators' perception of the ambassadors' perception

-        The perception of the ambassadors

-        The students' perception of the ambassadors

This is represented by the diagram below:
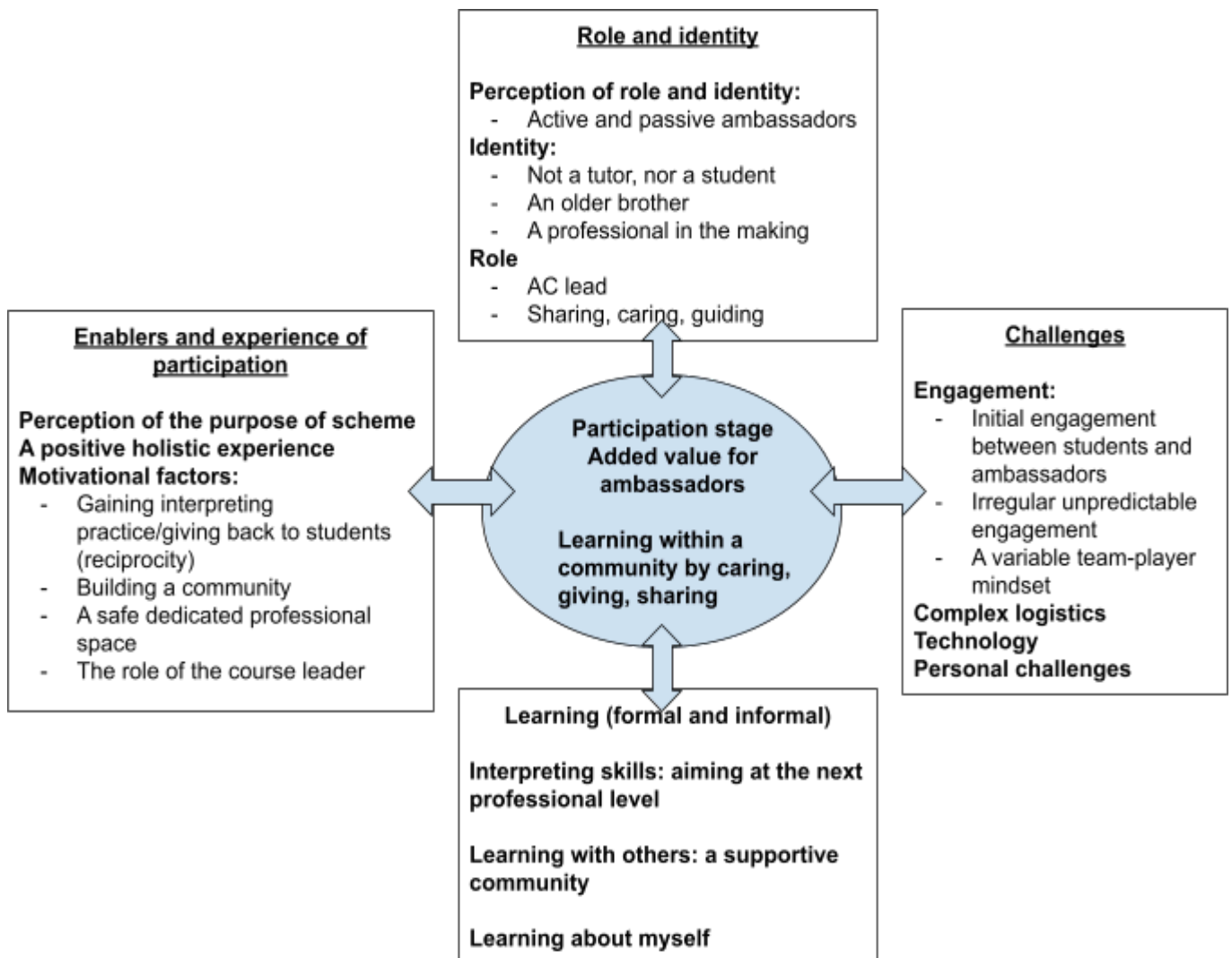
Figure 7: Participation stage. Added value for ambassadors. *Learning within a community by caring, giving, sharing*

4.2.2.1 Enablers and experience of participation

4.2.2.1.1 Perception of the purpose of scheme

Ambassadors share a common perspective that motivated their participation in the scheme: their *perception of the purpose of the Ambassadors' Scheme* matches or even exceeds their expectations. This is captured in the questionnaire that highlights that 100% of the participants in the scheme declared *their perception of the purpose of the scheme had not changed with time*; from this group 36.84% declared their perception of the scheme improved over time:

> 'It (the scheme) was more rewarding than I expected… as in the students were quite engaged and grateful and I didn't expect that initially (not sure why). Their enthusiasm was almost

contagious and inspiring as well. I would leave the interpreting suite feeling energised although it was quite late in the evening. It really helped because we are rather isolated as freelancers.' (Anonymous comment - AS Questionnaire: Question 25)

This certainty is reinforced by AC2 who reports that 'everyone went into it knowing exactly what to expect and what they would get out of it'.

4.2.2.1.2 A positive holistic experience

The holistic experience of being an ambassador on the scheme is perceived as positive; AC3 describes hers as 'one of the best years of her life' whilst AC2 continues with similar comments: 'Ehm, well, just very generally, I found the whole thing very, very, very enjoyable, and very interesting'.

The positive experience includes the enjoyment of participation but also the essentiality of participation: 'I now believe without it, my interpreting performance would deteriorate'. (Anonymous comment - AS Questionnaire: Q25)

And

'As an ambassador, in the same way as a pupilage for barristers, (one) allows the new-comers to the profession to engage and share their experiences under the supervision of those with more experience. I would go further and suggest that this should become mandatory for all alumni and help improve the profession.' (AS Questionnaire: Q35)

4.2.2.1.3 Motivational factors

During the pre-participation stage, it was demonstrated that the ambassadors' perception of the purpose of the scheme was closely connected to the enhancement of the motivational factors. Since the perception of purpose of the scheme during the participation stage matches or exceeds the ambassadors' expectations in the pre-participation stage , themes and subthemes identified in both stages are closely connected.

a. Gaining interpreting practice/giving back to students: reciprocity

What stimulates participants to actively participate in the scheme remains closely connected to two clear priorities: on the one hand, ambassadors are eager to

enhance their interpreting skills; on the other, they are keen to give back to the community of students on the MACI. Ambassador coordinators go further and state they *wish to help students make progress*. This is clearly expressed by AC1 'I was the coordinator, yea, that's right. So that was interesting to help the current students to have more practice'. AC2 identifies these two priorities are inseparable and strongly connected:

'Those were the two main things (helping students and interpreting practice). They are slightly different, but the overarching concept is that of providing help both to new students and of helping myself, ensuring that when the first job does come along, you're not so rusty that you can't even turn the mic on and read, so that was the whole appeal of it basically.' (AC2)

The involvement of the ambassadors to help students practice is demonstrated in Question 23 of the questionnaire where 65.22% of ambassadors *participated in additional interpreting practice sessions with interpreting students* and 43.48% of ambassadors organised additional practice for interpreting students face to face or remotely. In addition to supporting students' practice, ambassadors value holistic and informal support as 52.17% *met interpreting students for informal chats, interpreting practice or simply to socialise* (Question 23)*.* Furthermore, ambassadors offer students the opportunity to engage in the profession as colleagues and not as competitors, as 13.04% of them *worked with a student as a volunteer or paid interpreter* (Question 23).

Students were thankful and valued the formal and less formal contributions of the ambassadors:

'AC3 was such a dedicated ambassador. She/He was not doing it for herself, she/he was doing it for the students. She/he was someone to turn to when we needed. She/he was there every single day. This person went through what I am going through now.' (Focus group with students 2013-2014)

b. Building a community/making new friends/informal socialisation

Ambassadors and students quickly understand that together, they form a community. Students feel reassured there is a wider community of graduates who have experienced what they are going through:

> 'Knowing there was a wider network out there was important. It was nice to meet people who had just done the course.' (Focus group with students 2013-2014)

and can support them informally:

> 'Offering moral support at a time of crisis was essential. I was reassured. It was good to hear they had gone through the same thing.' (Focus group with students 2013-2014)

Ambassadors and students are fully aware their personal and professional journeys may slightly differ. But instead of being a hindrance they value what brings them together, that is the opportunity to share knowledge and learn from one another:

> 'Also I think it's a nice way of building a community in a sense, because most of us aren't going to be staffers, we are freelancers, and even us graduates we're still not at the same level as very seasoned interpreters, of course we're going to have a community with different levels, different levels of expertise, of experience, but we can all be in a professional community and learn from each other.' (Focus group 2015)

Beyond their differences, they value what brings them together; this is the case for 78.44% of ambassadors who actually describe the scheme as an opportunity t*o identify, and connect with people (they) know (*who*) are committed to interpreting studies (Question 29)*. For 66.67% of ambassadors, this commonality has allowed them to *build trust with other committed ambassadors and interpreting students* (Question 29).

In addition, 60% of ambassadors value the scheme as *a unique experience that allowed (them) to connect with other ambassadors, and (that) together (they) shared a unique experience (they) could not get anywhere else (Question 29).* For 60% of ambassadors, one of the benefits was to *obtain and share information about interpreting assignment opportunities* (Question 29). The data clearly demonstrates that both groups of participants have identified that coming together and forming a community of professionals that share a common interest is a strength and a motivational factor that engages them in their professional development.

c. A safe dedicated professional space

The university and more specifically the interpreting suite are familiar spaces. For ambassadors, it is a reminder of their learning experience when they were students. The interpreting suite represents a *safe dedicated professional environment* both students and ambassadors value.

> 'It's comforting to be here, because it's a safe environment, a place where you can practice, and when you spend that much time here, I mean, we were spending from nine o'clock in the morning sometimes until eight o'clock at night; you're here three or four times a week, that's your life basically.' (Focus group Ambassadors 25th September 2014)

For students, the interpreting suite represents a new professional environment that is both exciting as it provides a glimpse of their professional environment to be, but also daunting as they have to engage with complex technology and conference management tools. Meeting the ambassadors in the interpreting suite reassures them and provides guidance.

For ambassadors, they feel the interpreting suite is a '*dedicated professional environment' (focus group 25th September 2014)* they now know well. It symbolises the environment where their learning journey led them to their graduation. They now look at the interpreting suite as the professional context that motivates them to continue their practice, meet members of the community with a shared interest and also develop into young professionals able to accept their first interpreting assignments.

AC3 describes the interpreting suite as '*a safe inclusive environment*' that clearly demonstrates its purpose, that is to bring students and graduates together. Ambassadors report that the interpreting suite is *a safe place; it is a colleagues' environment*. This is something they experience further when they attend the Advanced Conference Interpreting course every two weeks: 'It is great to come back and practice. Nice to come back every two weeks. It sets a routine' (Focus group May 2014). Finally, the ambassadors questionnaire (Q24) identified that 92.86% of ambassadors-to-be declared one of their motivations to join the AS was to 'make the most of the technical facilities such as the interpreting suite to continue practising'.

So all in all, the interpreting suite represents a professional dedicated space that connects practice and progress. But it is also a space that symbolises mutual support and inclusiveness.

d. Ambassadors perception of the Course Leader

The Ambassadors' Scheme was set up by the MACI course leader. As former students, ambassadors know the course leader very well. However, feeling included is a factor that is perceived as key to a positive level of engagement, especially for AC3,[62] who was entirely new to the scheme and had not studied interpreting at London Met. AC3 explains that right from the beginning of her involvement in the scheme, the course leader made her *feel at home*. AC3 valued the feeling of being welcome and included as a valued ambassador. AC3 describes the Course Leader as the 'business card of (interpreting studies) at London Met*'.*

Furthermore, the Course Leader's *passion* and *commitment* are two characteristics that are identified by ambassadors as motivational and engaging.
AC3 describes the added value of the Course Leader's passion as a factor that influences their engagement:

> 'you're always very passionate, (...) When students are listening to you, they just can't fall asleep, because you keep them all awake, you know. You are open, talkative and always enthusiastic. (So we) have to feel the same way. (We) can't be depressed or lazy.'

The importance of the *Course Leader's passion* as a motivational factor to engage is reinforced by the following anonymous comment in the Ambassadors Questionnaire (Q35):

> 'The passion and the commitment of Danielle really act as a further motivation to do well during classes and professionally (...).'

Ambassadors value the commitment and the involvement of the Course Leader as unusual and motivational:

> 'I think a lot of it is down to your involvement and commitment to this course, and this is my third university course and I have never seen this before. I have never seen the commitment from the

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[62] Reminder: AC3 is an ambassador who graduated from a partner university that is included in the VC. She did not study interpreting at London Met but only joined the AS as suggested by the CL. The initiative to come to London Met was discussed between the course leader of the partner university and London Met's. It was the first time somebody external to London Met joined the scheme. Her views provide an external point of view.

tutor who has put so much time and effort into the course, and I think that is what makes a lot of difference.' (Focus group 2015)

The commitment of the CL does not only apply to the course; it also applies to the field of interpreting. As a result, ambassadors feel inspired and wish to commit and engage too:

'By doing additional things, oh, you're doing a conference or you have done the event, we want to come down to you and say to you, "yes, we have done it, but it is thanks to you, because you trained us for it, and it is great. It is really invaluable.' (Focus group Ambassadors 22nd October 2015)

As a result, ambassadors feel grateful to the course leader for motivating them to engage. They go further and anticipate their own achievements will be valued by the course leader:

'I think, collectively, from everything that we do and we manage to achieve whatever else – whatever we plan to achieve, we want to make you proud. We want to make you as an investor.' (Focus group Ambassadors 22nd October 2015)

4.2.2.2 Role and identity

4.2.2.2.1 Perception of role: passive and active ambassadors

One could argue that all members perceived they embraced a similar role and identity as ambassadors or ambassador leaders. However, the questionnaire (Question 30) demonstrates that no participant perceived (*they*) *we were all doing the same thing*. On the contrary, 66.67% perceived *some ambassadors took leading roles*, and 66.67% perceived *some ambassadors were more involved with students*. On the other hand, 27.78% of participants perceived *some ambassadors did not actively get involved and were observers in the background*. 5.56% went even further and perceived *some ambassadors were totally disengaged*. This perception of engagement by peers leads to the concept of *active and passive ambassadors*; it comes as a form of label that defines the role and identity of ambassadors in the scheme as perceived by peers. The perception of *active and passive ambassadors*

was reinforced in the data analysed from ACs and ambassadors (further analysed below in 4.2.2.3.1) who felt the level of engagement varied quite a lot:

> 'They were ambassadors (...) on the periphery who said they were ambassadors but I never really saw (...) I am not sure what exactly they thought they were doing as ambassadors.' (AC1).

4.2.2.2.2 Identity

a. Not a student, nor a tutor: a unique status

The perception of the role and identity of ambassadors is clearly defined by students who feel ambassadors 'go with the flow, they are not teachers' (Focus group May 2014). As far as they are concerned, ambassadors are *one step ahead.* This is reinforced by ambassadors who feel they are *ex-students*, *halfway between a tutor and a studen*t, *someone who has been through the experience of the course and can share it*.

Their unique identity opens a door that leads to a unique form of support:

> 'It's helpful to help the new students open up as well, because at least at first for me it was intimidating to meet just with the tutors and the lecturers, but if you can talk to another student, even if it's an older student, it's still a student; it's not a tutor, it's not a lecturer, so it's easier to ask questions, to say I didn't understand, can you explain that again, can we practice again, whilst maybe they wouldn't do it with tutors, but they'd do it with us as ambassadors, so it's really good for them as well.' (Focus group 25th September 2014)

Ambassadors do feel one of their roles is to support students in order to relieve the course leader or tutors from tasks for which they do not have time:

> 'But let's say, you know, you (the student) have a question and it's a weeknight and you (the student) want to email somebody, at least you know that person (the ambassador) well enough to know if it's OK to do that, if you're stuck or you just want an answer or just a piece of advice, not just from a tutor, something more.' (Focus group September 2014)

b. An older brother or sister

That *something more* is an added element ambassadors perceive as a more personal touch. The students' experience resonates with theirs. They describe their identity as *an older brother or an older sister* :

> '[We are not tutors], (we are) just like an older brother or older sister. I don't know how to put it. Just someone who is being very helpful and, you know, I'm here if you need me (...) [Someone]Who's been through the experience and can offer it. Yeah, because it's not only just in terms of interpreting. It's all the other stuff, you know, administration and, you know, placements for example.' (Focus group 25th September 2014)

c. A professional in the making

Ambassadors may be one step ahead compared to students, but they perceive their identity as *professionals in the making*. They also find it important to be recognised as such by the wider community of interpreters:

> 'You come (to an event at London Met) as an ambassador and people come, important people, like from NRPSI[63] or from other organisations, and Danielle introduced us as ambassadors, like don't call them students. They are not students anymore. They are new colleagues. They are ambassadors (...) and we met lots of people, and that got us to another conference later on with our research and that's helpful, because people take you seriously. It's not, oh, they're still studying (...) we've got our degree. (...) it's a good way of being there and not being considered a student, but a professional.' (Focus group 25th september 2014)

4.2.2.2 3 Role

a. Ambassador coordinators lead

Ambassadors' coordinators understand their role includes a leadership and supportive element. They *assign tasks,* they organise practice sessions and try to *engage other ambassadors to contribute*. They have an overview of the scheme, identify the challenges and feel they reinforce the tutor's voice. This is how AC1 defines her role:

> 'because ehm I'd be asked if any ambassadors could help, and I would contact the ambassadors and then I coordinate who would come and let people know (...)There were other ambassadors (...) on the periphery, who said they were ambassadors but I never really saw them. They were on

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[63] NRPSI: National Register of Public Service Interpreters

the list but I never really saw them, so I'm not sure what exactly they thought they were doing as ambassadors.' AC1

This leadership dimension is specific to the ambassadors' coordinators who think at a collective level. On the other hand, ambassadors did not feel the accountability the ambassador coordinator did. They may have observed the different levels of engagement as demonstrated in Question 20 of the questionnaire, but it did not come through as a collective concern.

b. Sharing, caring, guiding

Ambassadors believe their main role was to share the experience they had gained as students with the new cohort of students. They are aware that students have integrated the MACI and as such have engaged in the interpreting profession they now belong to.

> 'As most of us are ex-students, trying to offer the new students all the support throughout the course they're going to go through and be there for them, and share our experience of what we encountered during our course and be there for them.' (Focus group 25th September 2014)

Their way of sharing includes a caring approach that was easily perceived by students:

> '*AC3 was such a dedicated ambassador. She/he was not doing it for herself, she was doing it for the students. She was someone to turn to when we needed. She was there every single day. This person went through what I am going through now. We could integrate what we were being taught plus other things.*' (Focus group ambassadors - students 2013/2014)

Based on their experience as students, ambassadors empathise with students and know when to reassure them:

> 'They (the students) probably would ask the questions which they would feel that they've already received answers from the tutors, they still obviously didn't get it, so the reassurance that you can provide your student, because it was only a year ago that we were in the same boat and it seems terrifying for some of them'. (Focus group 22nd October 2015)

Ambassadors share with care and guide students. This level of interaction with students is rewarding for ambassadors too as they feel their role is to inspire students. This mutual benefit is clearly expressed by an ambassador during the focus group (22nd October 2015):

> 'Yeah, (...) it's nice how the students can see how, like my God, they did it, I can do it as well. We're kind of an inspiration to them as well and it's very nice.'

This collective practice is motivating for both groups. Actually, ambassadors feel that their identity as more advanced professionals entails a specific role which is to guide by demonstrating the skills they have gained during the course:

> 'I felt quite under pressure actually, because I thought, oh, I have to prove that I've learnt something, but actually it was very good because it really made me think about what I was doing and I have to perform, I have to finish my sentences, and I have to make sense in English, because I've just been telling her what she needs to do and if I don't do it then I'm a massive hypocrite. So yeah, it actually does put pressure on us.' (Focus group 22nd October 2015)

4.2.2.3 Challenges

4.2.2.3.1 Engagement

a. Initial engagement between students and ambassadors

Challenges during the stage of participation are perceived differently by the different groups of participants.

From the students perspective, engaging with the ambassadors at the very beginning of the course is not easy and requires time. They do not know who the ambassadors are as people, which makes the initial encounter challenging. In addition, this challenge is combined with the timing issue. It is the beginning of the course which can be perceived as overwhelming: 'the beginning of the course is so busy. You only get your head up in Feb, half of the year has gone' (Focus group students and ambassadors 2013-2014). The suggestions they make to overcome this challenge illustrate the relevance of this initial engagement to their learning journey:

'Could we get a presentation of ambassadors with short bios, including their hobbies. People are shy to ask. Short videos would be useful. Or going out for a drink.' (Focus group students and ambassadors 2013-2014)

Ambassador coordinators (AC) were the participants who reported challenges most vividly. Their position as leaders provided an overview of the challenges they faced whilst leading the scheme forward. More specifically, their perception of the ambassadors' and students' engagement is more collective.

b. Irregular unpredictable engagement

Earlier on, the concept of active and passive ambassadors was established as reflecting different levels of participation and engagement. Ambassadors with a low level of participation were identified by the ambassadors' coordinators. AC1 for example mentions:

'They were ambassadors (...) on the periphery who said they were ambassadors but I never really saw (...) I am not sure what exactly they thought they were doing as ambassadors.'

This reality is also mentioned by AC2 who feels some ambassadors engage as little as necessary so as to 'reap the benefits from this ambassador scheme, i.e. taking part in advanced courses or even the fringe benefits, i.e. networking'. Both AC1 and AC2 express their frustration. AC2 actually refers to fairness:

'Maybe it's me being British or anything, but it's all about being fair and sometimes people do take advantage of the opportunities that the scheme allows us to make the most of.'

However, it seems that the unpredictability and the irregularity of the engagement are what frustrates the ACs the most, as the consequences have a strong impact on the overall scheme.

c. A variable team-player mindset

As a result of the irregular and unpredictable engagement of some ambassadors, the workload was unevenly distributed. As AC2 mentions, 'it is all about sharing workload'.

'That's all down to individual people and as with many other things when it comes to individual people, it's all a bit of a lottery really, you never know how it can go, but that's the only main issue

that I can see – organisation and ensuring that everything runs smoothly without having two, three people doing all of the work.'

AC1 expressed her/his frustration focusing on the variability of the *team player mindset* of ambassadors and perhaps people in general. Her/his statement highlights the fact that some ambassadors have a more *instinctive team player mindset* and others need to be guided further:

> '*Ehm, I certainly have always been a team player and I like working with others. Ehm, I was reminded on occasion that some people are not team players. Ah, not to say that they are, makes them any nicer or not, nothing to do with that. But you realise some people don't instinctively work as a team. They, some people work for themselves, and don't, don't immediately think, oh what about everybody else. Sometimes in life I do it too much, I think, worrying about everybody else, and sometimes perhaps I shouldn't worry about everybody else on some occasions. But I was reminded that some people are not team players and when you're in an interpreting situation you have to make allowances for that and recognize that they're not an instinctive team player, perhaps just say, do you think you could do this or do that.' (AC1)*

A variable engagement has been identified as a challenge in the participation in the scheme. One of the main reasons is that each ambassador or student represents a language offer or a language need. When one person does not show up at the last minute, attendees need to overcome *complex logistics and technical challenges*.

4.2.2.3.2 Complex Logistics

Additional interpreting practice sessions are complex to organise as they involve planning the right language combinations to maximise practice for all participants who all have different language combinations. AC1 explains how irregular engagement affects the *complexity of language groups*:

> 'There were some ambassadors who came very regularly and others who came just occasionally. So the languages were not always all provided, but then there was not a lot that we could do about that.'

AC2 describes one of the main problems as:

'trying to ensure that everyone comes to a certain location, at a certain date. When additional interpreting practice sessions are finally organised, it is disappointing to feel that students did not always turn up.' *(Focus group students - ambassadors 2013-2014)*

Such a complex logistical setting requires strength and energy from ACs and ambassadors. The lack of participation at the last minute by either students or ambassadors is a great source of discouragement, which could jeopardise the whole scheme.

'It was a bit of a shame, because sometimes there was maybe no ambassador for certain students, basically they didn't have anybody listening to them.' (AC3)

4.2.2.3.3 Technology

Interpreting practice sessions took place face to face but also online. This was a natural progression as students and ambassadors were all engaged in the virtual classes with partner universities. Google Hangouts was the selected platform for the online practice. AC2 was responsible for the organisation of the online practice. The technological challenges paired up with the complex linguistic logistics represented a significant challenge that was not easy to overcome and described by AC2 as 'quite complicated actually'. AC2 describes how the limitation of the technology impacts participation:

'there's a limit to the number of people you can have in a Hangout, and then we needed to work out what languages would be used in it, how it would all work.'

In addition, the simultaneous interpreting practice online was made very difficult as listening and speaking at the same time and hearing both tracks at the same time to provide feedback is extremely difficult. Here are some of the challenges AC1 describes:

'What would they (the students) be doing? Would they go into simultaneous with their mic switched off, or would somebody do a consec (consecutive interpreting)? So that was all quite complex, quite complicated to organise the first time, at least.'

Technology for online practice adds a new layer of limitations and challenges for ambassadors but mainly for the AC that organises and leads such practice.

<u>*4.2.2.3.4 Personal challenges*</u>

When ambassadors join the scheme, they are no longer students. They need to work to earn a living. This reality often comes in the way of engagement in interpreting practice and in participation in the scheme. Making choices as to what to prioritise is a challenge. An ambassador explains how balancing the necessity of work to earn a living and interpreting practice is a challenge:

> *'Because previously I was working full-time, so I decided that I definitely wanted to [go back to work]. (...) When I had interpreting assignments, I had either to ask for leave at work or sometimes they were not happy, and I knew this is what I wanted, so I thought, (...) OK, if by the end, you know, I don't know, in like two, three, four, five years, X time, I want to be in the U.N. or somewhere I have to practise every day. It's not just that [interpreting] assignments come once a month, twice a month, I need to keep a level here and for that, it's just practice, we all know it.' (Focus group 25 September 2014)*

AC1 understands that the lack of engagement from ambassadors came from the necessity to earn money: 'There were times when people said they could come and then couldn't at the last minute, because they had a job*'.*

AC2 points out that participation is done on a volunteering basis and that *balancing earning money with volunteering* is challenging. Even though AC2 wished to participate to the scheme, earning a living often had to come first:

> 'Bills have to be paid and unfortunately as much as you want to, because as I say I'm a great believer in the scheme, but this year I just found myself unable to dedicate time to something when I could actually make money from my other work, which had to be made, and it's something which many people don't realise.'

The pressure of earning a living and *paying for bills* whilst trying to participate in the scheme to enhance interpreting practice is a reality that generates guilt. This is clearly explained by AC2 who explains how stressful it was to find enough time to dedicate to the scheme even though he really wanted to:

> 'This year I really, really felt guilty for not being able to contribute, especially when the students from last year told me, you know, it was really useful and nice having you there; so not being able to help other students – not that I'm kind of the word of God in things, but people do take something different away from every person and if something that I say or do can help shape

someone or give them input for them to become better, or have that aha moment, I did feel guilty that I couldn't manage to contribute to that.'

Participating is a voluntary activity requires time; this is why it is often challenging to participate when one has to work:

'that was stressful... it is a voluntary thing that you do. You find your own time and it was fine, but then people... once again, once we started working as sole traders or we go back to working in our previous jobs, we don't realise how much of that time it can take up.' (AC2)

This was not the case for every ambassador:

'On the one hand, it all depends on your situation. There were certain people who could dedicate their time 24/7 to it, because they were lucky enough that maybe they had a partner that supported them, they weren't the sole breadwinners; in my case, being a sole trader, being the sole breadwinner, it means that I can't dedicate as much time to some things which were voluntary.' (AC2)

Personal circumstances, especially financial needs to survive, play an important role in the experience of participating in the scheme; especially when ambassadors are so aware of the benefits of the scheme to their practice and their professional development as a professional interpreter in the making.

4.2.2.4 Learning (formal and informal)

Ambassadors are aware learning does not stop once they graduate. They know it is *a competitive market* that requires highly skilled interpreting professionals. As mentioned by an ambassador during the focus group (15th October 2015): 'from where we are now to where we have to go, I think it is a long journey'. The same participant describes the qualification as 'a very small step' even though it feels what has been achieved is 'great and large'.

4.2.2.4.1 Interpreting skills - Aiming at next professional level

Improving interpreting practice is one of the strongest motivational factors to join the AS. It then comes as no surprise that 92.86% of participants in the questionnaire (Question 28) declared they felt they *improved their interpreting skills whilst on the scheme.*

To start with, ambassadors explain they can now continue their journey without the *exam pressure,* 'you look at things different*y' (*Focus group 22nd October 2015) therefore offering a new perspective on the purpose of their learning. As a result, ambassadors first enjoy *reconnecting with basics* to *consolidate their own learning*:

> 'Personally, I'm currently finding it really useful as a way of reconnecting with basics and coming back to the things which I need to work on, and it's quite easy to forget that that practice needs to be structured and that you need to work on individual things.' (Focus group 22nd October 2015)

AC2 adds 'it was also a good way to structure a bit more my approach in interpreting', and 'sharpen language skills'. This was reinforced by 71.43% of participants in the questionnaire who declared their languages had improved (Question 28).

For ambassadors, their ambition is to improve their interpreting skills to *reach the next professional step* and therefore accept interpreting assignments:

> 'I have had some opportunities to do just a little bit of conference interpreting after finishing (the course), but not on a regular basis, and this is just a perfect opportunity at least every two weeks to get into a booth, switch on a mic.' *(*Focus Group October 2015)

and

> 'After all, we have just started a year ago, we're not there at all, at least me, so this is actually enough for me to carry on and hopefully reach the next step by the end of the year and then keep carrying on.' *(*Focus Group October 2015)

Even though interpreting practice could be done at home, interpreting in a professional setting as an ambassador enhances the improvement of interpreting skills. During the October 2015 focus group, a participant explains that interpreting in the suite feels different to 'switching on Audacity and sitting in front of my desk and staring at the mess in my bedroom.' The ambassador continues describing the interpreting suite as offering 'the state of the art booths.' The ambassador actually goes further:

> '*I find conference interpreting quite addictive so I kind of miss it when I can't feed my habit and be in the booth.*'

The continuous practice has an impact on the improvement of interpreting skills and AC3 offers an insight on the added value to her practice:

> 'OK, I improved also for my interpreting, I would say I feel much better now than I was one year ago; and I noticed, because I decided a few weeks ago to listen to a recording that I made, really, last year from English. I was like, "is it the same person?" I really noticed. It improved a lot. OK, not only passive English but also (my mother tongue), like now I can take more distance, I just have one-year practice more and it is a big difference.'

The questionnaire (Question 28) confirms the progression of interpreting skills is relevant as 71.43% of participants declared '*it helped them accept interpreting assignments they would not have otherwise accepted*'.

4.2.2.4.2 Learning with others - a supportive community

Ambassadors feel *helping students is very good* and *very useful, 'it is helping me with my practice'* (Focus Group 22nd October 2015). Furthermore, ambassadors feel under pressure to demonstrate what they have learnt to students, which contributes to their learning too. They are aware of their position as more advanced peers, showing the way forward:

> 'I felt quite under pressure actually, because I thought, oh, I have to prove that I've learnt something, but actually it was very good because it really made me think about what I was doing and I have to perform; I have to finish my sentences, and I have to make sense in English, because I've just been telling her what she needs to do and if I don't do it then I'm a massive hypocrite. So yeah, it actually does put pressure on us.' (Focus Group 22nd October 2015)

Ambassadors feel *giving advice is mutually beneficial* to students and themselves. When organising students practice, ambassadors still feel that even though they may not be practising themselves, the process of guiding students with feedback was highly beneficial to their practice. This is clearly expressed by AC2:

> 'OK, we didn't practice ourselves, but OK, of course, sometimes there were good solutions and, OK, always for vocabulary, you always learn new things; and also because the topics changed that much, so I don't know, we really learnt a lot of new things. And I think in general, like trying to listen to other people is good for you as well, sometimes, because they have good solutions that you can copy, like, 'that was great, I am going to use it next time.' But also when they make a

mistake or do something that is not that good, and then you realise maybe you are doing that yourself without realising, because for me it happens (...)so it was very good.'

In addition, ambassadors learnt from their peers during their own practice as well as the Advanced Conference Interpreting short course. AC3 thought the experience was so fruitful that '*I would start it again tomorrow. No, today!*'. She describes her attendance to the advanced conference interpreting classes as '*a good experience*', that was focused on '*practice, practice, practice*'. She further describes her learning experience:

'The Advanced was challenging, so it was really like, OK, now, it is not just practice for vocabulary or stuff, but really, I have to sound plausible. For me, also being in the booth with C, because he has a few years' experience, I learnt a lot. We helped each other a lot, (...) there was a good exchange of ideas and vocabulary, so it was good. (...)I don't like memory exercises, I admit I hate them, but so it was good, and to be honest, they are useful. So it is good that we started with that, because otherwise if I have to do them myself, I don't do them.'

Collective interpreting practice with peers and students is an opportunity to learn; for ambassadors, 'it is a way of also evaluating and assessing yourself ' (Focus Group 22nd October 2015). For students, it is an opportunity to learn from peers who are one step ahead in their learning journey and professional development:

'I think the Ambassador Scheme shows people that it is doable (...) you can do it. If you get at it, you stick to it and it is totally doable.' (Focus Group 22nd October 2015)

Earlier on, one of the roles of the ambassadors was defined as *caring, sharing, guiding.* Furthermore, one of the enablers to participation was to *build a community*. As a result, it comes as no surprise that one of the elements conducive to learning is the *collegiality* and *collaborative mindset* to support one another. AC3 describes the support as essential: '*Without this type of support,(...) I wouldn't have practised*'. She is enthused with the experience and describes how this support was essential to her:

'this kind of scheme is actually perfect; and this is the perfect type of support for me (...), the Ambassadors' Scheme, the feedback to students and the advanced conference interpreting, and going to classes.'

The support they bring one another contributes to *facing challenges together.* This could be attributed to students when they first join the course and learn something new:

> '*How did we feel, some of us, who were going into a booth at the beginning of the year, and you were looking at the console and it is like, "how on earth am I going to operate this, talk, make sense, finish my sentences, have a good posture and project myself well." There is a lot of multitasking when you first start. For somebody who is at the beginning, it seems impossible. For us, we have done it, it is doable, it is hard, but the emotional support, it is important and I think anybody, every single one of us throughout the year, we had our breaking point, I can't carry on.*'* (Focus Group 22nd October 2015)

But it also applies to ambassadors when the way forward to the interpreting profession seems unreachable. AC2 describes 'being self-employed and freelancing in the UK market (as) actually quite hard. There's nobody out there, professional organisations don't do anything or don't do enough actually.' So for him the advantages of the scheme were about *networking* and *sharing the best of practices*: 'You get together, you support each other, even on those days where you fell.'

AC2 is not alone to feel the importance of support in the learning journey. 85.7% of participants in the questionnaire declared they gained personal and professional support from others.

4.2.2.4.3 Learning about myself
85.71% of participants declared that one of the impacts on their learning from getting involved in the scheme was they *learnt about themselves as interpreters*.
78.44% felt they learnt 'how to work in a team*' and 78.57% were now able to 'engage with new interpreters*'*. The practice with students and peers was beneficial to their learning as 92.85% declared they learnt 'how to listen and give feedback to peers.' All in all 78.57% of participants declared they 'gained confidence in themselves*' and as such felt 'more ready to enter a new profession' (71.43%).

AC2 reinforces the experience of *gaining self insight about professional interaction* when working in a booth with a colleague one does not particularly wish to engage with:

'You are forced to stay for two hours in close quarters with people who you may not necessarily get on with as a person, but that also shows you the value of the scheme. In the booth, you may not work with someone you actually like that much and having to collaborate or work with maybe students who on a personal level you would never talk to, it does bring you a bit of insight into not networking per se, but into human interactions and professional behaviour, and how even if you don't get on with someone, you can still work with them to a certain degree of quality and giving the client what they want, and also being able to give objective feedback. If you didn't like a person, that doesn't mean that you had to shout at them or give them negative feedback.'

According to AC2, the AS allows you '*to take a step back*' and 'see things in a different light'. This self- reflective approach on the experience of learning together contributes to 'implementing the learning in your professional life':

'The things that you do take away from the scheme, interacting with colleagues and students, you do apply them, both in the booth, let's say, or on a more business side, when contacting clients, sometimes clients come along with ridiculous requests, you don't go and say, you know, write a rude email saying no, get out of my life. You (...) try to find a common ground.'

The '*open dialogue*' on the scheme came across as enhancing self-awareness that is conducive to *improving people's skills*. As far as AC2 is concerned, the scheme taught him to be more open as he felt he was not being judged:

'The [scheme] is a platform where you do not have to fear being reprimanded or scolded for maybe ideas which either go against the grain or for something you may just not know. You know, nobody is there to judge you, which on the one hand is good because that is how I approach colleagues.' (AC2)

Finally, the scheme was also an opportunity for self-discovery of *transferable skills* such as improving writing speeches and teaching. AC3 realised her propensity for teaching whilst learning how to give feedback to students and peers:

'So for me it was really like teaching is something that I would love to do in the future and it was good practice and a good way to start, and I was not on my own.'

4.2.3 Post participation stage: professionals actively engaged in a landscape of practice

Let's now move forward in time and understand the impact of participation in the MACI and the AS on the professional development of participants.

At this stage, participants no longer are students, nor do they participate in the Ambassadors' Scheme. This stage of the data analysis is defined as the *post participation stage.* Participants are now Professional Interpreters Newly Engaged in the Interpreting Market (PINEIM).

The data corpus is made of:

- a semi-guided interview of a group of 3 participants; they are colleague interpreters who studied together on the MACI at London Met as part timers, and were ambassadors on the AS. They will be referred to Cecilia, Maria and Anna, or under the collective name of PINEIM3.
- a semi-guided interview with one participant referred to as Elodie or PINEIM1
- participation in the AS questionnaire.

The diagram below summarises the data analysis findings articulated around 4 themes:
- *Collaborative mindset*,
- *Trust*,
- *Identity*
- *Professional activity.*

This is represented by the diagram below:
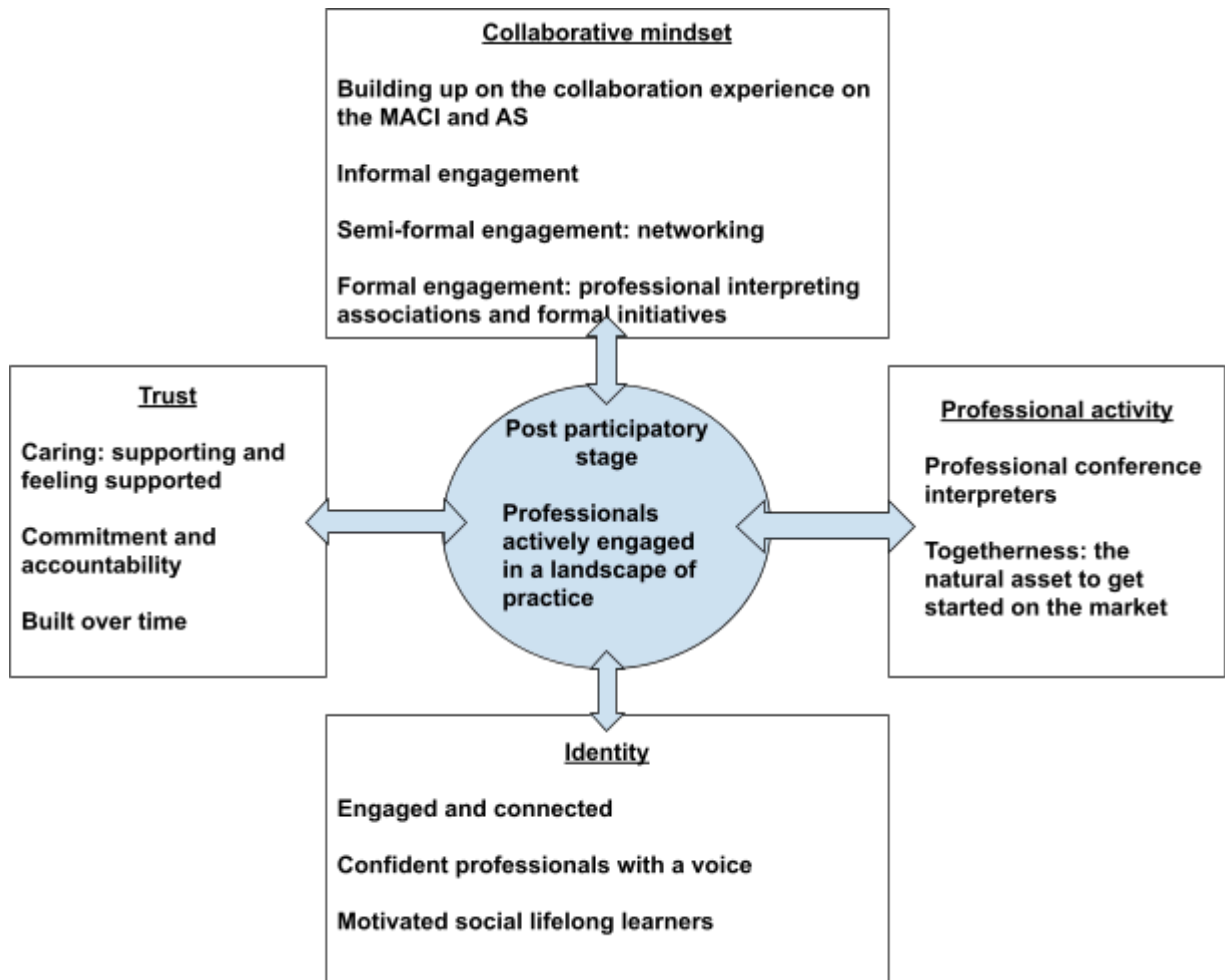
Figure 8: Post participation stage. *Professionals actively engaged in a landscape of practice*

4.2.3.1 Collaborative mindset

The first prominent feature of the data collected in the questionnaire and the interviews is that participants do not feel alone. They express their confidence and readiness to work with others in a formal and informal way. 92.3% of participants to the questionnaire declare they *have built their confidence as professional interpreters and feel ready to network both formally and informally*. Furthermore, they feel *ready to contribute to the interpreting profession* (92.8%), hence demonstrating their confidence in engaging and playing an active role with peers within the professional landscape of practice, be it informally, semi-formally or formally.

For Cecilia, Anna and Maria (PINEIM3), 'the MACI course design encourages a collaboration between students.*' One gets to know colleagues on the course and learns who to collaborate with:

> 'I think the course also encourages people to do that collaboration, to work with colleagues, and obviously you choose along the way who you are working with.' (Maria)

The MACI and AS offer opportunities for students and ambassadors to *work together, to become friends, to share the same values.* PINEIM3 have built on this experience during their professional life. This is described well by Cecilia:

> 'Over the two years [as students and ambassadors], we did so much together, we became friends as well, we've got lots in common; similar working values, but also values in life overall.'

The collaborative experience on the course took place during many stages of their learning and impacted their professional lives:

> 'Each of us would have their terminology prepared, subjects studied, so we would always be able to rely on each other, and practice at the university, out of university, giving each other peer feedback, constructive feedback as well.' (Anna)

Their collaborative approach experienced at university was beneficial to their learning. It taught them the value of their collaborative mindset:

> 'I think it was kind of the approach to work as well and I think all of us were quite time poor, because we all had our families/friends' interests, jobs, and we really didn't want to waste any time and we were never wasting each other's time, and we always found the most efficient ways of working together.' (Anna)

and

> 'it was also for pragmatic reasons, because if you needed to get something done or to prepare, I just knew if I was working with Maria and Anna it would be just completely pain-free and I could rely on them.' (Cecilia)

Finally the value of a collaborative approach during the MACI and AS is acknowledged by a participant in the questionnaire who anonymously reported:

'I have often said one of the London Met's strengths is the emphasis on teamwork. This runs counter to traditional conference interpreter training, which can be influenced by individualism and competitive rivalry. I believe mutual support and an encouraging atmosphere enhance learning and professional growth. Thank you!' (Anonymous comment in Questionnaire)

This collaborative mindset motivated PINEIMs to engage at different levels of formality.

4.2.3.1.2 Informal engagement

Their collaborative mindset transpires in very simple, informal and spontaneous decisions that are made.

This is clearly illustrated in the questionnaire (Question 31), whereby 95.83% of respondents declare they 'pass on relevant information to interpreting colleagues'. A further 25% of respondents 'encourage others to share information too'. Finally 37.5% of respondents declare they 'like to bring people together to share their expertise in interpreting.'

This kind of spontaneous informal engagement with peers is also confirmed by Elodie (PINEIM1) who simply engaged in *keeping in touch* with former students on the course. They would sometimes meet during interpreting assignments:

'I stayed in touch with other people from my course through volunteering, because I was meeting some of the former students during different volunteering assignments (...); and I worked also with one of the former students. So, yeah, I stayed in touch with quite a few of them [students and ambassadors].' (Elodie PINEIM1)

Keeping in touch with professionals (some of them former London Met students and interpreters) was an opportunity to *feel inspired* and *inspire others*.

4.2.3.1.3. Semi-formal engagement: networking

Informal collaboration is taken a step further, into semi formal engagement. This is illustrated with confidence in collaborating with peers. In the questionnaire (Question 31) 50% of respondents declare they are *attending a network of interpreting professionals; and* 37.50% of respondents (Question 34) state they *are actively involved with a group of interpreters (formal and informal).*

The semi-formal engagement of respondents can also be observed with other forms of collaborative initiatives. For example, 29.1% of respondents (Question 34) demonstrate their collaborative mindset by sharing their views in *writing on social media* (blog, articles and tweets).

Furthermore, PINEIM1 describes engaging with others as *sharing*. For her, interpreting with others as a group of volunteering interpreters is an opportunity to *share time with a group of nice people, to share a common practice and an inquisitive mindset, to have fun,* and finally to r*ecognise motivation and commitment in others*. She explains:

> 'It sounds a bit like a hippy community. It's just… the people were my friends or people I had met previously on the volunteering assignments, and I know I keep repeating the word "volunteering assignment", but it's not about volunteering, because at some point we need to be paid and to earn some money; but whenever you meet people at these events, usually you have the same mindset and you're very open-minded and you're very open to meeting new people, and whether it's a volunteering assignment (...), they share the same mindset. So they're happy to be listened to, they're happy to receive feedback, not necessarily criticisms but feedback, and they're happy to meet new people as well and new interpreters; because even if I knew most of them, some much more than others, some I only had met a couple of times, but I could tell that they were very committed and motivated. Everyone had the same objectives in mind, so I think they were all just happy to come to London [for interpreting practice] and spend a week with a group of nice people.'

4.2.3.1.4 Formal engagement : professional interpreting associations and formal initiatives

In addition to informal and semi formal initiatives, 84.61% of participants in the questionnaire (Question 31) declare 'they now feel ready to engage with professional interpreting associations*'*. Furthermore 69.24% participants (Question 31) go further and declare 'they now feel ready to play an active role within a professional interpreting association'. Actually 16.67% (Question 34) confirm 'they are currently actively involved in an interpreting professional organisation*'.* This formal commitment with professional interpreting associations demonstrates a strong desire not only to belong to an organised professional set up, but also to participate.

Formal engagement is demonstrated by taking a leap into the unknown and *leading initiatives* for interpreting peers. Elodie *organised a collaborative interpreting practice*

group, mixing interpreting and yoga. This very unusual combination was a great experience. But the idea was inspired by observing other similar collaborative interpreting initiatives. *Being inspired* by others made her *feel empowered* to also go ahead and lead the way for her own specific initiative:

> '*Interpreting practice and yoga practice is very complementary, and being able to do it every day was a bit of a challenge as well, so maybe because I had never done five consecutive days of yoga and I thought selfishly that will be the opportunity for me to try and maybe if one day I want to try a retreat then I can try it, but to me it's a bit too intense still for now, but it could be like a first step.*' (Elodie)

This form of empowerment was also experienced by Anna, Maria and Cecilia on the day of their graduation. They had supported each other as students and *built partnerships* as students and ambassadors. They decided to go further and transpose this partnership into their professional settings:

> 'It was after we graduated, and you said, I remember you said something like, 'let's work like associates.' (Maria)

This is what they did even though they realised it could be a high risk for them:

> '*But now talking about it, I think that doing it now, thinking about it, we were actually – we are actually risking our friendship, because should anything go wrong on the business front, it will be very difficult to then remain friends, I think, so we better make it work, it cannot go wrong.*' (Anna)

Regardless of the level of formality of engagement, participants in the questionnaire and interviewees have provided multiple examples of engagement inspired by their experience as students on the MACI and ambassadors on the Ambassadors' Scheme.

4.2.3.2 Trust

Trust is a word that was mentioned quite often by interviewees at this stage. The concept of trust is articulated around the following themes:

- *Caring: supporting and finding support*
- *Commitment and accountability*
- *Built over time*

When engaging in professional ventures, especially at the onset of a professional career, peers play a vital role. PINEIMs and ambassadors report that it is all about people: building trust to feel supported and supporting peers.

The questionnaire demonstrates that such a trust based supportive environment exists in the eyes of 92.3% of participants, who report (Question 31) 'they know who to connect with to get support if they faced a challenging situation in their professional life.'

For PINEIM3, mutual support is key to their professional development. Cecilia acknowledges that Maria and Anna represent a great source of support that was built over a period of time as students, ambassadors and now business partners. She says:

> 'on an emotional level, you know, we've been through ups and downs in different times, so we were able to coach and push each other, and when somebody had a weaker moment we knew how to motivate them, so that really helped as well throughout the studies.'

Anna reports they always _feel protective of each other_ and declares: 'we always had each other's back'. She explains:

> 'we all have incredibly busy lives and sometimes it was just overwhelming and it didn't go well in the booth (...) so we were able to support each other.'

Honest professional feedback on each other's performance when working with colleagues or together allows them to continue learning and improving their skills:

> 'whenever one… for example, one of us has an actual conference job, we always ask each other, so how was it, and rather than getting this glossy view, oh, it was fantastic, it was lovely… I was amazing. No it's actually, yes, it went well, but you know, oh, I had this real wobble and we really tell each other in detail how we coped under pressure and how we could actually approach it better, and also the industry tips; because whenever you interpret with someone, especially a more experienced person, you just pick up some advice and we just always kind of share it and pass it on. So this is something you won't get in any networking event.' (Anna)

Finally, Elodie explains how starting as a young professional was facilitated by the trust demonstrated by other ambassadors in the same situation:

> 'I could tell that after university, people were still in touch and the people who had stayed in London were still in touch, and some of them were working together as well and I thought that was very positive and it gives hope, in a way, because like I said, it is not always easy to start.'

4.2.3.2.2 Commitment and Accountability

Trust has been illustrated by the tangible commitment young professionals make and the accountability they feel for their work and colleagues.

As far as PINEIM3 are concerned, their commitment to each other was key to the trust that allowed their business partnership to exist. They declare they would 'never let each other down'. Cecilia explains:

> 'if you needed to get something done or to prepare [for an interpreting assignment], I just knew if I was working with Maria and Anna it would be just completely pain-free and I could rely on them. (...). I think this is something that is actually amazing and differentiates London Met a lot of that I think, because we do rely on our colleagues and our colleagues don't let us down.' (Cecilia)

As far as Elodie is concerned, the way she selected participants to her yoga/interpreting practice week was based on one criteria: 'people with good intentions':

> 'Yeah, it [organising the practice course] is a good way of networking and knowing that you're going to meet people who all have good intentions. That was also one of the main criteria whenever I was receiving people's applications. I wanted to make sure that they were people with good intentions and people who were flexible enough, so that they were not going to be high maintenance during the [audio], because I don't know… because it was a first edition, I didn't want to…if someone is a bit intense, it can change the dynamic, the group dynamic completely, so it was… I needed to either know the people or people who were recommended to me.'

4.2.3.2.3 Built over time

Trust is built over time. For ambassadors, trust was built over their time together as students and on the scheme.

> 'Yeah, (...) that trust factor, the fact that you can rely on someone and you know how they work, this is very important, but the Ambassadors' Scheme, for me, it was prolongation of the university;

so it was refining my skills even more, like a year extra of practice or research around the topics that were being covered and topics that were then prepared for the advanced practice.' (Maria)

As young professionals, many are still in touch and work together. For PINEIM3, their partnership goes beyond business, they are now friends:

'We're friends – at this point, we're also friends. What made that? I don't know. I think it's time. You build up trust. With clients, a different situation, you see how people react or behave in certain situations or instead of stabbing you, they will actually give you a hand and help you out.' (Maria)

4.2.3.3 Identity

4.2.3.3.1 Engaged and connected

Participants are now engaged in the professional landscape of interpreting or interpreting related activities. They no longer consider themselves students or ambassadors, even though the two stages are often mentioned as influential when discussing their current activity:

'The Ambassadors' Scheme has been essential for maintaining my skills after the course. It also allows students/new interpreters to keep motivated and surrounded by people in the same situation so as not to feel alone or discouraged at such an early stage. It has been a crucial part for me in making the most of what I paid for in the course which otherwise would have been half lost. I am thankful to the course leader for not thinking of short term profit (...) but long term and quality education and training for the benefits of students and their careers as interpreters.' (Anonymous comment in questionnaire)

For PINEIM1, remaining engaged with peers from the course and the AS was directly connected to feeling part of a caring community:

'Because I think it's really important to maintain relationships with the course and interpreter… people on the course and university in general. I don't know. It's more… I'd say it's because I met lovely people here I must admit and some people I'm really… they're my friends and they're part of my weekly life and I really make sure I see them regularly, and when I started working as an interpreter I really felt like I was becoming part of a community.'

4.2.3.3.2 Professional interpreters with a voice

Participants feel they belong to the professional world of interpreters; but more specifically 91.67% of participants to the questionnaire 'feel they are professional interpreters with a voice' *(Question 31).* As data previously demonstrates, participants are engaged at various levels of formality and feel connected to others. Their strong desire to engage in a professional association and even to take an active role showcase their confidence in who they have become as young professionals.

Maria express the idea that they are very different from one another, but they all have specific skills and talents that are complementary:

> 'We are very similar, but then we've got different skills and we are different. I think the three of us are very different.' (Maria)

PINEIM 1 and PINEIM3 demonstrated their creativity and confidence in leading very different initiatives that had an impact on the interpreting professional landscape. For PINEIM3, it is a collaborative business model based on trust and sharing complementary skills, which has allowed them to present themselves confidently on the interpreting market.

For PINEIM1, it is about materialising the initiative to bring novice interpreters together to a one week course focused on yoga and interpreting practice.

In both cases, these initiatives require confidence, creativity and self belief which they have demonstrated they have, even though this requires perseverance and hard work.

4.2.3.3.3 Motivated social lifelong learners

For both PINEIM1 and PINEIM3, ongoing learning is integrated in their mindset. They are fully aware their interpreting skills need continuous attention and engage with peers in initiatives that contribute to expanding their knowledge. For PINEIM3 it is about the sharing of feedback after interpreting assignments, whereas for PINEIM1 it is about creating continuous interpreting practice opportunities for her own benefit as well as others.' The *bonding* between themselves and peers is essential to their learning.

Elodie describes why the practice workshop she created was a success as everyone contributed to its success:

'Also, because people were very kind and my friends, all of them were saying, 'if there is anything I can do to help you, let me know', and so being able to delegate is a skill as well, and that was good that I could rely on them to help out. Because it was really… that idea that it was their workshop is not me organising something, it was more me allowing everyone to get together, that is it.' (Elodie)

She acknowledges the learning that takes place informally when interacting with peers:

'Lots of tips and tricks and advice were exchanged, and it always helps. During the breaks, for instance, or lunchtime, or in the evening… so whenever there were those informal moments, it is done very naturally. You say, 'ah, you should contact this person or that person. Did you do this? Did you go to that workshop? Have you heard of it?' It is a really good way of exchanging in a natural way.'

4.2.3.4 Professional activity

4.2.3.4.1 Professional conference interpreters

The questionnaire (Question 33) reports that participants are mainly engaged in the conference interpreting domain (70.83%). 29.17% of participants work as public service interpreters, whilst 54.17% work as translators and 12.50% as language teachers. It is worth noting that linguists often mix translation, interpreting and sometimes teaching, especially as they start their professional life. However, the majority of participants achieved what they had worked so hard to do, that is to work as conference interpreters.

4.2.3.4.2 Togetherness: the asset to get started as professionals

Both PNEIM3 and PINEIM1 describe *entering the interpreting market as very difficult,* the main reason being the market is 'very, very competitive.'(Elodie)*.* They respond to this challenge with a spirit of *togetherness.* This is something they had already experienced as students on the course and as ambassadors on the scheme. Maria reports: 'it was then kind of natural that we started together.' Maria explains further:

'I think there are a few kinds of aspects that contributed to us coming together. First of all, I think we are very like-minded. Since the very beginning I think in our language group we were very ambitious and we knew what we wanted to achieve, and we were working, practising together,

additional practice out of whatever we did at the university, we were preparing for exams together, we also did presentations for (...) modules together, so we actually spent a good chunk of time out of university practising together and we knew we can rely on each other.'

They knew they *shared values* and were *efficient when working together.* This was essential to them:

'I think it's very difficult and it could be very difficult to have to work with someone who I wouldn't get along with or wouldn't have similar standards.' (Anna)

For them the bond they share is essential and is essential to have a successful business;

'I think what is really important in any kind of business relationship or any kind of professional career is the many factors like qualification/education, but I think the personal dimension and the human dimension is very important and you just always have to remember you are, actually, a human and you have to form honest human bonds, so it is business, but it is not just business. It is about people, really.' (Maria)

In the case of PINEIM3, a *horizontal collaborative business model* adds *credibility* to the services they can offer. They have *come together* and *pooled their talent* to be more competitive and enter the market successfully.

However, for Elodie, *togetherness* comes in a different shade; it materialises with a strong desire to meet and get to know peers who shared a similar experience as novices trying to enter the market. She met them both socially and professionally via *volunteering* as an interpreter:

'it was also done through these volunteering assignments, because I met people who then became my friends and I was really happy to see them again during volunteering assignments. It became a way of working with these people. So seeing them on paid assignments, and that's how I started working.'(Elodie)

She then pursued her professional career using the concept of togetherness to continue practising interpreting with peers of the same language combination and get to know them socially and professionally. This is how she describes the outcome of the one week workshop she organised:

'Yeah, it was a great source of energy, so really seeing that people were really grateful and had enjoyed their week and wanted to do it again and asking me, 'do you think you're going to organise it again?' Just seeing that people had a great time is really rewarding. I think, also, seeing that some people who didn't know each other before were getting on really well. Some people were really happy to see each other again. It is really nice to see.' (Elodie)

This concludes the data analysis of the first case study.

Let's now move on to the data analysis of the second case study that represents the experience of participation in the virtual classes.

4.3 Virtual classes case study

The data offers an insight on the added value of the participation in the virtual classes in terms of learning, but also in terms of potential engagement of participants into further informal activities that would connect them into a potential community of practice. Furthermore, the data is based on the tutors' perspectives, the tutors' perspectives of the students' perspectives and the students' perspectives.

The format of the virtual class applies to all virtual classes. It is led by a detailed script[64] that carefully times each interpreting task (speech, interpretation and assessment). At the request of London Met CL, the last 15 mn of the virtual class are dedicated to an informal exchange between students and staff from both partner universities and aims at engaging participants from both universities to explore the experience of the virtual class and possibly informally extend the partnership between participants beyond the formal virtual classes.

The data expresses the views of seven tutors leading the virtual classes in their respective universities. Their views include their own perceptions, and the perceptions of their students' experience as participants. To maximise objectivity and gain a maximum insight on the truth, students from the seven participating

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[64] See appendix 2: Example of script for VC

universities and London Met were given an opportunity to reflect on their personal experience via an anonymous questionnaire[65].

4.3.1 Converging towards a common interest?
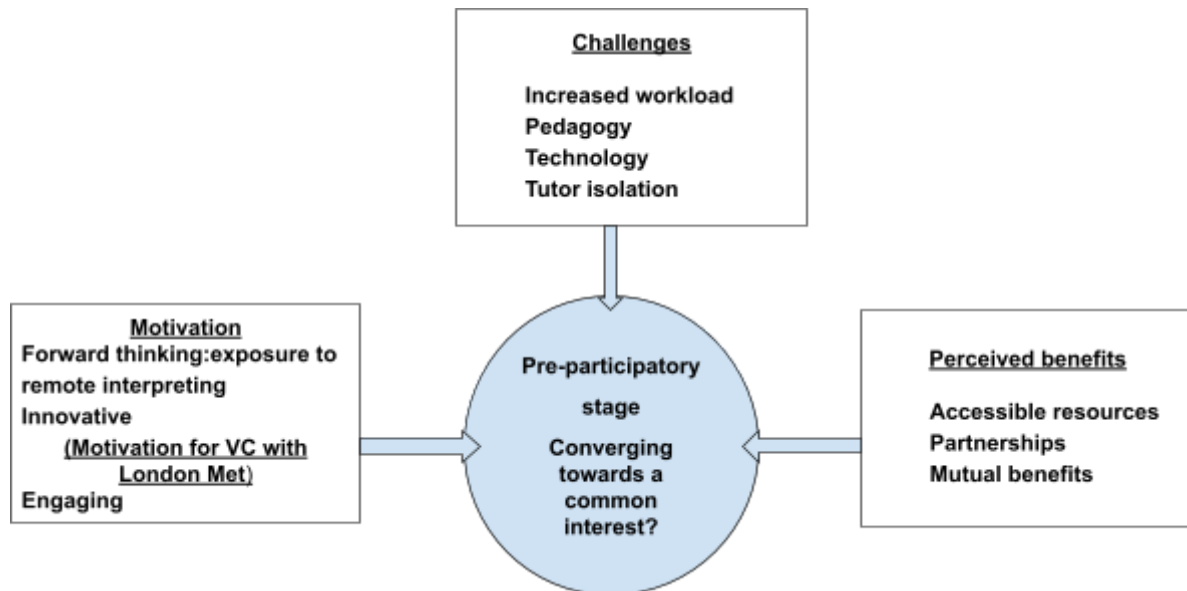
Figure 9: Before joining the virtual classes: pre-participatory stage - *converging towards a common interest*

During the pre-participatory stage, the role of leading tutors is essential as they are at the forefront of the organisation of the virtual classes. Their *motivation* is led by the *perceived benefits* for the students and for the course, despite the *challenges* they need to overcome.

4.3.1.1 Motivation

Motivation comes across as a dominant theme from all tutors interviewed. Tutors report that students perceive virtual classes as *innovative.* They offer *a new experience that motivates them:*

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[65] The link to the questionnaire was posted on the dedicated Virtual classes Facebook group "Virtual Interpreting at London Met" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/ConnectVirtualInterpreting Accessed on 24 December 2020).

'Ah oui, ils étaient très excités par cette expérience. Ils sont tellement habitués au ronron des cours qui se déroulent toujours à peu près de la même manière, dans le même cadre etc.... Que pour eux ça avait été une bonne diversion. Euh donc j'ai remarqué qu'ils étaient très motivés.' (Tutor 6)

Translation (TR): 'They were definitely excited with this experience. They are so much used to the routine of classes, the way they are set up... So for them, it was a great change. And I noticed they were highly motivated'.

The innovative format contributes to the motivation of tutors who feel that virtual classes are *forward thinking* for their students, exposing them to the experience of remote interpreting that is a relevant trend of the interpreting profession. Both students and tutors learn how to integrate new technology to the interpreting process.

'c'était des experiences interessantes pour toute une série de raisons. D'abord, du point de vue technique. J'ai trouvé que c'était intéressant que les étudiants soient confrontés à une caméra. Euh, ils doivent apprendre à gérer leur regard. Regarder non pas, être tenté de regarder le petit écran ou on voit euh... etc... mais regarder la caméra. Donc ça c'est déjà pas évident pour les étudiants. Ce n'était pas davantage évident pour moi. Nous savons tous que les vidéoconférences deviennent une pratique courante dans les institutions. Et donc je me suis dit que, entre autres, c'est d'abord un bénéfice que de permettre aux étudiants d'apprivoiser progressivement cet outil moderne qui va certainement se généraliser.' (Interview T6)

TR: 'This is quite an interesting experience for many reasons. First of all, from the point of view of technology. I thought it was quite interesting for students to face a camera. They had to learn where to look. Looking at the camera rather than being tempted to look at the screen. That was not that straightforward for them, let alone for me. We all know that video conferencing will get more popular with the institutions. So I thought that one of the benefits would be for students to get used to this new tool that will soon become the norm.'

In addition, tutors mention specific motivational factors to engage in virtual classes with London Met. First, VCs are bilateral, (only involving two partner universities) in opposition to multilateral VCs that involve multiple partners. Then, tutors report that students seem to perceive VCs with London Met as less formal, offering an opportunity for students on both sides to engage with one another.

154

'The experience is really great both for trainers and for the students, because our students are always asking when are we going to have our next virtual class with London Met, because they know that it is actually a very interactive experience, unlike sometimes it is with the [international] institutions when it is more formal lessons and fewer opportunities to speak themselves, and between themselves also because it's more about… of course it's really very precious to get the feedback from the experienced interpreters who work for the institutions, but as important it is for the students to talk within themselves and to see what the students at a partner university think or do, how they perceive this virtual kind of training or support, so that is why our students very much like doing virtual classes with you.' (Tutor 4)

Finally engagement in virtual classes with London Met was motivated by a common pedagogical approach.

'(...) we wanted to do it [VC] bilaterally with the universities, (...) we were always very happy to do it with you, because you also seemed to be very keen on using these technologies, helping students and helping trainers giving added value opportunities to the students, so I think our attitude was pretty much the same.' (Tutor 5)

4.3.1.2 Benefits

The perceived benefits of VCs enhance the motivation of tutors who are catalysts in the organisation of virtual classes.

The benefits include access to resources that are not always available within the university, such as native speakers of certain languages who can then provide speeches or feedback to students:

'Ce sont des profs de langues qui se sont recyclés à un moment donné dans la traduction, qui font de la traduction mais qui ont une petite expérience dans l'interprétation sur le marché du travail. Donc vu ces contraintes, parce que ce sont des contraintes quand même, une classe virtuelle dans laquelle on peut écouter un discours prononcé par un locuteur natif, c'est très important parce qu'on n'en dispose pas toujours. Je dirais même qu'on n'en dispose pas du tout.' (Tutor 1)

TR: '[staff] are language teachers that at some point joined the field of translation. They work as translators and gained some interpreting experience on the market. Taking these constraints into

account, as no one can deny these are constraints, virtual classes play an important role when they offer access to a speech delivered by a native speaker. It is important as we do not always have native speakers [in some languages]. Actually we don't have them at all.'

For some tutors, access to resources remotely provides an opportunity for students to *save money on travel expenses* and still *access expert advice*.

> 'That is especially important in crisis times to have this continuing virtual cooperation with partners to show the students that the opportunities are still here. It doesn't matter how much money you have to spend to travel somewhere, you can still practise with your peers, ask advice from experts, staying here. I definitely think virtual classes have a bright future and I will do everything I can to contribute to this bright future.' (Tutor 4)

Some tutors consider bilateral classes as *partnerships* that provide *mutual benefits,* such as sharing experience *on equal footing* with peers; students meeting other students and tutors exchanging on pedagogy.

> 'When we are having bilateral partners, universities, it's different because we are on the same level, we have the same problems, and the students can talk to the students, while we the trainers can exchange various… so we can discuss what difficulties, pedagogical difficulties.' (Tutor 4)

Finally, tutors report that students value being assessed by professional interpreters. It adds credibility to the feedback they receive and the feedback previously provided by tutors. Tutors understand the students' perception even though they often mention the pedagogical angle needs to be improved further. However, during bilateral classes, students tend to self assess and *compare their interpretation to peers*:

> 'Ils se comparent à d'autres étudiants. Ils se disent : "Ils sont meilleurs que nous" ou bien : "Ils sont moins bons que nous".' (Tutor 1)

> TR: 'They compare themselves to other students. They say to themselves: "they are better than us" or "they are not as good as we are."'

4.3.1.3 Challenges

The *motivation* stimulated by the clear *benefits* outweigh the *challenges* which are real and sometimes expressed as *a love and hate relationship with virtual classes.* It is important to note that the data illustrates students as the main beneficiaries of virtual classes. However, challenges mainly relate to tutors.

To start with, all tutors note the increased *workload* mainly due to the *technical support* required to run a virtual class and the *adapted pedagogy*:

> 'All of your effort concentrates on the technical aspects; do we have a room, do we have a technician, can we connect and we should prepare more for the pedagogical aspect?' (Tutor 5)

There is quite a lot of frustration expressed regarding the pedagogical approach adopted during VC, especially in how to provide feedback:

> 'I mean, it's like fashion, everybody wants to do virtual classes, but I think that virtual classes need to be well structured within your curriculum and follow progression, and that's very difficult, because not only your students are involved, but the other end is involved too – students, teachers, and of course the EU institutions trainers that do not necessarily follow your students during the whole process, so it's very difficult for them and sometimes it's a bit shocking for us.' (Tutor 5)

Engaging other colleagues in the participation of virtual classes is not always easy and tutors need to be highly motivated to keep going.

> 'Mais là c'est en direct et on voit la personne qui vous regarde aussi par le biais d'une caméra. C'est la raison pour laquelle, moi personnellement, je suis très enthousiaste. Mais je suis, je pense la seule et la première et la dernière enthousiaste de ce type de classe que j'essaie d'organiser assez souvent - disons une fois par mois, parfois c'est deux fois - qui demande beaucoup de travail, de mise en place. La préparation du script, c'est quelque chose qui prend du temps, beaucoup de contact, beaucoup de papier mais je le fais. Je le fais.' (Tutor 1)

> TR: 'We are there live, connected to a person that looks at you via the screen. This is why as far as I am concerned, I am all for it. But I think I am the only one who is keen to organise such classes. I try to set them up on a regular basis - let's say once a month, sometimes twice - that is quite labour intensive. Preparing the program takes time, you need to get in touch with lots of people, there is a lot of admin. But still I do it, I do it.'

The success of the pre-participatory stage depends on tutors who are the catalysts behind each virtual class. They need to balance their challenges with the perceived benefits for students.

There is a clear difference compared to the perceived benefits of virtual classes with the international institutions, who provide an insight on potential professional growth of each individual. On the other hand, virtual classes with partner universities organised bilaterally seem to offer further opportunities for pedagogical exchanges between colleagues and students. However, it is worth noting that *converging towards a common interest* is challenging.

4.3.2 Participation stage: added value

At this stage, the virtual class is set up and running. Tutors and students from both partner universities are connected via video conferencing. Technicians are supporting the virtual class on site or remotely.

The overarching *added value* theme is subdivided into 4 sub-themes as illustrated in the diagram below:
- *Role and the identity of participants*
- *Enablers of participation*
- *Learning*
- *Challenges*
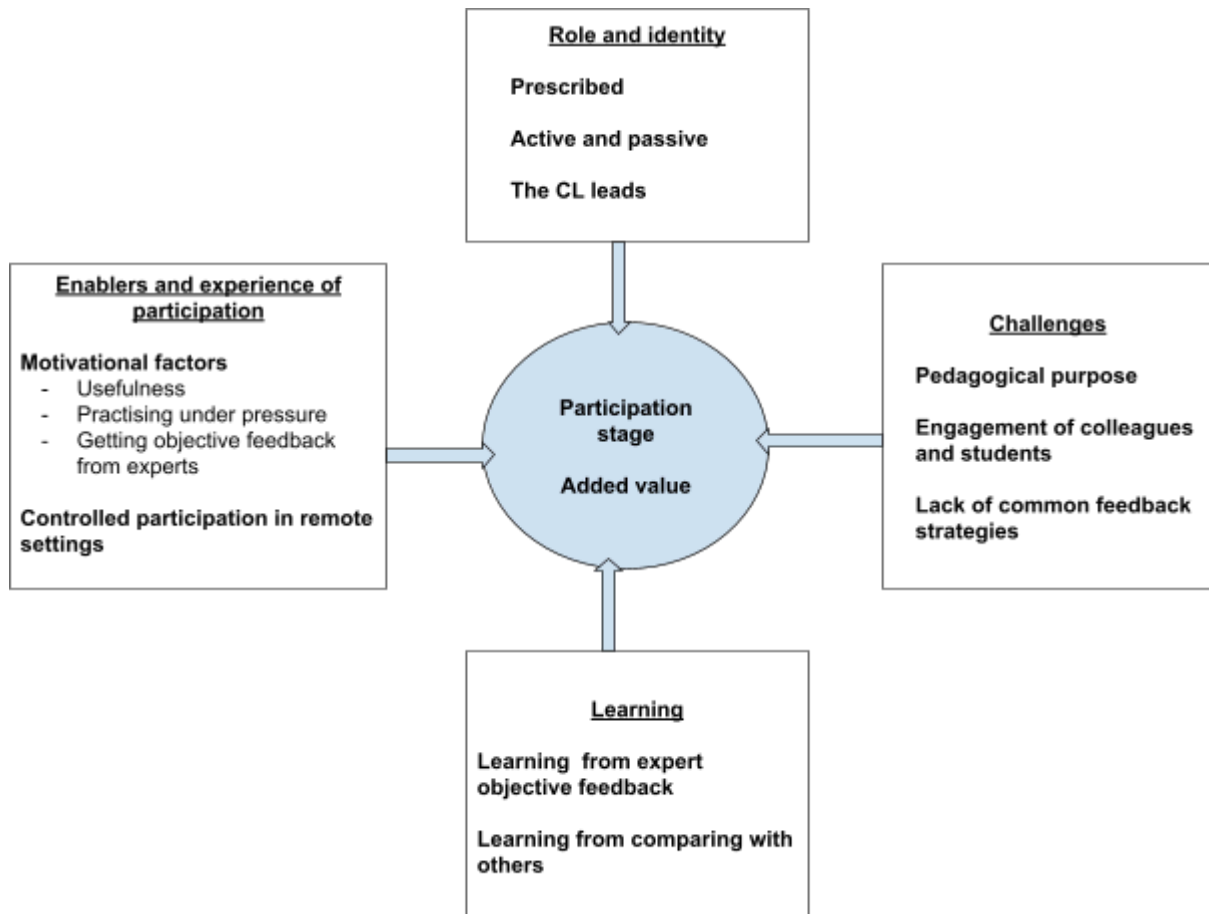
Figure 10: Participation stage - *Added value*

4.3.2.1 Role and identity

4.3.2.1.1 Prescribed

Virtual classes are carefully designed and based on a model initially set by the interpreting services of the European Commission (DG SCIC). It is materialised by a script which prescribes the roles of participants as follows:

a.   A speaker offers a speech in a language

b.   A student from the partner university interprets

c.   A student from London Met interprets

d.   A tutor from London Met university offers feedback to partner university student

e.   A tutor from partner university offers feedback to London Met student

The same format is repeated 3 times with a different speaker. This formal level of activity is visible on camera and recorded. In parallel, other students interpret off camera and may provide feedback to peers located on their site.

The roles are not negotiated, they are agreed in advance. Participants are appointed in their role by the course leader/host tutor. The decision is guided by the language combination of participants and the level of expertise. The script where roles are defined is considered to guarantee efficiency:

> 'Les classes virtuelles bilingues sont très utiles, très productives (...) Ça veut dire qu'on ne perd pas le temps, tout est organisé, tout est calculé comme dans le script. On garde les heures, les minutes et tout est là. Tout est là.' (Tutor 1)

> TR '[bilateral] virtual classes are very useful, very productive (...) There is no time wasting, everything is organised and calculated according to the script. We stick to the timing, it is all there [in the script], it is all there.'

4.3.2.1.2 Active and passive roles

Roles are prescribed and grouped as active and passive, as presented in the table below (Question 9)

I gave a speech	33.33% (7 participants)
I interpreted formally	61.90% (13 participants)
I interpreted informally with peers	71.43% (15 participants)
I provided feedback formally	9.52% (2 participants)
I provided feedback informally with peers	42.86% (9 participants)
I observed	76.19% (16 participants)

Table: Question 9: prescribed active and passive roles of participation.

For participants with active roles, they interact formally on camera and are visible to both university participants. As they speak, interpret or provide feedback, all

participants are able to assess the potential value of further collaboration (or not) with the active participant on screen. So active participants play an important role in the motivation of other participants to collaborate further beyond virtual classes.

Actually, in question 17 of the questionnaire,

- 33.33% of participants declared that their experience during the virtual class 'made them think of the added value of connecting with other interpreting students'.

- 22.22% of participants declared 'it was exciting to see other interpreting students willing to collaborate'.

- 33.33% of participants declared that during virtual classes, they 'saw the potential of practising with other interpreting students'.

- 22.22% of participants felt they 'could offer something other interpreting students needed.'

4.3.2.1.3 The host tutor/course leader leads

The host tutor/course leaders from both universities lead the session, facilitating the speakers and interpreters to perform, and the tutors to provide feedback. The rigid format of the script added to the remoteness of the learning environment generates a tutor-led fairly formal session. Actually, question 13 of the questionnaire demonstrates that participants were split in their perception of the formality of bilateral virtual classes, with 50% declaring they perceived virtual classes as 'very formal to formal' and 50% declaring they perceived virtual classes as 'not very formal to informal'.

The formal set up contrasts with the last 15 mn of the virtual class dedicated to a more free style approach to explore collaboration further. Finally, participants from both universities are invited to continue their collaboration further if they wish to on the Facebook group 'Virtual Interpreting at London Met'.

Tutors here try to lead a student-centred session whereby students are invited to speak spontaneously to each other. It is at this stage that the course leader opens the doors to a potential collaboration mindset that could lead to a community of practice approach. The session is led by the London Met course leader and supported by the host tutor from the other university. This is an essential role as further collaboration between participants follows this initiative. At this stage the

identity of participants is very much defined by their belonging to the course and university.

4.3.2.2 Enablers and experience of participation

4.3.2.2.1 Motivational factors

Practising interpreting in a remote setting such as the virtual classes allows students and staff to be exposed to learning opportunities that are highly valuable for their professional development, and which act as enablers of participation.

a. Usefulness

During the pre-participatory stage, the data demonstrated that the tutors *perceived that the benefits* of the virtual classes were worth the *challenges* they were obliged to face. Their motivation was based on the usefulness of *exposing students to remote interpreting*, identified as the new professional trend. For tutors, interpreting in a remote setting, and accessing speakers and assessors with different language combinations enhance the usefulness of virtual classes:

> 'I think it does a very good job in terms of preparing students for their possible future career tracks, because like it or not, but in future, most of the interpreters will be connected with remote interpreting and virtual classes help a lot in preparing them in making them not afraid of this kind of interpretation, so if we are not involved in interpreting virtually, then for them when they become working interpreters, it's going to be kind of a challenge whilst having this experience, we are not afraid of any kind of interpretation.' (Interview Tutor 4)

In addition students also expressed the usefulness of virtual classes as a motivational factor. In Question 15 of the questionnaire, 76.47% of participating students declared 'virtual classes motivated them to practise interpreting with others rather than by themselves.' Furthermore, 70.58% of participating students declared that 'virtual classes offered a unique opportunity to see what they could achieve at a precise point in their learning'. Students summarise the usefulness of their participation in the virtual classes in Question 14, with 64.7% declaring 'that virtual classes had been useful (35.29%) to very useful (29.41%) in their learning journey to become an interpreter.'

b. Practising under pressure

Students are exposed to quite a prescribed set up where they have to perform interpreting before their peers. Their performance is then compared to that of an interpreting student from the partner university; it is finally assessed by tutors who do not know them. The pressure is quite high. Even though this is stressful, students feel virtual classes provide the added value of coping under pressure that face to face teaching does not provide.

> 'Students seem to love it, not because they… not because they learn, I have to say, but because it's stressful and this is a component of their learning process that they lose very soon in face to face classes, because once you've done a class with the same trainer 10 times, you tend to be more comfortable with the trainer, so it's very good for stress management.' (Tutor 5)

This exposure benefits students and tutors.

> 'C'est utile parce qu'on découvre ces étudiants sous un jour nouveau. On les voit dans des situations plus stressantes que les situations de tous les jours et qui ne sont pas des situations d'examen.' (Tutor 3)

> TR: 'It [Virtual classes] is useful because we see our students from a different angle. We see how they perform during situations that are more stressful than usual and that are not exam situations.'

c. Getting objective feedback from experts

Tutors perceive that students value the feedback they are provided when it is delivered by a tutor who does not know them. The feedback is then perceived as more objective and often more valid. It acts as a true representation of their interpreting performance. It also reinforces the credibility of what their own tutor had already mentioned.

> 'Et je remarque que quand la personne étrangère qui les écoute pour la première fois dit quelque chose qui a deja ete dit par les professeurs, tout à coup je vois l'étudiant qui se dit "Ah oui je dois faire attention à ça" … parce que le professeur est parfois suspect d'être comment dire d'être un peu subjectif … les étudiants s'imaginent que les professeurs les trouvent antipathiques … ou qu'il dit n'importe quoi… Tout à coup entendre dire la même chose par quelqu'un qui ne les connaît pas, la ça fait VRAIMENT de l'effet!' (Tutor 6)

TR: 'I notice that when the assessor they don't know listens to them for the first time and says something that has already been mentioned by their own tutor, I can see that all of the sudden the student thinks oh yes, I need to pay attention to that" … because students sometimes suspect their tutor to be biassed … students feel tutors don't like them… or speak nonsense… So all of a sudden, when students hear somebody who does not know them give the same feedback, that makes a true impact.'

This is confirmed by Question 15 in the questionnaire, where 76.47% of students declared 'virtual classes allowed them to get feedback from other experts in the field'.

4.3.2.2.2 Controlled experience of participation in remote setting

The script may be perceived as a controlled way to participate. It is not flexible and predicts who speaks when, and for how long. It does not leave room for spontaneous debates. On the one hand it is a limitation, but on the other hand it offers some predictability in the complex logistics of remote interpreting practice both formally online and also informally at local level. It provides a flow.

4.3.2.3 Learning

The experience of virtual classes is designed as a learning opportunity for participants to practise their interpreting skills online, in a remote environment, before a number of peers and assessors that do not know them. This learning opportunity is one of the strong motivational factors expressed by tutors at the pre-participatory stage of the virtual classes. During the participatory stage, *usefulness* has been perceived as a motivational factor to participate. So one can deduct that learning is taking place during virtual classes. However there are two aspects of learning that come through quite clearly in the data.

4.3.2.3.1 Learning from expert objective feedback

The exposure to interpret to a panel of experts is a learning opportunity that reinforces the students' acknowledgement of feedback. This was identified as a motivational factor to participate in the virtual classes.

'Un autre avantage c'est que les étudiants reçoivent des commentaires de personnes qui ne sont pas leur professeur. Donc ça permet quand même d'élargir le champ des personnes qui commentent.' (Interview Tutor 6)

TR: 'another advantage is that students get feedback from people who are not their tutors. So it widens the field of people that provide feedback.'

4.3.2.3.2 Learning from comparing with others

The data shows that both tutors and students learn from their participation in virtual classes, mainly from comparing with peers. The synchronous delivery of the virtual classes facilitates this process as:

'Déjà, on peut se comparer à eux, donc la comparaison avec d'autres. On n'a pas besoin de partir, on n'a pas besoin de se confronter sur place : on le fait en ligne.'

TR: 'First, we can compare with one another, so comparing with others [is important]. We do not need to travel, we don't need to compare onsite: we do it online.'

When tutors listen to the way colleagues give feedback, they make up their mind about what they like or dislike.

'C'est utile aussi, on peut voir comment les autres dans leur feedback, voir ce qu'on aime, ce qu'on n'aime moins, ce qu'on peut offrir aux étudiants (...) J'apprécie personnellement, le fait qu'en écoutant les étudiants parler après la classe virtuelle, on peut s'améliorer soi-même. On voit ce qu'ils n'aiment pas parce qu'ils ne se cachent pas de dire tout ce qu'ils pensent.' (Tutor 3)

TR: 'It is also useful to see how others give feedback; you can see what you like, what you not so much like, what we can offer students (...). I really enjoy listening to what students say once the virtual class is over. I can then learn from what they say. I can see what they did not like as they are quite straight forward about it.'

Students do the same as they listen to the interpretation of their peers and the feedback provided by tutors who do not know them.

'It's very good for also comparing your development with the level of other students and it's also very good to reinforce some of the things that our trainers have already taught, and when they

hear the same thing said again to them and stressed to them, it's brilliant for us to do our own training.' (Tutor 5)

But students also learn as they compare with peers who share a similar learning journey. It is somehow reassuring for students to feel they are not alone to struggle.

'Et les étudiants avaient bien aimé. Ils voyaient leurs collègues étudiants de l'autre institution. Pour eux c'était assez sympa pour eux aussi de voir qu'ils étaient tous logés à la même enseigne, tous un peu anxieux, tous en train de faire des efforts pour atteindre le niveau requis.' (Tutor 6)

TR: 'Students enjoyed it [the virtual class]. They saw their fellow students from the partner university. For them, it was quite nice to see they were all experiencing a similar situation, all feeling worried, all trying their best to reach the right level of skills.'

4.3.2.4 Challenges

4.3.2.4.1 Pedagogical purpose of VC

The purpose of the virtual class seems to be clear from the onset. This is illustrated in the *perceived benefits* of the virtual classes that transpired during the pre-participatory stage. However, the pedagogical model of the virtual class as experienced by participants has been questioned by tutors:

*'I think that the future of interpreting is evolving towards distance interpreting and remote interpreting has to be taught to the students, so virtual classes are a way of teaching these new modes of interpreting, but I am not quite sure about the virtual class per se.' (*Tutor 5)

Tutors feel there is some *uncertainty* regarding the pedagogical purpose of the virtual classes. Is it interpreting practice with the purpose of making progress or is it mainly an assessment? Further clarity would help design the learning objectives.

'On est dans le cadre d'un cours ou d'un examen... où il faut préciser justement, est-ce que c'est une mock conférence comme on dit, est-ce que c'est une simulation de conférence, est-ce que c'est un cours?' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'Is this a lesson or an exam… we should be more specific… is this a mock conference as we say… a simulated conference, or is it a lesson?'

Tutors feel there is a need for further pedagogical reflection on the purpose of the virtual classes. As classes are delivered remotely with the benefit of exposing students to the remote environment, they could be much more than a replica of face to face teaching. Further pedagogical reflection on the format of virtual classes could enhance learning, especially as virtual classes represent a heavy workload for tutors.

> *'Basically, the only difference is that some of the students or the trainers are far away, but we do the same thing and I don't think that we should do the same thing. I think that we could do a lot of things to… even three per class and have them do some exercises then and then even if they don't do the exercise, like consecutive in the virtual class, for instance have a brainstorm or have them giving feedback to one another, we do the same in our virtual class than in our face to face setting. I think that's a pity, because a virtual class, it's not expensive in money, but it costs a lot of effort and it involves many persons at the same time, coordinating the technicians. It's expensive in that way, so we should get more rewarding outcomes from a virtual class than from… than we are now. We are doing the same, but basically it's the same, we should try to prepare something more interesting, create other activities.' (Tutor 5)*

The format as presented does not fully engage tutors and students in an in-depth understanding of the learning journey. Setting clear objectives would enhance learning and a more student centred approach.

> 'I do like to set a clear objective for the class and for the students in particular, according to their level and according to their earlier performances, which is very difficult, because I have some students who do not necessarily have to have the same level and the same objectives than the students on the other side.' (Tutor 5)

4.3.2.4.2 Engagement of colleagues and students

In the context of virtual classes, participating is different from engagement. All interviews of tutors demonstrated their *motivation* to engage in this new venture even though they had to overcome *challenges* - which was portrayed during the pre-participatory stage - one being *isolation*. It looks as if colleagues struggle to engage during virtual classes, for example when required to spontaneously provide feedback.

> 'Je regarde mes collègues qui participent à la classe virtuelle, parce que je les invite toujours à être là s'ils ont la combinaison. Je ne sais pas pourquoi ils ne sont pas tellement intéressés. Ils

n'ont jamais, en tout cas durant la classe, ils n'ont jamais rien à dire, et moi je les invite à prendre la parole, de faire des commentaires. Mais là, ils ne veulent pas et je me demande pourquoi. Peut-être qu'ils sont un peu trop… Non, non, non, je ne comprends pas. Je ne comprends pas.Je sais qu'en classe normale, ils ont des choses à dire, mais là c'est comme une barrière physique, alors que c'est normal. Ils ne sont pas encore peut-être habitués.' (Tutor 1)

TR: I look at colleagues who are taking part in the virtual class as I always invite them to participate if they have the right language combination. I don't know why but they are not that interested. During the virtual class, they never have anything to say, and I invite them to take the floor, to make comments. But it is as if they don't want to and I wonder why. Maybe they are a bit too…. No, I really don't understand. I don't understand. I know that during a normal class, they have things to say. It is as if there is a physical obstacle, when actually it is quite normal. Maybe they are not used to it yet.

Actually Tutor 2 suggests that *colleagues need training to engage in virtual classes*.

'J'avais l'intention en début d'année universitaire de faire une formation générale. J'en ai parlé en réunion de prérentrée, mais je voulais faire une formation systématique (...) Donc voilà, donc progressivement, j'implique mes collègues.' (Interview tutor 2)

TR: 'At the beginning of the academic year, I intended to organise training [for virtual classes]. This is something I presented at a meeting to prepare for the new academic year. I wanted the training to be systematic. (...) So there you are, little by little, I get my colleagues involved.'

Students participate in virtual classes according to the role they have been provided by the script. But there again, their level of engagement may be questioned when they are given the opportunity to communicate freely with one another at the end of the session. The level of formality generating a tutor led session may be an influential factor.

4.3.2.4.3 Lack of common feedback strategies
Gaining feedback from a tutor that does not know the students has been identified as a benefit and motivation by students and tutors. However tutors report that giving feedback to students is a sensitive issue for colleagues.

'Moi, ce qui m'a frappée, et ça a été confirmé en fait par les collègues qui ont participé à ces classes virtuelles, (...) la question du feedback est très délicate.' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'What really surprised me, and this was confirmed by colleagues who participated in virtual classes, is that providing feedback is a very sensitive matter.'

Colleagues from partner universities have different styles of providing feedback. They worry whether their feedback may upset colleagues and their students. It is perceived as an uncomfortable situation that may demonstrate a lack of trust between colleagues of different institutions.

'Et si tu veux, de manière un peu caricaturale, je dirais que j'ai assisté à deux extrêmes, en fait, soit les collègues ne font pas de feedback, soit les collègues ont peur d'être trop agressifs ou méchants dans leur feedback par rapport à des étudiants qu'ils ne connaissent pas ou des étudiants des collègues voisins. Donc bon, donc du coup, ça reste courtois et poli, mais ça n'apporte pas grand-chose aux étudiants.' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'To stretch a point, I'd say that I have seen the two ends of the spectrum; as a matter of fact, either colleagues do not have any feedback to give, or they worry their feedback will come across as too straight forward or nasty to students they either do not know or students who study with colleagues. So well, as a result, it is all nice and polite, but it is not of great value to students.'

There is a lack of common harmony in the strategy to provide feedback that is influenced by a potential lack of communication or even trust between colleagues.

'Quand tu te retrouves avec peut-être deux fois plus d'étudiants parce qu'il y a le groupe d'un côté et le groupe de l'autre, deux fois plus d'enseignants parce qu'il y a un enseignant d'un côté et de l'autre, voire quatre fois plus d'enseignants, parce que comme c'est un peu nouveau on se met deux d'un côté et voire plus, qu'il y a des sensibilités, que quelquefois, les enseignants se connaissent ou ne se connaissent pas, s'apprécient ou ne s'apprécient pas, enfin, ont des préjugés ou pas de préjugés, bref, tu peux rajouter toutes les couches que tu veux, mais n'empêche que c'est ça, ça devient…' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'When there are twice as many students because there is a group on one side and a group on the other side [of the screen], twice as many colleagues because there is one colleague on one side and one on the other side, sometimes even four tutors, because as it is all a bit new to

everyone, there can be two colleagues on one side even more… this creates sensitive issues as sometimes tutors know each other or not, like each other or not, then may have prejudices or not… and it goes on… well then, it becomes…'

4.3.3 Post participation stage: outcome - disconnect

The virtual class is now over. The screens are turned off. What happens after the virtual class? Will participants use the experience of the virtual class to engage with one another, or as a group which could potentially develop into a social learning space, or even a community of practice with some unique features?

The overarching theme describes this third stage as a *disconnect*, an absence of follow up connections. The semi structured interview with tutors allowed further discussions to explore what happened after the virtual classes, how they perceived their students in the context of their course, educational system and professional development in the country. The questionnaire will present the experience of the post participation - as perceived by London Met students.
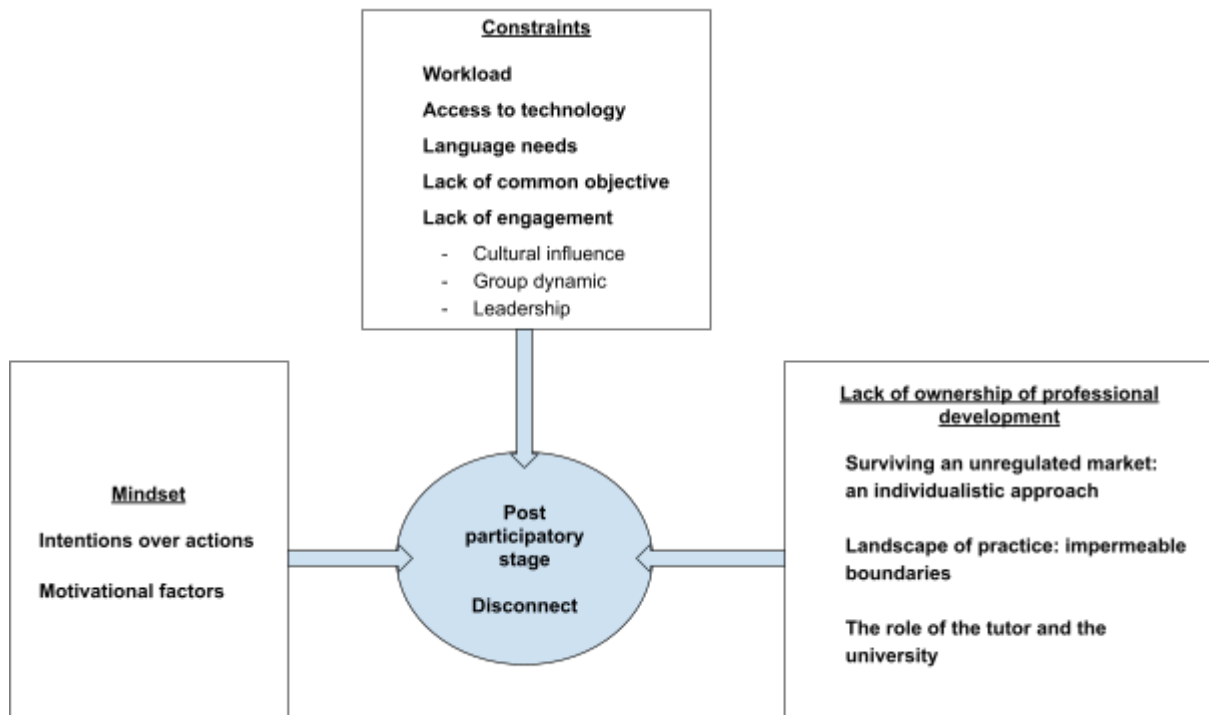
Figure 11: Post Participatory stage *- Disconnect*

4.3.3.1 Mindset

4.3.3.1.1 Intentions over actions

Tutors report that in all cases, virtual classes are followed by an immediate debriefing. It seems that at the stage of debriefing, three tutors note that students intend to connect with London Met students.

> 'with the virtual classes, when we disconnect, we always do a debriefing (...). I remember them saying that they [the students] had the intention to follow up...' (Interview Tutor 5)

However, no tutor has any further information as to whether their students joined the dedicated Facebook group.

In the questionnaire (Question 18) 62% of London Met students confirm they *intended to connect* with their counterparts whereas 31,25% were *unsure*.
The data shows that even though there does not seem to be an overwhelming desire to connect with one another, a significant number of students had the intention to connect.

Furthermore, Question 19 of the questionnaire demonstrates that only 11.76% of London Met students connected with peers from partner university, whilst 52.94% declared they did not. 11.76% declared they 'tried but no one replied'. 17.65% 'intended to but did not.'

One can see quite a difference between the intention of connecting (62%) and the actual deed of connecting (23.52%).

4.3.3.1.2 Motivational factors

Additional opportunities were provided to respondents to identify whether further encouragement from alumni or members of staff would have made them connect. But the figures did not exceed 5.88% of respondents, with a slight increase to 11.76% of participants who said they would have felt encouraged to do so if 'members of staff had taken the leadership in making connections possible'. One can deduce that support from others after the virtual classes would not have had a significant impact on the decision to connect. One can surmise the influential factors that could have

encouraged students to connect would have been found far earlier on, perhaps during the pre-participatory stage.

Question 21 of the questionnaire provides further understanding of the motivation of one in four students (23.52%) who reached out to connect with peers.
-        66.67% of them declared they wanted to:
   -        'practise languages'
   -        'practise interpreting'

-        60% of them declared they wanted to:
   -        'Chat about interpreting'
   -        'Exchange with other experts in the field'
   -        'Learn from others'
   -        'Practise interpreting in a less formal setting'

-        33.34% of them declared they wanted to:
   -        'Socialise'
   -        'Get to know the interpreting market of the country'
   -        'Improve cultural and political knowledge of the country'
   -        'Network'
   -        'Engage with future professional interpreters'
   -        'Connect with interpreters I met during virtual classes I could trust'
   -        'Connect to establish contact during the course and beyond'

-        16.67% of them declared they wanted to:
   -        'Go to the partner institution and help on the course once graduated'

One can see that the key motivation to connect was skills based, followed by a less formal interaction connected to interpreting, but also connected to the social desire to engage with peers in the same field.

Finally it is interesting to note that students who had not connected with peers during the course declared that:
-        'They will connect once they graduate' (25%)

- 'They may connect once they graduate' (56.25%)

Their main motivation to connect after graduation was:
- 'It would be nice to be in touch with others in the same situation' (30.77%)
- 'It is difficult to keep the interpreting practice momentum after graduation': 'connecting with others I met during virtual classes would help me keep practising'. (23.08%)
- It would be fruitful to connect with other interpreting graduates I met during virtual classes because I somehow know them. (23.08%)

Motivation to connect after graduation is more socially motivated, closely followed by the strong desire to keep on practising interpreting on a regular basis.

4.3.3.2 Constraints

It has been established that interpreting courses are quite intensive. They require extensive interpreting practice to enhance skills, confidence and performance. The data demonstrated that even though there was some intention to connect, it did not materialise into actions. A number of constraints have been identified by tutors who try to understand why their students did not follow up virtual classes with further engagement. The data expresses the tutors' perception of their students' perceptions regarding potential constraints that could explain why further engagement did not take place. Some of these constraints are external such as the workload or access to technology; others are influenced by cultural factors, a lack of engagement, commitment, or leadership.

4.3.3.2.1 Workload
All tutors mention their heavy workload. However, students too have a heavy workload. The invitation to connect with others and practise with others comes in addition to the existing workload prescribed by partner universities. In the UK, contact hours are more limited than in partner universities outside of the UK. Tutor 3 suggests that the workload may be a constraint that could explain why the connection between interpreting students did not materialise further:

'Et d'un autre côté, peut-être, j'ai trouvé ça comme excuse principale, c'était la surcharge de travail. Ils ont de toute façon beaucoup d'informations à digérer chaque jour, donc beaucoup de choses à préparer, et alors ils n'en peuvent plus, avec le travail en groupe, le travail individuel, ils ajoutent trop d'heures de cours qui ne sont pas peu nombreuses (...) Ça fait un total d'environ 22 heures par semaine. (...) A la fin de la semaine, on n'a pas vraiment envie de travailler encore. Ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'ils n'auraient pas pu peut-être intégrer dans le travail individuel ou en groupe, cette collaboration avec London Met.' (Tutor 3)

TR: 'Then on the other hand, I thought a good excuse could be a heavy workload. They have to process quite a lot of information on a daily basis which requires quite a lot of preparation. Therefore, they feel overwhelmed with group work, personal work and a high number of contact hours. It adds up to 22 hours per week. (...) At the end of the week, they don't feel like working even more. This does not mean that they could not have added the collaborative work with London Met in their group or personal work.'

4.3.3.2.2 Access to technology

In addition to the workload, access to the appropriate technology was a constraint. On a one to one basis, tutors perceived students used Skype when they connected informally beyond the virtual classes. Sometimes, it worked, sometimes the quality of the connection was not satisfactory. The questionnaire however suggests that 50% of London Met students used Google Hangouts as their favourite tool to connect. It is worth noting that Google Hangouts was the tool used in class for informal practice.

However, Tutor 2 feels that students would prefer to connect with peers using the same equipment as in the virtual classes. However, the cost and complexity of the technical set up were two constraints that stop universities offering access to students for informal practice.

'Donc il y avait ce souhait qui se heurte à des conditions pratiques et financières encore, parce que c'est encore des équipements qui sont lourds, c'est encore des équipements qui sont chers. (...) Voilà, les écoles ont un peu peur qu'on se mette à bidouiller, et puis que ça casse. Ou même je dirais que, sans même casser, que lorsqu'il y a la visio avec l'institution machin, là, le fait que tout est déréglé, donc il y a ça. Mais donc il y avait ce souhait exprimé, mais tu vois, ils n'ont pas essayé, de ce que je sache, de se mettre en contact effectivement, par le biais de...' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'So there was this desire [for students to use the virtual classes technology] that could not be met because the technical set up is quite complex and the equipment is quite expensive. (...) Here you are, the universities are quite worried that if you start messing about with the equipment, it breaks. Well, I would even say, that even if you forget about breaking up the system, imagine you connect with university A, the set up will need to be altered, so this is an issue. However, there was this desire that [students] expressed, but, actually you see, as far as I know, they did not try to get in touch, through…'

4.3.3.2.3 Language needs

Tutors notice that certain language combinations are quite rare and would enhance the motivation to connect with peers informally for further practice.

'Il y a des combinaisons linguistiques, où là, il y a un vrai besoin, donc peut-être que c'est plus facile aussi pour ces combinaisons-là.' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'For certain language combinations, there is a real need. So it may be easier for those.'

While the opposite would also be true. When language combinations are easily available, tutors perceive that they would come in the way of further informal practice with peers not from their university.

'Maintenant, il faut quand même… Quand même si c'est avec des Anglais, il faut voir quand même le côté linguistique de la chose. C'est-à-dire que si les étudiants ont déjà des partenaires avec qui ça fonctionne bien, avec les langues dont ils ont besoin, entre guillemets, sur place, donc bien sûr, c'est toujours un enrichissement, d'en avoir d'autres, mais voilà. Est-ce que ça vaut la peine?' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'Well, one has to… if it is with English partners, we need to consider the language combination. That is if students already work well with peers who have the language combination they need on site, well of course it is always an enriching experience to add others, but there you are. Is it worth it?'

4.3.3.2.4 Lack of common objective

During the pre-participatory stage, tutors seem to converge towards a common interest. However at London Met, the tutor presented an additional prime objective which was to extend virtual classes into a potential opportunity to connect with one

another. This was an objective that was discussed during the pre-participatory stage between tutors and included in the script with a 15 mn time for students to informally engage with one another. Even though tutors were receptive to the idea, helpful and even encouraging, it was not their prime objective. This lack of common objective was expressed as a potential constraint by Tutor 2:

> '(...) Je t'ai dit que ce n'était pas mon objectif primaire ou prioritaire, donc, bon, j'ai fait une introduction (...) Je pense que l'on avait meme coche noir sur blanc sur le papier avec une croix que de votre cote c' [l'objectif] etait justement la communaute d'apprentissage. (...) je ne peux pas dire que ce soit la dessus que j'ai mis l'accent.' (Tutor 2)

> TR: (...) I told you it was not a prime objective or a priority for me, so well, I introduced [your objective] (...) I think that actually, we had even specified black on white on paper with a box to tick that your objective was the learning community. (...) But I cannot say that this was a point I focused on.

4.3.3.2.5 Lack of engagement

a. Cultural influence

Some tutors notice that the lack of motivation for students to connect may be influenced by a different cultural approach when collaborating with peers.

> 'Je ne suis pas psychologue (...) mais j'ai remarqué que dans notre pays, surtout dans notre pays, c'est très difficile de faire des choses ensemble. (...)Je réfléchis sans arrêt à ce problème, pourquoi les gens ne veulent pas collaborer. On essaye toujours de trouver la raison d'un tel ou tel comportement et je me dis toujours peut-être que c'est typiquement de chez nous que les gens ne veulent pas partager, que les gens ne veulent pas partager, un point c'est tout, qu'ils sont toujours un peu en dehors de tout contact, de tous types de travail à faire ensemble.' (Tutor 1)

> TR: 'I am not a psychologist (...) but I noticed that in our country, especially in our country, it is very difficult to do things together. (...) I continuously think about this issue, why don't people wish to collaborate. We always try to find a reason that would justify such or such behaviour and I always tell myself that this behaviour is typical from our country; people don't want to share, people do not want to share, full stop. They always stay away from any connection, any kind of work that would involve collaboration.'

b. Group dynamic

Tutors notice that every year, cohorts of students may present different levels of engagement. Some cohorts may be more passive. Tutor 2 suggests that in the case of virtual classes, students are used to being told what to do and get lazy when they have to spontaneously engage.

> 'Je pense que c'est plus la flemme. (...) Et puis, comme je t'ai dit, on ne leur a pas mis sur un plateau toutes les infos, donc ils ont fait comme ils ont l'habitude de faire.' (Tutor 2)

> TR: 'I think it is about being lazy. (...) And as I mentioned, we did not provide all information on a plate for them, so they did as they normally do [and did not take any initiative].'

Group dynamic may depend on factors that influence a collaborative approach to practise, such as the balance between working and studying.

> *'Oui, je pense que ça dépend des promotions, on avait eu des promotions qui sont plus… je ne sais pas, l'esprit de corps, une vraie solidarité entre eux. (...) et puis, cette année, c'est plus difficile. C'est un peu compliqué tout ça, mais ils sont plus chacun dans leur coin, donc je pense qu'ils font moins de choses ensemble, et physiquement, en plus, il y en a qui sont plus âgés, qui travaillent par ailleurs, donc effectivement, qui seraient plus enclins à faire des choses à distance.' (Tutor 2)*

> TR*: 'It depends on cohorts. Some cohorts were… I don't know, together, tied with true solidarity (...) and then, this year, it is more difficult. It is difficult to explain, but they keep to themselves, they do less together, and besides some are older and need to work so as they are physically apart, they have a tendency to work remotely.'*

c. Leadership

A group needs leadership to work collaboratively. But Tutor 5 suggests leadership does not have to come from the tutor. Students could lead too, but it does not occur often.

> 'My experience in the last few years dealing with the masters is that everybody has really good intentions, but then you need someone to tell them what to do and when, and how to assess it and how to do it basically, and it doesn't have to be the trainers.' (Tutor 5)

However, understanding what makes a person a leader remains a bit of a mystery as expressed by Tutor 5

'I don't know if it is a natural – if they are born leaders, I don't think so. I think that they have experience, they have good experiences of leadership, maybe. Maybe it is the character features, I don't know.' (Tutor 5)

Students may be leaders, others followers. They need to be told what to do and how to go about it. In this case, they need a leader.

'Some people are followers, some people… and in our students we see that too and some students are very, very keen on practising and others are not. You have to tell them to work a lot and tomorrow we are going to do the exercise, you'd better practice. The week after you're going to have an assessment, so you better practice.' (Tutor 5)

Tutor 5 suggests that to go beyond the constraint of having a tutor who continuously leads, the tutor could be prescriptive and appoint students to lead smaller tasks, to organise further virtual classes with London Met. This prescriptive approach would have to be assessed so that students feel motivated.

'I think that what we need… what they need is someone to take the role of the organiser and it doesn't have to be a trainer. It can be…. We asked students and it could be a student changing the role from time to time. This week, we are doing our video conference with London Met. It is your duty to prepare that, contact the students, and then I'm going to verify that you have done it and it's going to count in your assessment, and that's the way to do it, but it is more work for the trainer, because you have to be checking if the student has done it or not.' (Tutor 5)

This approach demonstrates there is a need to implement some form of help and guidance for students to lead, even for small tasks. Even though a student-led leadership initiative is mentioned, there seems to be an absence of creative thinking to invite other forms of consultation to instigate leadership.

4.3.3.3 Lack of ownership of professional development

The data extracted from the semi guided interviews with tutors provide an insight on the experience of graduates as they leave the university and try to join the professional market. The data shows that students from partner universities and

London Met did not engage further with one another after the virtual classes. No network or group activity was initiated as a result, apart from participants' membership to the dedicated Facebook group.

However, students have now graduated. As professional interpreters newly engaged in the interpreting market (PINEIM), they need to engage in a landscape of practice to join the interpreting profession.

4.3.3.3.1 Surviving an unregulated market: an individualistic mindset

The data shows that interpreting markets slightly differ depending on the geographical location. But they all have something in common, they are difficult to access and are unregulated. As a result, the landscape of practice is difficult to identify by newcomers who may not have experienced a collaborative approach when studying or practising interpreting.

> 'Moi je vois d'un œil très pessimiste la situation. (...) Mais je pense que les jeunes qui ont tant de problèmes s'ils ne se connectent pas, s'ils n'entrent pas dans les réseaux ça va être encore pire.' (Tutor 1)

> TR: 'I feel very pessimistic about the situation [market]. (...) But I think that for young people [novice interpreters] who experience so many challenges [to break through the market], if they do not connect, if they do not network, the situation will get even worse for them.'

Newcomers on the market do not engage with practising interpreters or professional organisations that may not be active at national level. They do not seem to look for guidance but focus on breaking through the unregulated market and getting work at any cost. This competitive approach contributes to worsening the isolation of the interpreter.

> 'c'est une jungle, c'est une jungle, personne ne te demande de papier, personne ne te demande. « vous pouvez le faire, faîtes-le ». Vous connaissez les langues ? La cabine? Les tout jeunes, les étudiants en première, deuxième année en filière traduction qui acceptent du travail pour des sommes tout à fait ridicules.'

> TR: 'It [the market] is a jungle, it is a jungle. Nobody is asking for any qualification, nobody is asking for anything. "You can do it, then do it". Do you know the required languages? The booth? The young generation, students in their first or second year of translation studies, accept work for

peanuts.'

In such a context, tutors from partner universities try to initiate new ideas and projects to engage students in a more collaborative approach. Unfortunately, this has not been very successful as the individual mindset is deeply rooted in the approach to access resources and professional work. Sharing resources is not valued.

> *'Et pourquoi est-ce que je mettrai mon discours en ligne si les autres ne le font pas, etc? L'individualisme explique tout.' (Tutor 2)*

> TR*: 'Why would I share my speech online when others don't? Individualism explains it all'.*

Some tutors invited an experienced interpreter to engage students in a collective reflection on ethics. Unfortunately, the experience was never repeated as the professional association he launched collapsed for lack of support.

> 'Je me rappelle encore deux ou trois ans un de ces jeunes interprètes qui est venu à mon cours pour leur parler d'éthique et dire "mais surtout n'acceptez pas le travail pour des sommes tellement parce que vous gâchez le marché du travail". Il l'avait fait une seule fois, il n'a jamais voulu le refaire. Le groupe s'est complètement désintégré, il n'y a plus rien, il n'y a plus rien.' (Tutor 1)

> TR: 'Two or three years ago, I remember one of these young interpreters who came to my class to discuss ethics who said "please do not accept work for ridiculous amounts of money because you undercut the market". He only did it once, he never wanted to do it again. The group [he created] disappeared, there is nothing left, nothing left.'

Tutor 1 summarises the individualistic approach as follows: '*Solidarite nulle, solidarite nulle'*. (TR: Zero solidarity, zero solidarity)

4.3.3.3.2 Landscape of practice: impermeable boundaries
The landscape of practice portrays a clear distinction between the newly qualified interpreters who try to access the interpreting market at the risk of undercutting the market and the professional interpreters who have been established on the market for years. The experienced interpreters - who are often unqualified because interpreting courses were not available formerly - seem to fear the newly qualified

interpreters who may not have experience but have a qualification. Mistrust between the two worlds prop up impermeable boundaries that prevent collaboration.

> 'Moi je pense que c'était l'enthousiasme des jeunes, l'enthousiasme, "regardez, on peut changer le monde". Quand on est jeune on veut changer le monde, on veut faire la révolution; ils ont voulu faire la révolution, ils se sont cognés contre un monde qui n'en voulait pas, qui voulait être conservateur, qui ne voulait aucune nouveauté, surtout les anciens, ceux qui sont sur le marché depuis des années, qui n'ont jamais reçu aucune formation mais qui sont sur le marché, qui ont appris sur le tas, ils ne veulent pas de changement, qui vraiment ont construit cette muraille d'Hadrien, non mais c'est vrai !' (Tutor 1)

> TR: 'I think it was about the enthusiasm of young people, their enthusiasm "look we can change the world". When you are young, you want to change the world, you want to create a revolution; they wanted to do a revolution, and they hurt themselves to a world that did not want it, a conservative world that did not want anything new; especially the oldest who have been on the market for years and who were never trained; they leant on the job and they don't want any changes. They truly have built the Hadrian Wall.'

4.3.3.3.3 Role of the tutor and the university

Some tutors report that there is a formal or informal network of alumni in their universities. These sometimes play an active role.

> 'On a un réseau d'anciens étudiants que j'anime, étant moi-même en plus ancienne de l'école. Donc ça, on l'a toujours fait de manière informelle.' (Tutor 2)

> TR: 'I look after a network of alumni as I too am an alumnus. This is something we have always had at an informal level.'

Alumni are welcome to come back to university to informally practise interpreting. This is usually accepted on a one to one basis, rather than at a collective level. Alumni may practise interpreting with students or prepare the interpreting accreditation test for the international institutions. They may even be recruited as tutors as they gain further experience in the years.

> 'Les anciens reviennent facilement dans l'école, mais pas au jour d'aujourd'hui en tant que tuteurs pour les générations suivantes. Ils ont d'abord les portes grandes ouvertes pour s'entraîner, préparer les concours ou les tests d'accréditation.' (Tutor 2)

TR: 'Alumni easily come back to university, but not yet as tutors for the next generations. First they are warmly welcome to come and practise, prepare the accreditation test.'

However, some semi formal schemes are implemented to include alumni back at university so they can practise with students and even get support to become trainers.

'Well, if they want to stay and have more practice, sometimes they can do it as volunteers, because we have a little bit different scheme for study. So, actually, if they want to stay and have more practice, we encourage them to do it, and we use them more for group sessions, not for classes maybe, but more for independent work of the students who are students now, something like this. Or if they want to stay as future trainers, we give them an internship period when they do some volunteer work, give them classes and then we decide if we like them or not. And then if we see their potential, we ask them to be partly employed trainers, and then there is more development, but it depends on the person actually. So it is kind of individually decided. It is not that we have a particular scheme for everyone.' (Tutor 4)

However, tutor 6 was the only one to report the relevance of a voluntary practice group to inspire, welcome and include newcomers to the profession. This was a unique case but it is highly relevant as it shares similarities with the Ambassadors' Scheme.

Tutor 6 explains the value of a trusting collaborative approach in teaching, and the relevance of partnerships between students and the interpreting practice group. When asked what triggered a collaborative approach with the practice group and students, she responded:

'Souviens-toi, tu es venue, tu es venue il y a quelques années, tu es venue faire un séminaire.[66] Et c'est là que moi j'ai compris. Et à partir de là, donc ça a fait de l'effet sur la génération que tu as vue. Mais évidemment, une génération suit l'autre. Il faut que je fasse passer un peu le message. Et donc maintenant je prends le temps au début de l'année de leur expliquer que c'est pas forcément le professeur et lui seul qui joue un rôle, qu'ils doivent vraiment être solidaires, qu'ils doivent fonctionner en équipe.'

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[66] The practical workshop was delivered to students and staff and aimed at setting up a collaborative approach such as communities of practice to enhance deliberate interpreting practice outside formal teaching hours.

TR: 'Remember, you came, you came a few years ago to deliver a workshop. And it is at that moment that I understood it all. And from then, it had an impact on the cohort you met. But obviously new cohorts come in. I have to carry on passing on the message. And so now, at the beginning of the academic year, I take the time to explain that the tutor is not the only person who plays a role, that they must all be working together, that they have to work as a team.'

Tutor 6 describes the added value of the interpreting practice group that is hosted at university where students have just graduated. The practice group works as a welcoming home where young professional interpreters have already been practising for a few years. It acts as a transition from the student status to that of a young professional.

'Parce que je vois bien qu'une fois leur diplôme en poche, ils ne tombent plus dans un trou noir, ils connaissent déjà l'adresse, ils savent que ce groupe existe, ils sont habitués à nos locaux et ils sont assez nombreux à s'associer à ce groupe. Ils font connaissance avec plein de gens, et il y a des amitiés qui naissent de là.' (Tutor 6)

TR*: 'I can now see that once they are qualified, students no longer fall into a black hole. They already know where to go, they know the group exists. They are used to the university and quite a few of them get involved with the group. They get to know lots of people and from there some of them even become friends.'*

The experience from Tutor 6 comes across as totally different from other tutors interviewed but it does illustrate the direct consequence of the benefits of an alumni group integrated in the university. Students benefit from the group whilst they are students and naturally feel invited to join the group once they are graduated. The collaborative approach is fully integrated in the learning journey and has a direct impact on the mindset of graduates who continue their professional development in collaboration with peers.

'Ça je dois dire que depuis que ce groupe est là, nos jeunes diplômés sont très bien soutenus. Oui ça, donc je suis tellement contente de l'existence de ce groupe. (...) C'est un groupe très soudé, très enthousiaste, bien organisé, et très courtois aussi. (...) Et je dois dire, ces jeunes interprètes qui tirent le groupe, Isabelle, il y a Richard, il y a Coraine, il y a Stephanie etc…A chaque fois qu'ils veulent se réunir une fois de plus, ils prennent contact avec moi, ils me demandent. Moi je négocie avec l'administration et donc on trouve une solution. (...) Ça se passe

vraiment très bien. J'ai vraiment confiance en eux. Ils ont la clé du labo, ils peuvent l'utiliser. Je sais qu'ils ne volent pas et qu'ils ne cassent rien. Là, ce sont vraiment des jeunes qui sont vraiment très responsables.'

TR: 'I have to say that thanks to that group, our new graduates are well supported. Yes, I am definitely happy this group exists. (...) They are very close, very enthusiastic, well organised and very polite too (...) And there are these young interpreters who lead the group, Isabelle, there is Richard, there is Corraine, there is Stephanie etc… Every time they want to meet up, they get in touch with me, they ask me (...) It works very well. I trust them. They have the key to the interpreting suite, they can use the facilities. I know they won't steal anything, that they won't break anything. They truly are very trustworthy young people.'

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of the data. The participants' voices are captured and represented in the themes and subthemes illustrated in figures 6 to 11 to facilitate an overview of the storyline that represents the dynamic experience of participation in both case studies.

Building on this data analysis, the following chapter offers a discussion of the research findings, which will then lead to the main conclusions of this study.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The AS and the VC were never designed nor cultivated to intentionally operate as communities of practice. They were set up as collaborative initiatives that have organically evolved over a number of years. Hence, the interest of this research is not to find out whether these two initiatives have succeeded or failed as communities of practice. Rather, it is to investigate the main research question based on the findings of data analysis of the two case studies:

'To what extent and in what ways do communities of practice facilitate learning in the context of professional development for interpreting students and practitioners?'

Aim 1 Explore how learning in a formal or informal network or potential community of practice such as the AS (Ambassadors' Scheme) and the VC (Virtual Classes) enhances the outcome of interpreting education/training.

> **RQ#1**. How do interpreting students perceive the benefits of joining networks such as the AS and the VC within their formal and informal learning experience?

> **RQ#2**. How do interpreting students use the network environments to enhance their formal and informal learning? What was the impact on their learning?

> **RQ#3**.How do networks such as the AS and the VC influence the interpreting students' perception of self and peers within networks?

Aim 2 Establish identity and boundaries of AS and VC during and after in relation to a CoP model as defined by Etienne Wenger (2002)

> **RQ#1**.How do interpreting students involved in the AS and the VC perceive their identity and their belonging to a group/network/CoP?

RQ#2. How do interpreting students involved in the AS and the VC perceive the network/group/CoP they belong to?

RQ#3. Does their perception of belonging, identity and role within the AS and VC evolve over time (before joining, during the academic year, moving out of formal academic year structure)?

Aim 3 How do the AS and VC compare as potential CoP?

RQ#1. How does the environment (virtual versus face to face) influence the community/network?

RQ#2. Who facilitates the network/community? What is their role? How does it influence values and practices?

RQ#3. Do the community/network as potential CoP bring any added value? How is it measured?

Let's initiate the discussion with the aim 3 of the research question; that is whether the AS and the VC operate as CoPs[67].

5.1 Do the virtual classes and the Ambassadors' Scheme operate as a Community of Practice?

As mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 2), understanding what communities of practice are, and trying to define what they do, what makes them successful and how they evolve has never been considered straight forward (Henriksson, 2000; Kimble and Hildreth, 2004; Kimble, 2006); actually, it has often been referred to as the weakest point of the theory (Kimble, 2006). Wenger's definition (2002) adopted for the research clearly states it is the combination of three well defined elements, a *domain*, a *community* and a *practice* that defines a community of practice:

> Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. (Wenger, 2002)

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[67] See Appendix 14 to access the links to the questionnaire analysis.

As a result, the priority is to establish if the data demonstrates whether the virtual classes and the Ambassadors' Scheme for interpreters operate as CoPs, presenting a well defined domain, community and practice.

5.1.1 Is there a well defined domain?

5.1.1.1 The Ambassadors' Scheme

The experience of participants in the Ambassadors' Scheme evolves over three key participation stages that provide an insight on the growing commitment to, engagement and participation in the domain. The domain specifically emerges at the *pre-participation stage* as 'ambassadors-to-be' *converge towards a common interest.* At this stage, participants have a clear *perception* of the purpose of the scheme which they define as *helping new students and each other improve their interpreting skills* (Figure 6)*.* This is reinforced by their strong *motivation* to *commit to their professional development* and *give back to the community* (Figure 6)*.* As they pursue their journey into the participation stage, participants still define the domain as being their common interest in *practising interpreting skills with peers* and *growing as professional interpreters in the making* (Figure 7). During the post participatory stage, participants refer to the Ambassadors' Scheme as having a clear common interest in *practising interpreting skills with peers to grow as professional interpreters*.

As a result, the domain is not only well defined but it remains consistent over the three participatory stages, that is *a common interest in practising interpreting skills with peers to grow as professional interpreters*. Ambassadors not only have a clear understanding of the domain, but they also have a strong commitment to the domain which strongly associates their own professional growth to the *togetherness* and *trust* factors with their peers and students. One can conclude that the AS presents a clear, well defined *domain* that grows stronger over the participatory journey of the members.

5.1.1.2 The Virtual Classes

Even though the experience of participation in virtual classes also evolves over three comparable temporal participatory stages, the data highlights a different story, especially when it relates to the potential formation of a domain and a community.

During the pre-participatory stage, the tutor in charge of the virtual classes is clearly motivated by the *perceived benefits* of the participation in the VC (Figure 9). Even though the *benefits* may be perceived as *mutual* by both participating institutions represented by the organising tutors, they are primarily motivated by each institution's interests (Figure 9). At this stage of pre-participation, the main *motivation* is extrinsic and does not come across as a common shared interest that would shape a CoP's domain. There is a similar interest expressed by two people representing two institutions. Actually, this *common interest* reinforces the motivation of organising tutors who report they feel *isolated* and struggle to bring colleagues in spontaneously (figure 9). In addition, participating students may feel enthusiastic about the perceived benefits of the virtual classes but their participation is compulsory. The shared competence of participants relates to interpreting skills and the organisation of the virtual classes, not to the commitment of a domain that is negotiated by a community.

During the participating stage, both groups of students and staff from both institutions finally meet for the first time. Even though they enjoy intensive interpreting practice and mutual feedback, it remains prescriptive and controlled by the time factor and the top-down hierarchy between students and staff. The time slot that is dedicated to a spontaneous discussion between students to explore the negotiation of a domain feels artificial and controlled (Figure 4.2 (VC)).The post participatory stage confirms the lack of continuity of relationships between participants and as a result there is no shared interest that would potentially shape a domain (Figure 11). The only connection that remains and is consistent is between the two organising tutors.

To conclude, one can clearly observe that the evolution of participation in the virtual classes does not lead to the formation of a defined domain as intended in the definition of a CoP.

5.1.2 Is there a well defined community?

5.1.2.1 The Ambassadors' Scheme

Participants continuously engage and interact over the three participatory stages. During the pre-participatory stage, members of the AS are former MACI students who have experienced a collaborative social learning experience with each other, and with the ambassadors from the previous cohort. They met and supported one another for a whole academic year. They describe themselves *as trusted colleagues who have evolved through the shared experience of studying under pressure on the MACI*. This collective social learning experience has contributed to shaping their *togetherness* which acts as a *motivation* to commit to the domain of the community (Figure 4.1 I(AS)). They have developed *trust* with one another. Trust is not only present in the community they form, it is a key element that contributes to their motivation (Figure 6).

> 'It's very motivational to keep going, but it's also feeling the support of everyone who is in the same boat, who is doing the same, and it's like, OK, it's difficult, but it's difficult for all of us and we're all doing it together'. (AC2)

This altruistic approach is embedded in the community; it demonstrates that the individual successful professional journey is interwoven with the participation in the community. It breaks isolation and provides mutual benefits and growth for the community that continues to exist beyond the individual participation and the structural academic year.

During the participatory stage, the sense of building a community grows and is defined as one of the enablers to participation. This specific stage is defined as *learning within a community by caring, giving and sharing* (Figure 7). The level of participation in certain activities varies with ambassadors being defined as *active* or *passive* but the sense of togetherness persists. The community is described as *supportive* and plays a key role in the *learning process with others* (Figure 7). Their formal and informal regular interactions strengthen their togetherness that allows them to *give back to the community* and continue to *learn* together (Figure 7). As such, they form a *community* as defined in the CoP theory.

'Over the two years [as students and ambassadors], we did so much together, we became friends as well, we've got lots in common; similar working values, but also values in life overall'. (Cecilia, PINEIM3)

Their experience of the community is so vivid that it goes beyond their participatory stage in the AS. It shapes their identity as *professionals actively engaged in a landscape of practice* (Figure 8). The post participatory stage (Figure 8) highlights the impact of their *collaborative mindset* on their experience of participation in the AS as students and ambassadors. They now feel they have become *confident professionals with a voice*; they are *motivated social lifelong learners* who feel *engaged* and *connected* to the wider community of professionals (Figure 8).

5.1.2.2 The Virtual Classes

The virtual classes offer potential to form a CoP community predominantly during the participation stage when students and staff from both universities meet, practise interpreting together and attempt to engage to explore further collaboration of mutual benefit. Unfortunately, data from the post participation stage highlights that *actions do not follow on from intentions (Figure 11)*. Forming a community cannot be imposed (Pyrko et al, 2016). In the context of virtual classes, participation is imposed by tutors as attendance is integrated in the curriculum.

However, students are fully autonomous to engage with one another and form a community once the virtual classes are over. One of the *constraints* highlights *the lack of a common objective* which refers to the potential domain of a CoP (Figure 4.2 (VC)). In this particular context, the absence of learning citizenship (Wenger, 2009) prevents the community from taking shape. The post participation stage confirms this mindset as it is characterised by a strong disconnect, not only with participants from peer universities[68] but also from the landscape of practice that presents *impermeable boundaries (Figure 11).* The market is presented as *unregulated* and encourages an *individualistic approach (Figure 11).*

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[68]See 4.3.3.1.1: 'Question 19 of the questionnaire demonstrates that only 11.76% of London Met students connected with peers from partner university, whilst 52.94% declared they did not. 11.76% declared they 'tried but no one replied'. 17.65% 'intended to but did not. One can see quite a difference between the intention of connecting (62%) and the actual deed of connecting (23.52%).' (p.169)

In this context, trusting potential peers from different institutions to shape a community and define a domain seems unexpected and perhaps unprepared. Even though tutors from both universities have engaged and are *motivated* by *mutual benefits (Figure 9),* participation in a virtual class is not enough to create the spark of common interest, motivation and commitment to engage over a period of time and evolve into a community able to define a domain. The lack of engagement or spark to define a common domain confirms Lea (2005)'s scepticism regarding the challenge to overcome boundaries in CoPs and joining established communities. In this specific case, each university already has an established identity and even though virtual classes bring two universities to work together, the data highlights that defining a common objective beyond the skills-based interpreting practice is not a priority for staff nor students (Figure 11).

5.1.3 Is there a well defined practice?

5.1.3.1 Ambassadors' Scheme

Members of the Ambassadors' Scheme are engaged in the practice of interpreting. This is what they do together. As practitioners, students and ambassadors describe themselves as *professional interpreters in the making (Figure 7).* The practice of interpreting within the AS is about evolving from being a student of interpreting to becoming a professional interpreter engaged in the profession of interpreting. Together, practitioners share their experience of transiting through this experience and develop their professional skills to reach the professional stage. Through regular formal and informal mutual engagement with one another, they create a shared repertoire of resources and opportunities to practise interpreting skills, provide feedback for one another, and support each other in their professional endeavour.

> 'Providing help to new students and ambassadors" is "helping myself" so "when the first job does come along, you are not so rusty that you can't even turn the mic on.' (AC2)

Their practice is clearly defined by *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998a)*, from the pre-participatory stage to the post participatory stage. It undoubtedly qualifies as a CoP practice.

> 'Personally, I'm currently finding it [engaging in the AS] really useful as a way of reconnecting with basics and coming back to the things which I need to work on, and it's quite easy to forget that, that practice needs to be structured and that you need to work on individual things, so the process of giving advice to people who are starting out is very useful, because it shows you things that perhaps you'd forgotten to pay attention recently. So it's useful from… yeah, it's mutually beneficial'. (AC2)

5.1.3.2. Virtual Classes

Practising interpreting is a shared interest for the participants of both institutions. Together, they are motivated to *practise interpreting under pressure,* and *get objective feedback from experts (Figure 4.2 VC)).* They have established the *usefulness* of virtual classes.

> 'The experience is really great both for trainers and for the students, because our students are always asking when are we going to have our next virtual class with London Met, because they know that it is actually a very interactive experience, unlike sometimes it is with the [international] institutions when it is more formal lessons and fewer opportunities to speak themselves, and between themselves also because it's more about… of course it's really very precious to get the feedback from the experienced interpreters who work for the institutions, but as important it is for the students to talk within themselves and to see what the students at a partner university think or do, how they perceive this virtual kind of training or support, so that is why our students very much like doing virtual classes with you". (Tutor 4)

But the shared interest is mainly driven by individual gain for participants and the institution. Practice as defined by Etienne Wenger (1998a; 2002) evolves over time, it has to be more than a punctual interest. It has to be shared for a collective interest (Smith et al, 2017, p.212). Participation in virtual classes does not represent a CoP practice as the community is not forming and as such cannot negotiate a domain and engage in a living practice, as distinct from a rehearsing of skills.

5.1.4 Conclusive remarks

5.1.4.1 Virtual classes

As mentioned in 2.2.1, the term "Community of Practice" is often used outside the theoretical context to describe or explain a feeling of togetherness and willingness to share information during specific events or initiatives, such as a conference that brings together enthusiastic and motivated participants for the day. If the term is used widely, it is perhaps 'for lack of a better word' (Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.31).

The experience of virtual classes illustrates this phenomenon quite well. At first sight, participation in virtual classes appears to look like a social learning space where participants share a common interest and come together to share an experience that is mutually beneficial.

> 'When we are having bilateral partners, universities, it's different because we are on the same level, we have the same problems, and the students can talk to the students, while we the trainers can exchange various... so we can discuss what difficulties, pedagogical difficulties.' (Tutor 4)

The experience includes an intention from students to be extended further but *actions do not follow on from intentions (Figure 11)*. From an outsider's point of view, this participation seems to fit in with the notion one may spontaneously understand when first encountering the term Communities of Practice; that is a group of interpreting staff and students coming together to optimise their interpreting skills by sharing resources and practising together. However, when applying the CoP definition criteria, the data analysis shows absence of a domain, community and practice as defined by Etienne Wenger (2002), which clearly demonstrates that the experience of participation in virtual classes does not fit the CoP theoretical framework.

One may even challenge the idea that this is a social learning space at all. The interaction between organising tutors remains the focus of the social learning interaction as there is a form of 'negotiation of meaning' there. However, during the

participation stage, the *lack of common feedback strategies (Figure 4.2 (VC))* demonstrates the absence of social learning engagement between participants of the two organisations.

> 'either colleagues do not have any feedback to give, or they worry their feedback will come across as too straight forward or nasty to students they either do not know or students who study with colleagues. So well, as a result, it is all nice and polite, but it is not of great value to students.' (Tutor 2)

Criteria of success are not negotiated or revisited but are set up in advance and represent certainty. Students value *the objective feedback from experts* (Figure 11) who are presented in the position of knowing. In this context, learning is prescribed and not negotiated.

To conclude, the experience of participation in virtual classes demonstrates that collective participation alone does not suffice to create a social learning space, let alone a community of practice. The experience of the virtual classes is punctual and does not spark motivation to break silos and engage beyond the boundaries of universities, and hierarchy. One may argue that the remoteness of the experience of participation undermined the formation of a community. However, even if *access to technology* came across as a *constraint* during the post-participatory stage (Figure 11), it remains minor[69].

The major influential factors that jeopardise the creation of a social learning space and a CoP remain the *lack of common objectives* and the *lack of engagement* that results from *cultural influence, group dynamic and a lack of leadership (Figure 11)*. This phenomenon is influenced by the wider context of a closed *landscape of practice* and an *unregulated market* which encourages an *individualistic approach (Figure 11)*. In this context, participants in the virtual classes are driven by their *mindset* whereby *actions do not follow on from intentions (Figure 11)*. The *motivational factors* confirm their personal interest is focused instrumentally on *improving interpreting skills (Figure 11)*. There is no evidence of trust as participants consider one another as competitors with individualistic objectives.

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[69] See 4.3.3.2.2 Access to technology

194

The virtual classes can be considered as a network of course leaders who represent their institution; they act as nodes (Wenger et al, 2011) that connect with one another to share resources so as to enhance the interpreting skills of their students (Probst and Borzillo, 2008). As nodes, they lead the interaction between the two universities which generates the continuity in the relationship between them and the course leader at London Met. This experience clearly highlights aspects of CoPs that are challenging, such as designing for the emergence of CoP (Barab and Duffy, 2012). A network may lead to a CoP. However, strategic discussions - potentially led by a social artist or system convenor (Garavan et al, 2007; Wenger-Trayner, 2015) - that would act as negotiation of meaning between the two universities involved, would need to take place to overcome the CoP missing elements presented here.

Furthermore, once more it raises the controversy on the common understanding of what CoPs are (see 2.5.1). On the one hand, Wenger presents CoPs as commonly existing everywhere around us, such as school or work (Wenger and Snyder, 2000). On the other hand, as for the VC case study, the data shows that when taking a closer look, what appears to be a collective initiative is not a CoP, but a network of tutors. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020, p.31) recently addressed this point by clearly presenting two distinctive uses of the CoP concept. One refers to the precise theoretical framework that has been discussed in this research; the other one is the use of the concept 'to refer to a certain mode of learning interaction in which people engage with each other as learning partners' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner. 2020, p.31). Even though this new statement attempts to articulate the wider use of the term CoP, the same ambiguity prevails as 'a certain mode of learning interaction' is far too vague. The reference to adopting a 'CoP mindset' seems to illustrate better how a CoP can be shaped out of a network, interaction between peers or a collaborative initiative.
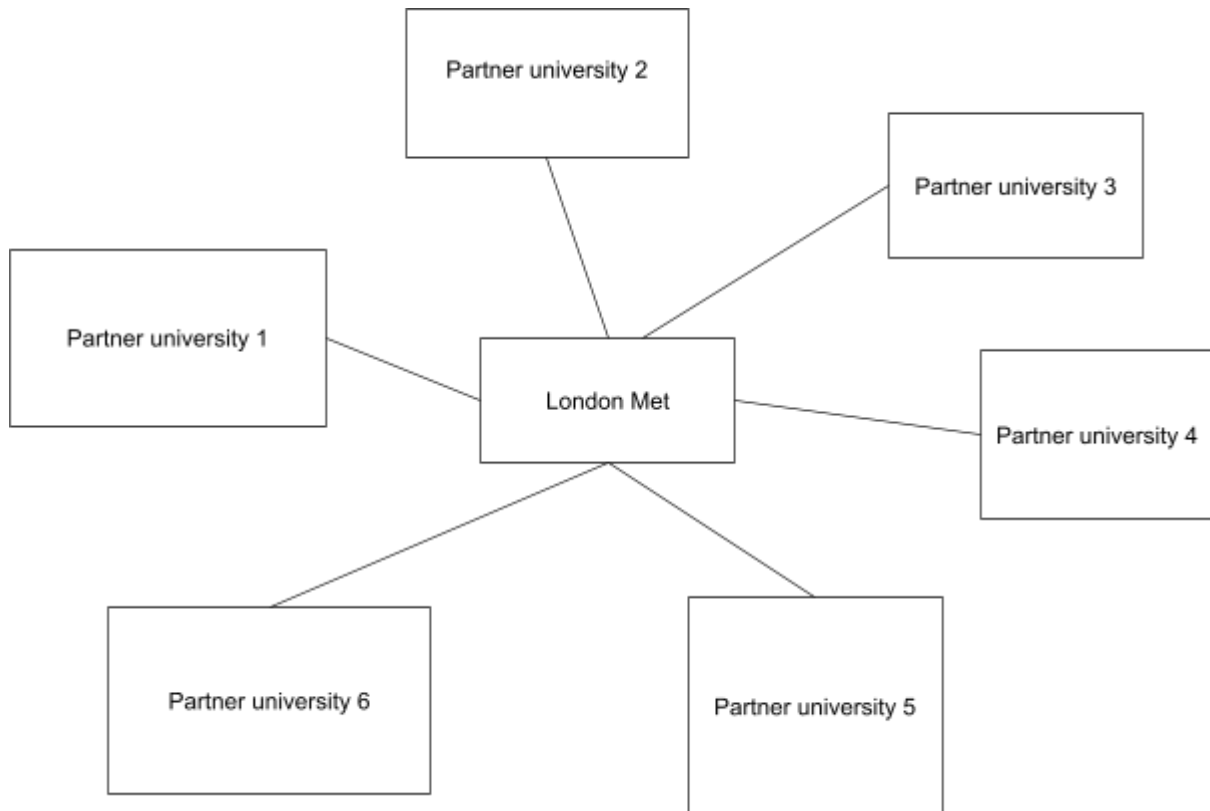
Figure 12: A network of tutors

In this case, one can see that the network is based on self interest (Reinett, 2007) and does not aim at improving the members' know-how on one specific domain (Probst and Borzillo, 2008). The virtual classes are punctual events that are organised by course leaders for the intended benefit of their students.

5.1.4.2 The Ambassadors' Scheme

On the other hand, the Ambassadors' Scheme case study data clearly demonstrates the combination of a well defined community, domain and practice. Therefore, as the three key elements that form the definition of a CoP are present, one can safely conclude the AS operates as a Community of Practice as described in the CoP theoretical framework (Wenger, 2002).

5.2 Learning in a CoP: value creation among interpreting students and graduates

Regardless of their composition, the data demonstrates that *learning* is taking place in both the virtual classes (see figure 10) and the Ambassadors' Scheme (see figure 7). However the perception of the experience of learning differs.

For the AS, it is a multifaceted and multilayered social learning experience across three participatory stages with a continuous impact on identity that evolves beyond the participation in the scheme, throughout the transitional journey to shaping professional identity.

> 'Also I think it's a nice way of building a community in a sense, because most of us aren't going to be staffers, we are freelancers, and even us graduates we're still not at the same level as very seasoned interpreters, of course we're going to have a community with different levels, different levels of expertise, of experience, but we can all be in a professional community and learn from each other.' (Focus group 2015)

For the virtual classes, the experience of learning is formal and takes place during the participation stage. Virtual classes offer a situated learning context (Sawyer, 2004) whereby students experience interpreting under pressure, with students and staff from a different university they do not know well or even at all.

> 'Students seem to love it, not because they… not because they learn, I have to say, but because it's stressful and this is a component of their learning process that they lose very soon in face to face classes (...) (Tutor 5)

This context of situated cognition (Derry & Lesgold, 1996; Sawyer, 2004) offers participants an opportunity to experience interpreting under pressure and develop coping strategies.

These two contrasting experiences of learning highlight the relevance of the understanding of the concept of learning to educational programmes and point to the potential benefit of expanding the apprenticeship model in interpreting studies to integrate a social learning dimension that is lacking (see 1.4.1).

As the data captures the evolution of the experience of participation over three years, it offers an opportunity to identify value creation at the different stages of

participation. The Value-creation Framework (Wenger et al. 2011, 2017, 2020) offers guidance and language to identify value-creation in social learning spaces; different types of created value may be identified in isolation or/and organised in cycles (see 2.4.1). The framework will therefore contribute to guiding the conversation on identifying value creation for both the Ambassadors' Scheme and the virtual classes and 'assist in drawing the link between community activities and learning' (Culver and Bertram, 2017). It is represented as follows:
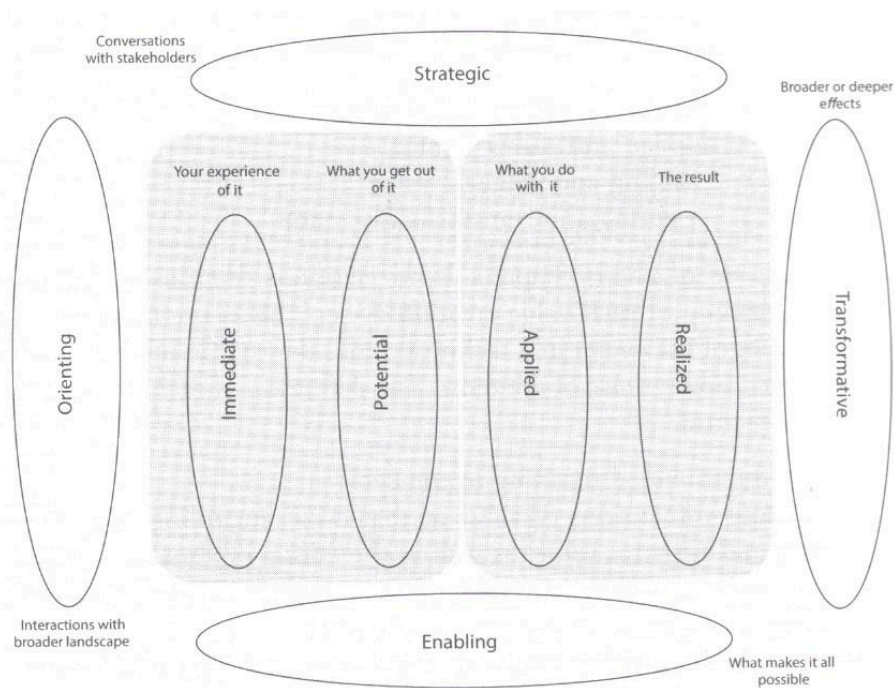
Figure II.1.1   Value-creation cycles in the framework.

Figure 13: Value-creation framework Wenger-Trayner and Wenger- Trayner (2020, p.75)

The observation of data over a three year period demonstrates that participation in the AS brings added value[70] to participants as individuals and as a community, both in the short term and the long term. It also demonstrates that the learning journey

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[70] Added value and value creation are distinct. Added value refers to the benefits an individual enjoys following an experience. In this context, 'value creation is a humanistic perspective' (Wenger Trayner et al, 2020, p.68) and refers to the process of creating value. It is tightly connected to agency and the facilitation of social learning spaces.

through participation is only made possible if the CoP is relevant, resilient, looked after and situated in a professional landscape. Most studies on CoP provide data on a specific aspect of the CoP experience, but rarely do they present data on the experience of the full participation in the CoP, that also includes the impact of participation in a CoP when interacting with the wider landscape of practice.

5.2.1 Learning experience of participation over three developmental stages: the Ambassadors' Scheme

5.2.1.1 Strategic and enabling value: situating the CoP in the landscape of professional practice for interpreters

Strategic value and enabling value work hand in hand. They optimise the effectiveness of social learning (Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The Ambassador Scheme operates as a community of practice. It is far more than an independent practice group of interpreters who wish to come together to practise interpreting. It is connected within a landscape of practice. The experience of participation over three developmental stages capture the relevance of the strategic situatedness of the AS as a CoP that makes a difference. Strategically, it is situated in a professional landscape that connects the experience of learning in formal education (student participation in the MACI at London Met) with the experience of joining the interpreting profession. It not only fills a void, but it does so in a connected strategic approach. As a result, the enabling connectedness and strategic situatedness offer a social learning space that allows participants to transit through the different stages of their professional development. Participants experience learning in development with peers; they evolve through their professional journey with peers that share a similar experience. Through this process, they build confidence and evolve in a safe space that enables them to gradually shape their professional identity, as expressed during the focus group 2014, 'it's a good way of being there [an interpreting event at London Met] and not being considered a student, but a professional.'

5.2.1.2 Strategic and enabling value: predictable cycles of participation - a momentum to keep the CoP alive and relevant

Creating a community of practice is challenging. The experience of virtual classes indicates that participants may come together and demonstrate intentions that may be clearly stated (immediate value[71]). But they do not transform into actions (realised value[72]). The experience of participation over time did not materialise (see figure 11) and the potential of the collaboration did not develop into a community of practice. This illustrates the initial challenges that need to be overcome for a community of practice to exist.

When the community of practice is finally created, it encounters many potential challenges that may threaten its existence. It needs to develop some resilience.
In the case of the AS, the initial challenge is external and relates to the circumstance of the academic calendar. A dynamic group of engaged students and ambassadors may work well for an academic year. But what happens when the academic year is over? Does the community of practice collapse? Does it all have to start from scratch? To make a difference, a community of practice needs to be resilient, and sustainable to survive over time.

For the AS, the *continuity* over time acts as a motivational factor that stimulates engagement of participants (see 4.2.1.1.3). The predictable academic cycle was used as a strategic value and transformed into an enabling value. What may have been perceived as a threat was actually strategically used to define the regular ongoing life cycles of the CoP. The predictability of the cycles of participation offers a dynamic momentum that allows new groups of ambassadors to revisit the domain on a yearly basis; based on their student experience of the Ambassadors' Scheme, members engage in the community with the motivation to improve, update and adjust the community to their needs and the anticipated needs of the students who are at this stage new students on the MACI (See figure 6).
What binds the two groups together and facilitates engagement is the quality of the experience of participation. These regular and predictable cycles of participation offer momentum to the CoP which does not have time to confront issues related to tensions of power within the CoP, such as 'the displacement of old timers' (Hughes et al, 2007, p.173). On the contrary, as new cohorts join the CoP, members continuously

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[71] See 2.4.2
[72] See 2.4.2

renegotiate meaning for the CoP, hence offering an opportunity for the community but also for the members who leave to grow in strength, as well as those who join.The predictable cycles of participation guarantee the sustainability of the CoP over time and its potential to make a difference not only to the participants but also to the interpreting profession, which then becomes more accessible and more collegially organised, with the potential to evolve into a more open collaborative mindset (see figure 8 and 4.2.3.1).

5.2.1.3 Enabling value: The social art of leading in a safe social learning space

With virtual classes, course leaders play an important role as they network with the London Met course leader to create interpreting practice opportunities for their students. They then connect with their respective students to *prescribe participation.* But participants from the different institutions do not connect, nor *engage* beyond the virtual classes (see 4.3.3.1.2). The online space[73] is the only space that has been created for participation. There is no leadership initiative nor demonstration of agency from either participants or staff to spark motivation to come together or to extend the virtual space created with the virtual class experience into a new safe social learning space that could host new social interactions. The technology would be easy to blame as the social learning space would have to evolve online. But in this case, the data highlights it is the absence of motivation to lead, that is the main obstacle (see 4.3.3.2.5).

> *'I think that what we need… what they need is someone to take the role of the organiser and it doesn't have to be a trainer (...). (Tutor 5)*

On the other hand, data demonstrates that in the Ambassadors' Scheme, there are different layers of motivational factors that enable leadership to evolve in a safe social learning space. First, there is the physical space, that is the interpreting suite (IS) of the university. Ambassadors perceive the IS at university as a *safe inclusive environment,* and *a colleagues' environment* (see 4.2.2.1.3.c). Their perception of the physical space which is designed for professional interpreting practice motivates them to come together.

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[73] Facebook page: Virtual interpreting at London Met

'It's comforting to be here, because it's a safe environment, a place where you can practice, and when you spend that much time here, I mean, we were spending from nine o'clock in the morning sometimes until eight o'clock at night; you're here three or four times a week, that's your life basically.' (Focus group Ambassadors 25th September 2014)

As students, this was the place where they learnt, built resilience ('going through the same struggles'(focus group 2015), and developed trust for one another.

'It's very motivational to keep going, but it's also feeling the support of everyone who is in the same boat, who is doing the same, and it's like, OK, it's difficult, but it's difficult for all of us and we're all doing it together'. (AC2)

The physical trusted space connects them to this social learning experience which they try to extend with their participation in the AS. The space embodies the home of the CoP.

However, a space has to be designed and defined as a home by someone who *makes you feel at home*. This initial experience of designing a safe space into a welcoming home is crucial when setting up the CoP, but also pivotal in the maintenance of the CoP. It requires an act of leadership that has to be safe, inclusive and enabling. In this case, data shows that the course leader is perceived as the person that *makes you feel at home* in the Interpreting Suite. The course leader acts as the 'passionate' and 'strategic' 'social artist' or 'system convenor[74]' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014, p.112) who has 'a vision and transcends traditional boundaries.'

Similarly social artists create social spaces where meaningful learning can take place. When these social learning spaces work well, they are magnificent pieces of art - social art - that chan*ge* the way we experience the world and ourselves. (Wenger, 2009, p.10)

As the social artist, the course leader enabled not only a safe physical space such as the interpreting suite, but mainly a 'legitimate' space (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014, p.114) for the community of ambassadors to exist in the eyes of its members but also for the non members such as the candidates to the MACI or professional interpreters looking at the landscape of practice.

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[74] See 2.3.2 on the key role of social artists

This 'subtle and less visible' (Wenger 2009, p.12) form of leadership compares to 'leading as an act of service' *(Wenger, 2012).* This conceptual mindset is paramount when initiating and maintaining a CoP (Wenger, 2014). Leading in this case is not telling others what to do, how to behave, it is not a top-down dynamic. It starts with creating a safe inclusive home that fosters trust; the course leader in this case is perceived as generating a *feeling of being welcome and included as a valued ambassador*. Participants perceive her *passion* and *commitment* over time as motivational and engaging factors.

> 'The passion and the commitment of Danielle really act as a further motivation to do well during classes and professionally (...).' (anonymous comment in the Ambassadors Questionnaire (Q35))

The leader's essential duty in this case is to look after the *home* so that participants can safely evolve into practitioners of the community where roles and identities differ. Ambassadors feel they are *ex-students*, *halfway between a tutor and a student*, *someone who has been through the course and can share it (see 4.2.2.2.2).*

The main motivation for the leader who initially created the safe space for the community is to facilitate a 'power-full space'[75] (Wenger, 2015) where additional layers of leadership and participant agency form. Practitioners may engage in leading as co-practitioners, as a group or individually if they wish to do so. In the AS, the ambassador coordinators (AC) who chose to coordinate practitioners to organise weekly interpreting practice sessions, were not omnipotent; they provided an act of service for the community and facilitated agency. Other practitioners provided acts of service to students. At times, it was language-specific acts of service whereby practitioners of language specific groups led students with similar language combinations.

> 'because ehm I'd be asked if any ambassadors could help, and I would contact the ambassadors and then I coordinate who would come and let people know (...). AC1

Leadership is stimulated by the commitment of the practitioners for the domain, the practice and the community who act as 'custodians of one part of the learning process of the community' (Wenger, 2012, p.5). Leading is not about giving power to

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[75] See 2.1.2.2.3.a

some and removing it from others, it is about initiating and delivering acts of service to empower practitioners, enhance learning, and the community of practice as a welcoming home that facilitates a spectrum of tacit and explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967, 1998; Wenger, 1998). In the AS, leaders who identify as an *older brother or sister* delivered acts of service that aimed at *learning within a community by caring, giving and sharing* (see figure 7). These altruistic values guide the engagement in the delivery of the acts of service, as perceived by students during the focus group, 2013, 2014:

> '*AC3 was such a dedicated ambassador. She/he was not doing it for herself, she was doing it for the students. She was someone to turn to when we needed. She was there every single day. This person went through what I am going through now. We could integrate what we were being taught plus other things.*'

5.2.1.4 When participation in the community of practice enables a collective and individual learning journey

Within an academic year, three groups of participants interact: the MACI students, the ambassadors and the PINEIM. The experience of participation is dynamic and evolves within the specific boundaries of the community, but also beyond. The evolution of participation is multilayered. It takes place within each group, and across boundaries.

5.2.1.4.1 First layer of participation: participation within boundaries.
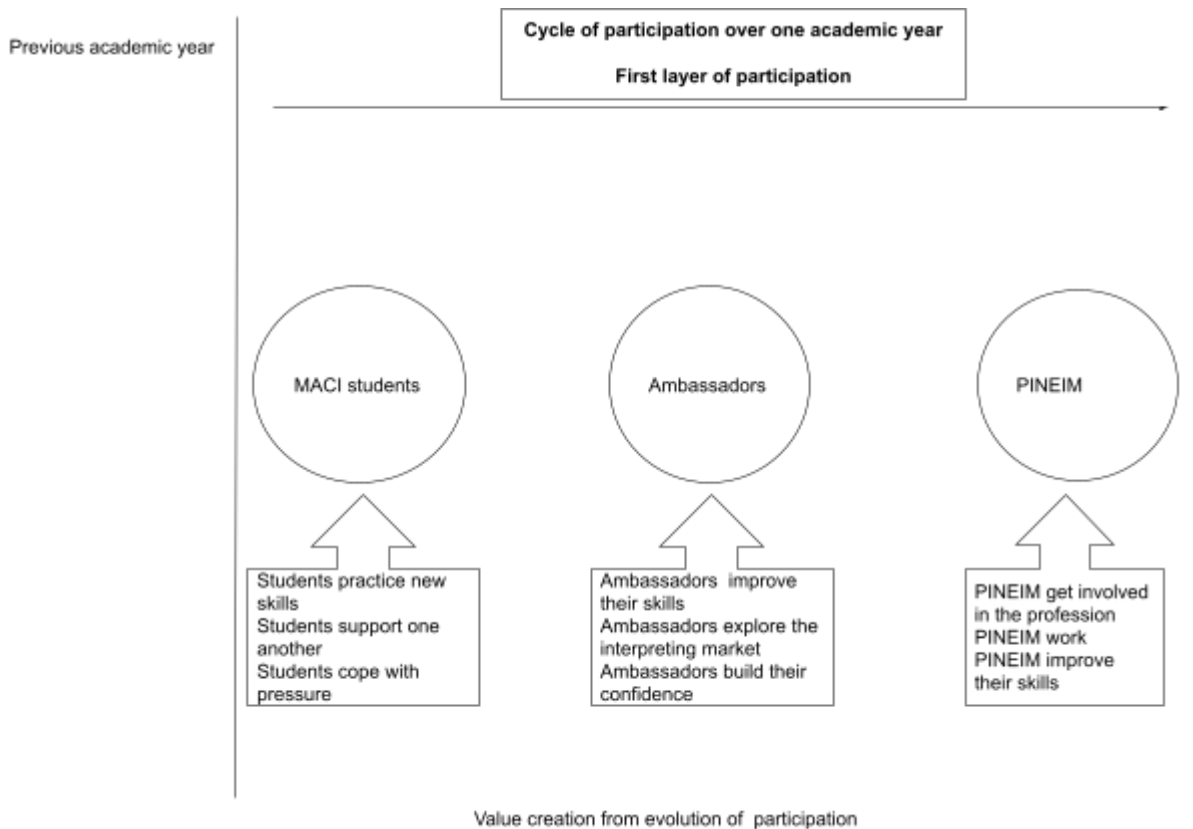
Figure 14: Cycles of participation over one academic year - First layer of participation

Students experience the immediate value of the community of practice mindset pedagogical approach from the very beginning of the MACI course. They feel excited to identify with their peers who care about the same passion and share the same professional horizon. As they engage with their learning, they internalise the potential value of participation with their peers. They experience the potential value through impact on their achievements and learning. They gain new skills through their shared work; they produce shared documents such as glossaries and speeches. They work in partnership with their peers; they support one another through challenges and gradually build trust (see figure 8). This is clearly expressed by PINEIM Maria:

> 'I think the course also encourages people to do that collaboration, to work with colleagues, and obviously you choose along the way who you are working with.' (Maria)

The experience of participation little by little generates a safe social learning environment that feels like a "bubble" conducive to learning. They have fully integrated the potential value to their learning and are now able to engage further in

the process of learning. They apply their agency to shape their approach to learning at an individual and collective level.

> 'Each of us would have their terminology prepared, subjects studied, so we would always be able to rely on each other, and practice at the university, out of university, giving each other peer feedback, constructive feedback as well.' (PUINEIM Anna)

They build confidence in their professional identity, find their voice and feel they are coming closer to their objective, which is graduation and further professional development. In this context, graduation is the visible realised value (Hattie, 2009, 2016) that everyone can see. Graduation is the formal outcome of the learning journey (Cross, 2007) that was guided by formal learning (curriculum). It is a landmark that acknowledges a formal qualification but also a partnership gained through informal learning that is not visible in any formal university statistics, or ranking. This was clearly expressed by PINEIM Maria when discussing the professional partnership with peers:

> 'It was after we graduated, and you said, I remember you said something like, "let's work like associates".' (Maria)

However, learning through the experience of participation is transformative in perhaps less visible ways (Hattie, 2016). It presents broader and deeper effects which are captured in the pre-participatory stage data of the AS. The transformative value is demonstrated in the *motivation* experienced by graduates who wish to engage as ambassadors (See 4.2.1.2). Their prime motivation not only involves their *commitment to professional development*, it also involves the altruistic value of *giving back to the community*. Finally, these two motivations are integrated into the third one which is *being part of a community that shares the same motivation* based on *togetherness and trust* (See Figure 6).

> 'The networking amongst people [students] was amazing. I've never really bonded with anybody as much as I have with such a large group that I've ever done, so I think we need to keep at it.'
> (Focus group 22th October 2015)

The transformative value embraces a collaborative approach to personal objectives for professional development, as well as altruistic care for peers. Graduates are aware of their own value through learning; the transformative value is captured in the purpose of their participation in the AS, which is l*earning within a community by caring and sharing* (see Figure 7).

This initial layer of participation within boundaries is transformative. The experience of participation has led to shaping identity. By the end of the experience of participation within the group, participants have situated their transformation in the wider context of their professional and personal development. They are ready to engage further into their learning journey.

> 'I have often said one of the London Met's strengths is the emphasis on teamwork. This runs counter to traditional conference interpreter training, which can be influenced by individualism and competitive rivalry. I believe mutual support and an encouraging atmosphere enhance learning and professional growth. Thank you!' (Anonymous comment in Questionnaire)

5.2.1.4.2 Second layer of participation: participation across boundaries

Evolutions of participation within and across boundaries are interconnected and form a dynamic approach that enhances learning and professional development.
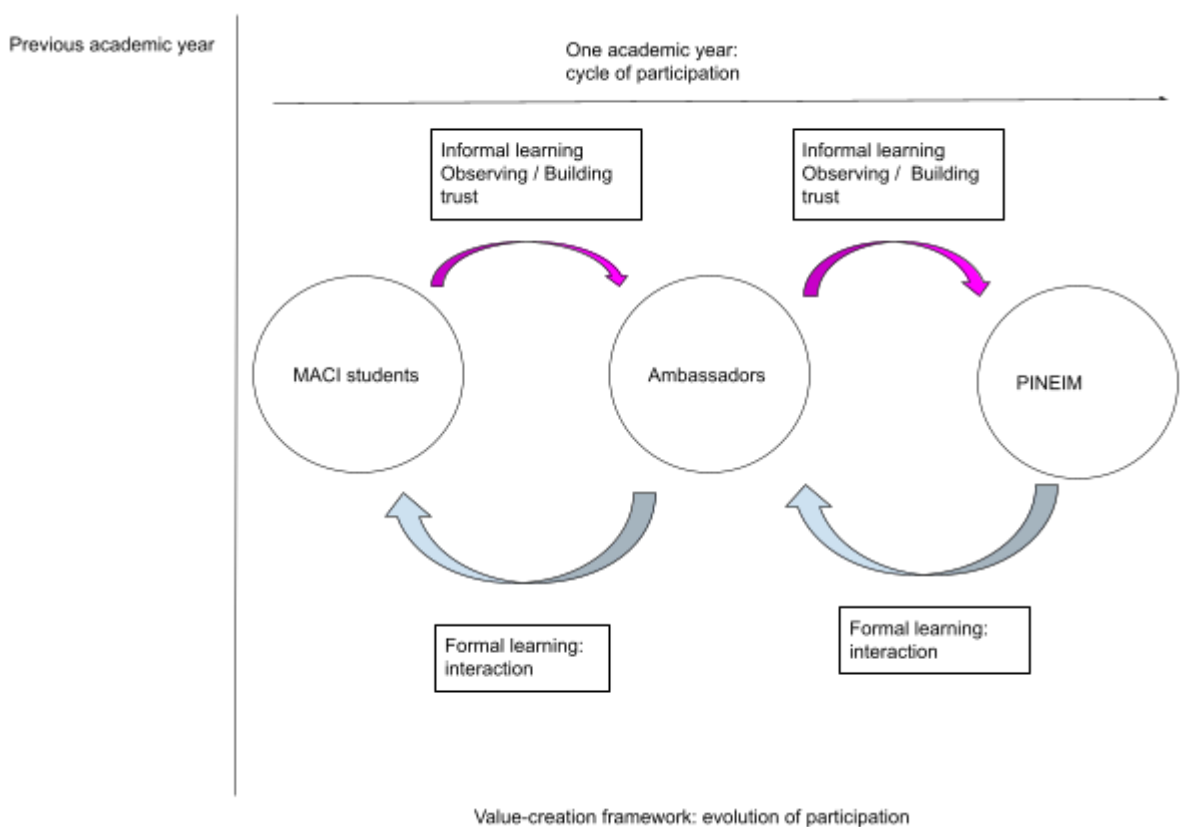
Figure 15: Cycles of participation over one academic year - value-creation framework: evolution of participation

The MACI students experience the collective learning approach with their peers within the boundaries of the course. They 'surround [themselves] with people who aim in the same direction to keep the momentum going and get the drive.' (Focus group 2015). This collective experience of learning forms ties based on trust. Students experience hardship together. They 'go through the same struggles' (Focus group 2015) and make progress together thanks to the mutual '*incredible support*' (Focus group 2015) provided within the community. They value this experience that brings them closer together.

However, they are not alone. Beyond the boundaries of their own cohort, in the distance, they can observe a group of graduates who are slightly ahead in their professional development. Officially, they know about the ambassadors. They were formally introduced to the ambassadors by the course leader who explained what the AS was. They were invited to share a social lunch together; ambassadors were

invited to formally contribute to classes and informally drop by when they wish. At this stage, students and ambassadors experience the immediate value of engagement across boundaries. But engagement across boundaries takes time; it happens gradually. It requires observation from a distance, a sense of purpose and trust. Engagement across boundaries takes two forms.

One is fairly formal. It is initiated by ambassadors who have included *giving back to the community* in their domain (See Figure 6). They know from their recent experience that they can make a difference to students. They identify with them and see their role as *an older brother or sister* (See 4.2.2.2.2.b). They empathise with them as they remember what the experience was like at this stage of their studies.

> '[We are not tutors], (we are) just like an older brother or older sister. I don't know how to put it. Just someone who is being very helpful and, you know, I'm here if you need me (...) [Someone]Who's been through the experience and can offer it. Yeah, because it's not only just in terms of interpreting. It's all the other stuff, you know, administration and, you know, placements for example.' (Focus group 25th September 2014)

They formally engage and organise interpreting practice sessions. Students and ambassadors together experience the potential value of participation in the scheme.

The second form is more informal and often invisible. It is about observing and building trust. When ambassadors contact students and engage with them, they open a door. Students understand ambassadors are *not tutors, nor students* (See 4.2.2.2.2.a). Ambassadors describe their identity as *an older brother or sister* who is there to enhance *learning within a community by caring, giving and sharing*.

> 'They [students] probably would ask the questions which they would feel that they've already received answers from the tutors, they still obviously didn't get it, so the reassurance that you can provide students, because it was only a year ago that we were in the same boat and it seems terrifying for some of them.' (Focus group 22nd October 2015)

However, even when the door is open, it requires commitment, trust and confidence to come through and engage. Students need to decide. They may decide collectively with the support of peers. They may decide individually and *learn about themselves*

as individuals. Engaging from the potential value to the applied value is critical when moving across boundaries. These *challenges* were captured in the data and refer to the *initial engagement between students and ambassadors* which may feel artificial and distant. Ambassadors then may lose motivation and *engagement gets irregular and unpredictable.*

Building trust will then become even more critical. The role of storytelling is essential. If ambassadors identify with students, students need to relate to ambassadors and project themselves thanks to the ambassadors' achievements that contribute to motivate them.

> 'Yeah,(…) it's nice how the students can see how like my God, they did it, I can do it as well. We're kind of an inspiration to them as well and it's very nice.' (Focus group 22nd October 2015)

Students hear the stories of the ambassadors who share their recent experience as students, but also as ambassadors engaging in their transitional journey to young professionals individually, and within the community. Little by little, they identify with the ambassadors who offer support and opportunities to practise interpreting. Both ambassadors and students will then continuously interact as the boundaries between the two groups are porous, and at times transparent.

> 'Today, it was a very difficult speech. She [the student] was very impressive though, but she has actually been giving me [the ambassador] feedback as well, which is really useful, because my first reaction was a bit why are you giving me feedback, but I thought, well, actually no, of course it's valid, because there are things which I say in English which don't make sense when I'm interpreting and she's obviously well qualified to criticise that, because she speaks English, so yeah, it's been good to get different perspectives from everyone.' (Focus group 22nd October 2015)

5.2.1.5 Agency in the landscape of practice

Communities of Practice may sound complicated and hard work as they require commitment and an understanding of leading skills in a social learning environment to create and maintain the domain relevant to the practice and practitioners (Garavan et al, 2007; Garfield, 2018)). However, the experience of participation within and across boundaries of the AS demonstrates the transformative value to the ambassadors, and as a result, the impact on their engagement in the landscape of practice.

Their journey represents participation in evolution across three specific stages of their professional development and is well captured in the key themes that represent each participation stage, as demonstrated below.
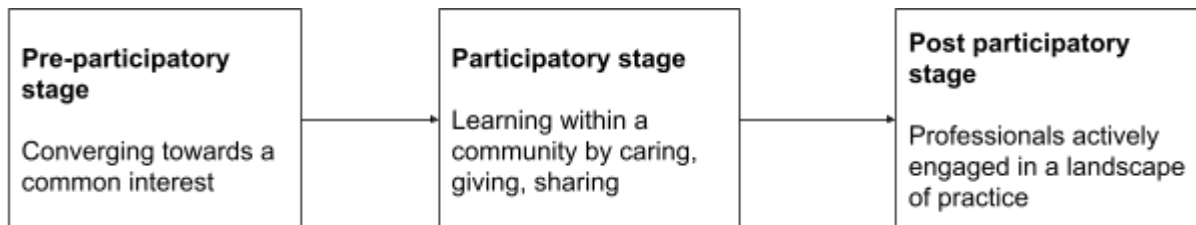
Figure 16 Added value of each participatory stage for the ambassadors scheme

Figure 16: Added value of each participatory stage for the Ambassadors' Scheme

Each participatory stage is the result of a commitment made at an individual level to engage for one's personal and professional development. But the engagement process did not occur in a void. It occured in the context of social learning, first with students, then with ambassadors-to-be during the pre-participatory stage. It continued with peer ambassadors and with students. And finally, individual agency was applied to decisions made to connect to the profession.

The CoP approach and the predictable cycles of participation is an opportunity for members to operate their agency to refine, adjust, innovate or pursue with the domain every academic year. During this process, their motivation comes from their reflection on what added value they have gained from their experience as students, but also on the values that bring them together into the CoP.

First and foremost, they enjoy the added ethical value of the *togetherness* that occurred from sharing the experience of learning and overcoming challenging times. They have internalised the value of *togetherness* in their learning and professional development. This experience motivates and empowers them to engage with students, with ambassadors, and later on with colleagues. It empowers them to avoid what they fear the most; feeling disconnected and alone; having no one to practise interpreting with; losing motivation; losing skills through lack of practice; losing a safe and professional environment.

'I have quite a strong willpower, but still being alone, you know, it's very, very difficult to sit down and say, OK, I'm going to take the [audio] today and every week I'm going to practice, so this [joining the AS] is a way of doing that.' (Focus group 25th September 2014)

As PINEIM, they have developed a *collaborative mindset* that *built on the collaboration experience on the MACI and the AS* (see 4.2.2.4.3).

Their experience and agency over the dynamic evolution of participation within and beyond boundaries have empowered PINEIM to make decisions for themselves. They can identify what is worth their engagement.

'The things that you do take away from the scheme, interacting with colleagues and students, you do apply them, both in the booth, let's say, or on a more business side, when contacting clients, sometimes clients come along with ridiculous requests, you don't go and say, you know, write a rude email saying no, get out of my life. You (...) try to find a common ground.' (AC2)

They know how to observe in the distance and when to build trust to further engage. They value *togetherness* as a *natural asset to get started on the market (See 4.2.3.1)*.

'The [AS scheme] is a platform where you do not have to fear being reprimanded or scolded for maybe ideas which either go against the grain or for something you may just not know. You know, nobody is there to judge you, which on the one hand is good because that is how I approach colleagues.' (AC2)

Moving forward in professional development requires confidence in their skills and identity. This is enhanced by the experience of giving back. When *giving back to the community,* they not only *gain interpreting practice*; *giving back to students* is an opportunity to validate what they know in their eyes and those of students. *Reciprocity* shapes their identity. It confirms they no longer are students, nor ambassadors; they are PINEIM (See Figure 8).
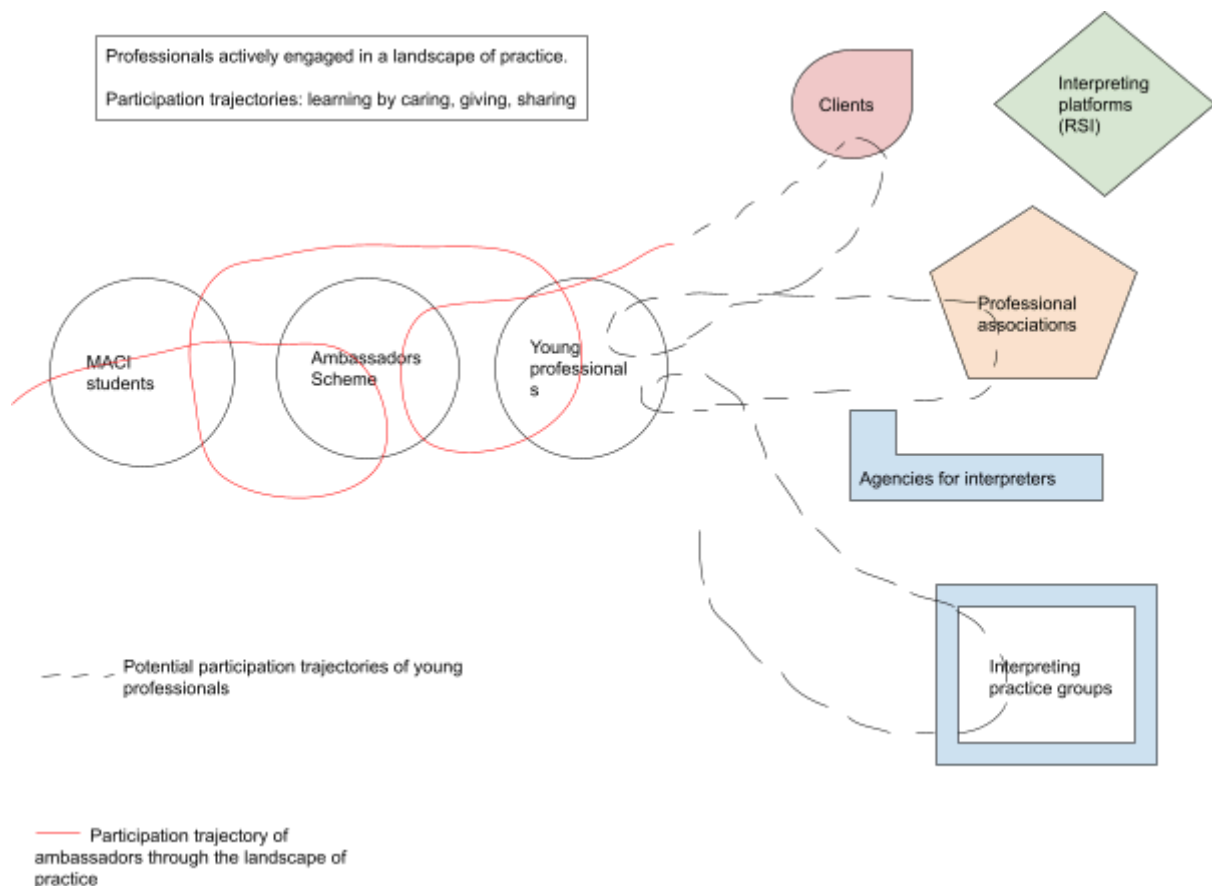
Figure 17: Professionals actively engaged in a landscape of practice - participation trajectories: learning by caring, giving, sharing

This trajectory through the landscape of practice is informed by the agency they have experienced in their participation in evolution. They have become *professionals engaged in a landscape of practice*. They are now *confident professionals with a voice* who are *engaged* and *connected*[76]. They engage and participate at formal, semi-formal and informal levels in the profession. As *professional conference interpreters* with *a collaborative mindset*, they understand *togetherness* and *trust* are their strength. They are not only able to identify the landscape of practice. They can navigate the landscape of practice, and contribute to shaping it (See 4.2.3.1.4).[77]

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[76] 92.3% of participants to the AS questionnaire declare they *have built their confidence as professional interpreters and feel ready to network both formally and informally*.

[77] 92.8% feel *ready to contribute to the interpreting profession*. Furthermore 69.24% participants (Question 31) go further and declare 'they now feel ready to play an active role within a professional interpreting association'. Actually 16.67% (Question 34) confirm 'they are currently actively involved in an interpreting professional organisation'.
See appendix 14 to access the link to the questionnaire outcomes.

This experience has equipped them with a learning approach that can be adapted in all walks of life: learning by caring, giving and sharing within boundaries but also across boundaries.

> 'if you needed to get something done or to prepare [for an interpreting assignment], I just knew if I was working with Maria and Anna it would be just completely pain-free and I could rely on them. (...). I think this is something that is actually amazing and differentiates London Met a lot (…) because we do rely on our colleagues and our colleagues don't let us down.' (Cecilia)

5.2.2 Virtual classes: a learning opportunity to enhance interpreting skills

5.2.2.1 Value creation aimed at interpreting skills improvement

From the data analysis, the virtual classes appear to be a network of tutors highly motivated to provide additional learning opportunities for their students (See 5.1.4.1). The added value of the VC for interpreting students as perceived by tutors is captured in the *benefits* they describe during the pre-participatory stage (see Figure 9): a*ccessible resources*, *partnerships* and *mutual benefits*. Unsurprisingly, the *common interest* of tutors and students at this stage is situated within the wider context of the original purpose of the virtual classes initiated by DG Interpretation (SCIC) at the European Commission; that is to *practise interpreting under pressure* and *getting objective feedback from experts (See 4.3.2.2.1).*

> 'I think it does a very good job in terms of preparing students for their possible future career tracks, because like it or not, but in future, most of the interpreters will be connected with remote interpreting and virtual classes help a lot in preparing them in making them not afraid of this kind of interpretation, so if we are not involved in interpreting virtually, then for them when they become working interpreters, it's going to be kind of a challenge whilst having this experience, we are not afraid of any kind of interpretation.' (Interview Tutor 4)

This clearly defined purpose that emerges from the data concurs with the outcome of the EMCI[78] ToT 2016 conference that offers an evaluation of the added value of virtual classes as skills-based enhancement classes. Leitao (2019) from DG SCIC offers an overview on the evolution of virtual classes with universities, with a focus on 'cultivating a good learning and teaching environment in VCs with SCIC'(p.380). In all three contexts, virtual classes are considered to be a teaching tool included in the curriculum, and therefore *prescribed* and taking place in a formal setting. The added value and pedagogical approach of the virtual classes logically fits in the traditional approach of interpreting training based on the apprenticeship model (Sawyer, 2004, p.43) inspired by the transmissionist model (Orlando, 2016), focused on a skill-acquisition influenced pedagogy (Moser Mercer, 2015).

Initially, the remoteness element of the VCs was considered to be a specific added value for its *forward thinking, exposing students to remote interpreting (See Figure 9).*

> 'They were definitely excited with this experience. They are so much used to the routine of classes, the way they are set up… So for them, it was a great change. And I noticed they were highly motivated'. (Tutor 6)

But as technology evolves with time, further adjustments will have to be made to keep the innovative perspective meaningful.

This experience of learning in the VC contrasts with the social learning approach experienced in the AS. The experience of participation in the VCs assimilates the transmissionist approach whereby learning is the acquisition of skills and knowledge and comes from experts. During the participatory stage, it is illustrated in the roles and identities that are static and *prescribed*. Tutors lead, interpreters practise, observers observe. And the content and approach are dictated by a detailed and timed script. As a result, there is no room for the 'unplanned', unintentional learning that could occur from student-led spontaneous contributions. There appears to be no sign of engagement between the students of the two institutions that could lead to

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[78] EMCI: European Masters in Conference Interpreting: https://www.emcinterpreting.org/emci/application/files/1315/2293/6751/ToT_Prague_Feb2016-Group2_Report_on_VC_related_issues_CG.pdf (Accessed 2 April 2021)

building trust. During the VCs with London Met, the last 15 minutes of the session were dedicated to some form of engagement between the two student cohorts but the approach is artificial, imposed and perhaps contrasting with their usual experience of participation in the VC.

During VCs, students learnt from comparing themselves with peers. It is quite difficult to engage openly in such a context; peers are no longer potential equal peers. They are either classified as 'better than me' or 'worse than me' (See 4.3.2.3.2).

As a result, it is not surprising that the post participatory stage demonstrates a disconnect (See Figure 11).

Pre-Participatory stage	Participation stage	Post participation stage
Converging towards a common interest?	Added value	Disconnect
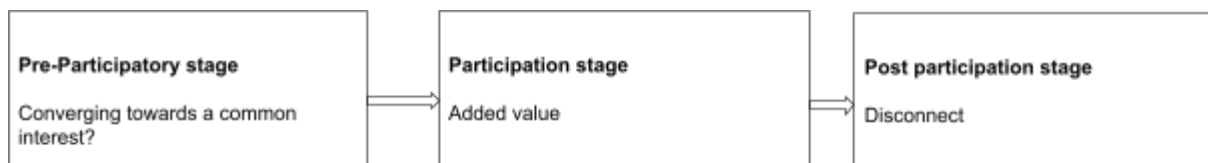
Figure 18: Added value of each participatory stage for the virtual classes

The closed Facebook group 'Virtual Interpreting at London Met' was an invitation to step outside the formal context of the VC. All London Met students and some students from partner universities connected. Even though the prime ambition, which was to offer a safe online space to support informal interaction between students that could potentially develop into a collaborative space even a CoP, was ambitious. However, it demonstrates a platform alone needs far more than just a few posts to build trust (Wenger et al, 2009). It also confirms that designing for a CoP takes time, strategy and vision (Barab and Duffy, 2012, p.59).
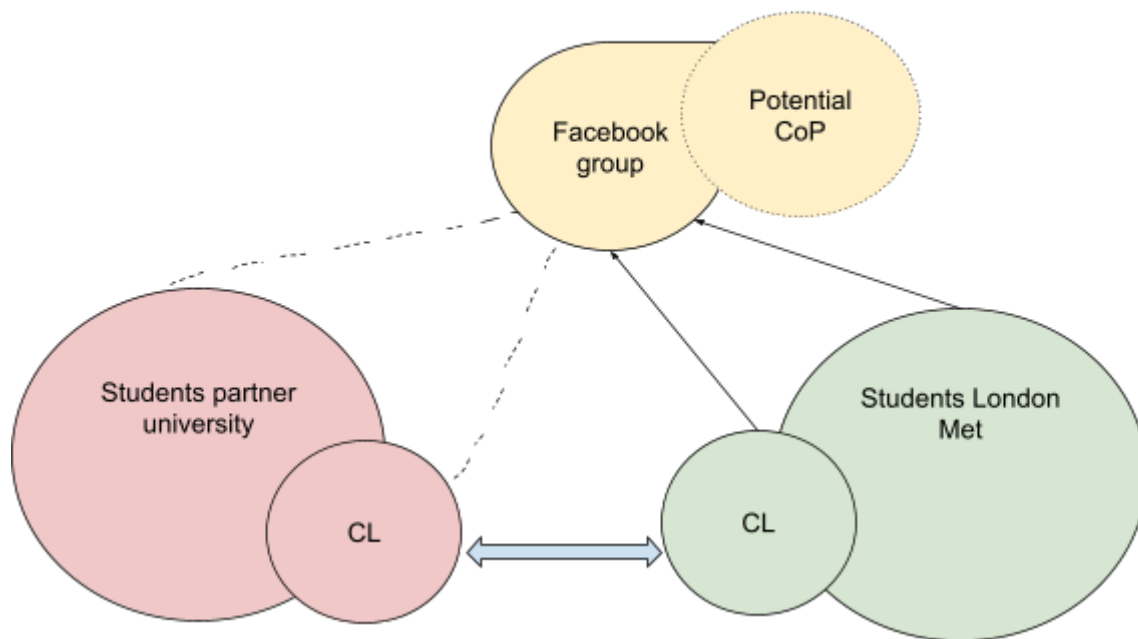
Figure 19: Bilateral virtual classes with London Met: potential student led communities of practice?

5.2.2.2 The added value of connectivism: a network of motivated tutors

The observation of the experience of the virtual classes over three years provides an extensive observation of the learning and engagement between participants and tutors over the boundaries of institutions, countries, language and educational systems. All universities that London Met connected with belong to the same network of universities that specialise in interpretation such as CIUTI or EMCI. This membership is a factor that was decisive when initially connecting. All the universities London Met connected with had experienced virtual classes with DG SCIC. This membership element was essential as tutors knew each other from formally participating in conferences and meetings that involved international professional networking events, and informally interacting during these events. Furthermore, connections included following one another on social media, getting up to date with publications and even taking part in common projects. One can say with confidence that the relationship between the researcher and the tutors involved in the virtual

217

classes with London Met was based on trust, built formally and informally over a number of years, appreciation and respect of one another as colleagues, and motivation to enhance the experience of their respective students in the wider context of professional development for interpreters[79]. Each tutor represents an institution, a language combination, and a country. As nodes, tutors are connected to a wider network. When two nodes connect, two different networks connect. But as demonstrated clearly in this case, 'the starting point of connectivism is the individual' (Siemens, 2004. p.5). As illustrated in Figure 9, tutors demonstrate that their commitment to engage is based on motivation (*Accessible resources, partnerships, mutual benefits*) and outweighs the challenges that impact them as individuals (*increased workload, tutor isolation, technical and pedagogical challenges*). Finally, it is interesting to note that most tutors shared the same language as the researcher, which reinforced affinity and a common identity. This was perceived during the interviews with tutors, carried out in the language of the researcher and not that of the research. The information that was shared was far more open and precise with a stronger will to connect and contribute[80].

To conclude, even though the data demonstrates there is a disconnect between students over the boundaries of institutions, the tutors are connected in a network that was initiated years before the beginning of the virtual classes. This long term connection based on trust fed the motivation to initiate bilateral virtual classes with London Met. So here again, trust and identity are two essential factors that feed the motivation to connect (See Table 1). These are altruistic values of great importance when building communities of practice and engaging in social learning spaces. They are implicit and invisible, but essential when initiating a connection .

5.2.2.3 Connecting over boundaries and identities: a reflexive account

The researcher, also the course leader at London Met, initiated the idea of exploring the potential value inspired by the initial experience of the virtual classes. Based on the experience of social learning and the community of practice mindset embedded in the pedagogy of the MACI and the Ambassadors' Scheme, the researcher thought

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[79] This is based on the personal observation of the inside researcher who is the course leader at London Met.
[80] This is based on the personal observation of the inside researcher who is the course leader at London Met.

that a similar approach across countries and universities would be of *mutual benefit* for the students, who could then connect beyond the formality of the virtual classes to carry on their practice and get to know one another. Thus in the future, once graduated, there would be a context of mutual support and collaboration rather than a feeling of isolation after graduation, suspicion of one another when entering the market, and of competition with peers in accessing interpreting assignments.

However, in the light of this qualitative research outcome, reflexivity invites the inside researcher, who initiated the project of a potential CoP model for bilateral virtual classes with London Met, to revisit the initial motivation behind such an ambitious endeavour. The word 'naive' springs to mind to describe the initial beliefs of the researcher. A reflexive approach to the outcome of this research highlights a number of essential points that have emerged and which had an impact on the feasibility of this endeavour. When designing for a potential CoP, the following outcomes come across as essential:

a.   What works in one context may not simply be transposed to another.

b.   What a group of students wants may not be what all students want.

c.   The passion, strong motivation and enthusiasm may not be enough to motivate and enthuse everyone.

d.   The relevance of educational systems that shape how students learn and interact with peers and tutors should not be underestimated. It shapes how groups interact, how trust is built and what defines values within the organisation.

e.   The learning experience in an education system influences the learning experience in the landscape of practice. They both affect one another. In the case of the VCs, a top-down approach based on a formal hierarchy is situated at the other end of the spectrum of the CoP theory, which is horizontal and egalitarian. As a result, tensions need to be anticipated.

f.   A great investment in time and regular interactions ('social microclimates' according to deChambeau, 2017, p.418) are required to build trust and get to know one another, especially online. Some factors such as connecting over time zones, accessing technology, benefiting from a good quality connection to hear well and be heard clearly especially for interpreting practice, are basic but essential. They have an impact on connecting with one another.

g.　　The need for guidance and leadership to generate meaningful interactions between members so that a safe space can be created is essential. An invitation to connect to a Facebook group does not suffice unless followed by invitations to come together for a very specific purpose. Here the role of the social artist or system convenor is essential. There needs to be a space to negotiate meaning and define the domain.

h.　　Finally, CoPs are not the only structures that lead to a collaborative approach. It may be useful to gradually build a social learning space that may lead to a CoP or even to focus on a CoP mindset to help describe the intentions and context of a social interaction.

To conclude, a community of practice mindset may be an initial step that may lead to a transition to a more horizontal egalitarian approach that would enhance the benefit of social learning and a collaborative approach to interpreting studies within courses, hoping it will gradually impact and transform the interpreting profession and its landscape of practice.

5.3 Participation trajectories: a CoP for the interpreting profession guided by ethical values of learning within a community by caring, giving and sharing.

Participation within boundaries (see Figure 14) and across boundaries (figure 15) are conducive to enhancing learning. This dynamic experience of participation creates a momentum and contributes to building confidence to further travel in the landscape of practice of the profession (See Figure 17).

However, it also suggests that participation trajectories are multidirectional. The outcome of this research is an invitation to rethink the traditional model that is used to organise the interpreting profession, whereby the trajectory suggests students are on the periphery of the profession and gradually move inwards to reach the professionals, as traditionally portrayed in the initial studies on CoP inspired by the apprenticeship model (Wenger, Lave 1991).

Based on the experience of participation within and across boundaries, students, ambassadors and PINEIM should be at the very heart of the profession, valued by

professionals that surround, protect, guide and welcome newcomers to the profession as a source of opportunities to strengthen their knowledge, and continue learning by caring, giving and sharing. This approach would encourage established interpreters to have a specific role and identity connected to the momentum of participation trajectories that are initiated with students, ambassadors, PINEIM and established professional interpreters. This would involve professional associations that could act as special bridges between boundaries to facilitate trajectories and participations.
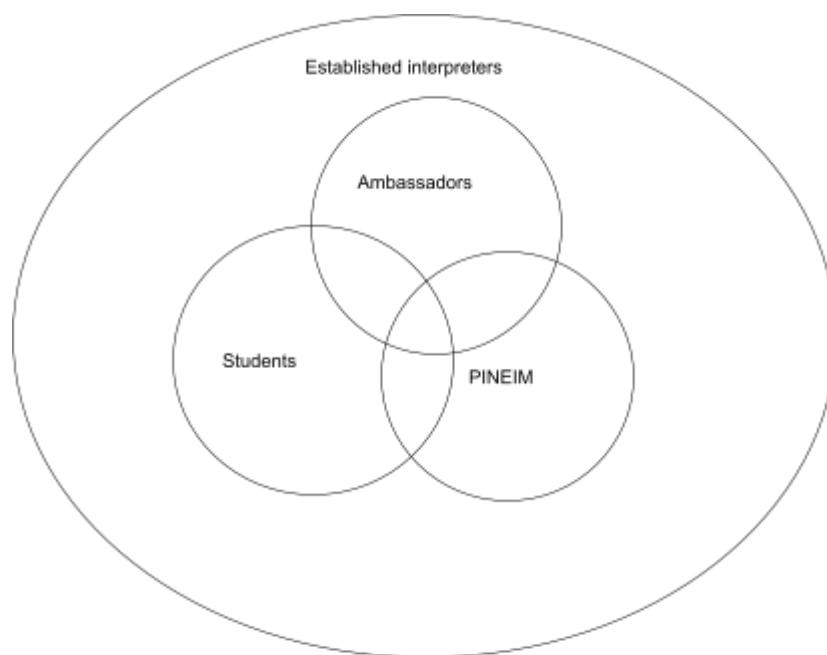
Figure 20: Participation trajectories: A CoP for the interpreting profession guided by ethical values of learning within a community by caring, giving and sharing

Figure 20: Participation trajectories: A CoP for the interpreting profession guided by ethical values of learning within a community by caring, giving and sharing

The previous sections in this chapter evidence the added value of such a model and demonstrate that newcomers to the profession should not be considered as newcomers since they have been involved with the interpreting profession for years through their studies and engagement. Their experience of participation has transformed them into professionals that already embrace the values of the CoP experience of participation. They have been full participants in the profession and have an experience of *learning within a community by caring, giving and sharing*. The CoP is the cradle of its values negotiated and nurtured by its members. It can enrich the ethical values already established in the Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics for interpreters, for example 'moral assistance' and 'collegiality' from Article 6 of the AIIC Code of Professional Ethics[81].

To conclude, this chapter has attempted to tell the story of the experience of dynamic participation in the AS and the VC. It has provided an insight on the learning experience within a CoP, such as the AS. It has highlighted the differences between what represents a social learning space and what may appear like one but actually is not. It has revealed the added value of a dynamic participation within and across boundaries and the impact on identity transformation. It has offered an opportunity to understand how the academic year structure in HE could not only accommodate but also be strategically instrumentalised to predict the levels of participation. Finally, it has suggested that a CoP mindset and a CoP approach could change the way the profession is organised and the added value it may generate, with a direct impact on the enhancement of the ethical values of the profession.

The chapter that follows moves on to the main conclusions of this study and its implication for interpreting studies and the profession. It will also present the limitations of the research and recommendations for further research.

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[81] Article 6 a) It shall be the duty of members of the Association to afford their colleagues moral assistance and collegiality.(Available at:
https://aiic.org/document/6299/Code%20of%20professional%20ethics_ENG.pdf. Accessed: 3rd July 2021)

Chapter 6 Conclusions and implications

'Learning is not just an accumulation of skills and information but a process of becoming' (Wenger, 1998, p.125).

This research was inspired by a compelling desire to redesign the experience of conference interpreting students and graduates when transitioning between the end of their demanding structured studies at university, and the initial engagement in a competitive professional interpreting landscape of practice. Chapter 1 established that this gap between the two professional development stages is comparable to a no man's land (ref 1.3), where new graduates no longer get the support of the university, but are not yet integrated in the profession, as they still need to build their reputation and skills to prove they are worth the trust of established practitioners, both in the market and in professional associations. This challenging lonely transition affects the shaping of their professional identity and reinforces the competitive mindset that characterises the conference interpreting profession.

The AS and VC were selected as two relevant case studies that could potentially offer an insight into what appeared to be collaborative initiatives that evolve across boundaries. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the AS and the VC were operating as organically grown communities of practice or if perhaps they were suited for their potential emergence. If so, the aim was to understand whether the experience of participating in a social learning space such as a community of practice enhanced learning, especially in the context of professional development, mainly when transitioning between identities and boundaries; e.g. (i) from being a student, to evolving as a graduate, and finally entering the profession (AS); or (ii) connecting with peers of similar language combinations across institutions, to enhance their deliberate practice and a collaborative approach while entering the interpreting market as new graduates (VC).

Furthermore, the wider ambition was to cross-pollinate interpreting-specific findings to the wider context of Higher Education, especially for professional courses that require transitioning from educational to professional contexts.

Chapter 4 presented and analysed a substantial data corpus collected over a three year period (2013 to 2016), consisting of two questionnaires, four focus groups and ten semi-structured interviews. This corpus was analysed to capture the experience of engagement of participants through the three temporal, dynamic participation stages.

The study aimed at giving a voice to all the participants of the two case studies. The students and ambassadors and PINEIM from London Met were offered opportunities such as focus groups, semi guided interviews and questionnaires. As a result, the researcher is confident that the data reflects what participants wanted to express in groups, individually with her or in the comfort of their own home.

On the other hand the voice of students that participated in virtual classes from partner universities was captured by their tutors. The questionnaires were posted on the Facebook group dedicated to virtual classes but only 2 participants responded. As a result the data that represents their direct views is not as rich as that of London Met students. With further participation on their part or further encouragement to respond, perhaps the data would have been slightly altered. This is a limitation of the study. In any case their non-participation perhaps reflects the sense of *disconnect* that came through the data analysis.

To the researcher's knowledge, no such study has been carried out before. It is the first time that a study so closely looks at CoPs in the context of interpreting studies, especially in dealing with the thorny question of graduates transitioning to the professional market (Chapter 1, section 1.4.2). This is highlighted by Duflou's (2016) substantial research that looked at the integration of newly accredited EU interpreters into the wider community of EU interpreters as a CoP. In her conclusion, she emphasises the need for developing educational provision that can bridge the route into professional working:

> The findings of this study open perspectives for schools and trainers to better prepare future graduates for the reality of professional interpreters' work, be it in institutional or private market meetings. Duflou (2016, p.315)

Tiselius's (2013) research on 'experience and expertise' also suggests that further 'longitudinal or long term research' would be welcome to 'understand what

intra-individual development there is beyond interpreting programmes' (p.98). This research offers an insight on the value of CoPs in inter-individual development for interpreting students, graduates and PINEIM.

Therefore, the evidenced findings are expected to be of significant interest to the universities that deliver interpreting education programmes, the professional associations and the interpreting profession as a whole. They are presented below and organised into two principal conclusions: one represents the contributions to knowledge for interpreting studies; the other represents the contributions to knowledge for education, more specifically the added value of CoPs in Higher Education, especially with respect to professional courses. They are followed by recommendations aimed at both fields. Finally a few suggestions for further research conclude the works.

6.1 Conclusion 1. The experience of a dynamic participation in a community of practice enhances learning and identity transformation over boundaries in interpreting studies, and contributes to filling the gap between graduation and engagement in a professional landscape of practice. Why it matters for interpreters and the profession.

The outcome of this research demonstrates that the AS operates as a CoP, as defined by Wenger (2002). On the other hand, the VC case study represents a network of tutors, and not a CoP. The experience of participation in the AS is dynamic as revealed in the three temporal stages of participation captured by this research over three cohorts. This is quite innovative as most studies on CoPs only capture a snapshot of the experience of participation in a CoP. Thus, the conclusive points that follow are presented with confidence as they represent the findings established from a detailed analysis of considerable qualitative data that captured the experience of participants over three years.

As this conclusion is fairly substantial, it encompasses the following sub-conclusions that constitute the essential conditions required for the set up, running and maintenance of a CoP in interpreting studies (but not only), and in HE (but not only), that have emerged from the data.

6.1.1 Situating learning in terms of the social theory of learning

The first key precept that emerges from the outcome of this research is an invitation to revisit the concept of learning in interpreting studies and situate its meaning in a social learning context. Traditionally the apprenticeship model with a skills-based approach prevails during interpreting studies (see 1.4.1). This entails a selective and hierarchical approach to interpreting practice, with feedback delivered by expert practitioners to novices. At the end of the academic year, learning is traditionally assessed with formal visible exams run by practitioners and academics who measure how closely a student interprets to a professional level (see 1.3.1).

This approach is essential as interpreters need to be taught and assessed on their interpreting skills by both academics and practitioners. But it is incomplete. Situating interpreting professional development stages within a CoP framework offers the opportunity to give the social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998, p.5) centre stage, hence integrating the four aspects of learning throughout:

- 'Practice: learning as doing
- Community: learning as belonging
- Meaning: learning as experience
- Identity: learning as becoming.'

As the data analysis provides an understanding of the learning experience over three dynamic temporal stages of participation (see 5.2.1), the value-creation framework (see 5.2) offers an opportunity to confirm the experience of social learning within and across boundaries (see, 5.2.1.4) for the AS, but not for the VC. The outcome of this research demonstrates that commitment and belonging to the community motivates members to take an active role and exercise agency to continuously negotiate meaning so as to define the purpose of the community, its practice and who they are becoming in the process. *Converging towards a common interest*[82] contributes to developing *trust* and creating a safe space so that *learning within a community by*

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[82] See figures 6, 16

caring, giving and sharing[83] takes place. The values of participation, such as *learning by caring, giving and sharing, trust, a collaborative mindset* and *a professional activity* based on *togetherness*[84], reside in participants even beyond the CoP experience, and contribute to transform their identity and approach to learning as *motivated social lifelong learners*[85] and *professionals actively engaged in a landscape of practice*[86].

On the other hand, the experience of participation in the VCs demonstrates that it is not a social learning space (see 4.3); the absence of negotiation of meaning among all members averts further contact between peers who just met punctually for a well defined task, that was to practise interpreting according to a programme well defined by tutors networked together. Even though tutors perceive the *mutual benefits*[87] of VCs, learning is described as *learning from comparing with others* and *learning from expert objective feedback*[88]. This competitive type of learning reinforces boundaries on many levels: a distance between experts and novices; a comparative mindset between institutions; and a divide between participants who compare one another and situate peers according to how well they perform under pressure. This experience of learning feeds the competitive mindset that characterises the interpreting profession established on reputation and skills (see 1.2.1). The impact of this experience of learning is demonstrated with the post participatory data that reveals *a lack of engagement* due to factors that keep participants apart rather than together: *leadership, group dynamic and cultural influence*[89]. The *lack of ownership of professional development*[90] demonstrates the challenges participants face and the need for graduates to *adopt an individualistic approach* when trying to *survive in an unregulated*[91] *market* as they engage in a *landscape of practice characterised by impermeable boundaries* [92].

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[83] See figures 7, 16
[84] See figures 8, 16
[85] See figures 8, 16
[86] See figures 8, 16
[87] See figure 9
[88] See figure 10
[89] See figures 8, 16
[90] See figures 8, 16
[91] See figures 8, 16
[92] See figures 8, 16

The pertinence of the added value of learning in a CoP is reinforced as it emerges from a comparative analysis of two experiences of participation. The essential findings that follow emanate from the data analysis that provides an insight on what happens when the various forms of added value are present, but also when they are not.

Chapter 4 demonstrates that the two case studies offer two genera of learning, but present very different outcomes. The data shows that in the case of the AS, the negotiation of meaning is at the very heart of the engagement in terms of social theory of learning. To enable this process, members of the potential community were given the opportunity to be agents of the community and their own learning. The research demonstrates that the social theory of learning, together with the experience of participation in a community of practice, offer a multidimensional approach to learning that has a direct impact on the shaping of identity of individuals at personal and professional levels. Chapter 5 demonstrates that the added value gained through learning can be assessed in terms of **value-creation** that is individual, collective and situated.

This approach to learning is an invitation to move away from a competitive mindset and embrace an egalitarian non-hierarchical community of practice mindset, which invites agency to negotiate meaning and build a supportive community that focuses on what brings people together rather than what keeps them apart. Learning no longer resides in a course or a programme, neither does it reside in experienced experts; learning resides in the experience of social participation in a supportive community of practice where members negotiate the meaning of what they do and who they become over cycles of professional development that includes the experience as students on the master's programmes.

This experience of learning as meaningful participation which starts when students engage in the master's programme sows the seeds for a community of practice mindset that has the potential to transform the competitive interpreting landscape of practice into a safe and supportive space that is inviting and inclusive; a trusted social space for learning where together practitioners engage in a process of professionalisation to perhaps gain the protected title the profession so much needs.

6.1.2 Rethinking roles and identities: an invitation to design for the emergence of CoPs in interpreting studies

The second key precept highlights that roles and identities are directly connected to designing for the emergence of CoPs in interpreting studies. Chapter 5 demonstrates that to break isolation after graduation and bridge the gap with getting started as a professional interpreter, alumni play an essential role when they come together to form a CoP. As a community, they interact with peers, students and PINEIM over stages of participation within and over boundaries.

This first requires embracing a non-hierarchical horizontal approach (see 5.1.4). Then, what immediately follows is the need for a leader, also referred to as the social artist or system convener (in this case the Course Leader) whose role is to create, maintain and nurture a power-full, sustainable, safe and welcoming home over the momentum of the academic year (see 5.2.1.2) so that members feel empowered to become full agents of their becoming (see 5.2.3.1).

6.1.2.1 A horizontal approach

In the context of interpreting studies observed in this research, the traditional top-down tutor-student model is perhaps inevitable in some education systems. However, the research outcome demonstrates that the apprenticeship model alone is not conducive to a CoP mindset, as demonstrated in the VC.

The horizontal structure that underpins the CoP framework attenuates the somewhat intimidating novice/expert paradigm that has been observed in the data analysis of the two case studies.

6.1.2.2 A CoP needs a sustainable, safe and welcoming home: the crucial role of the course leader - leading as an act of service

Chapter 5, section 5.2.1.3 highlights the social art of leading in a safe social learning space as an enabling value for a CoP. Leading as 'an act of service' has to be perceived by the community as an altruistic value that inspires trust. This is even more relevant when designing for the emergence of a CoP. The research outcome for

the AS demonstrates that the course leader is the decisive person whose role is essential for the CoP to exist and last beyond the constraints of members leaving at the end of the academic year.

The role of the CL is to facilitate the emergence of a safe space that becomes the home of the community. The social art of leading with a CoP mindset is to create social participation within and beyond boundaries to offer an opportunity to negotiate meaning and define a sustainable, safe and welcoming home (see Chapter 5).

Tutors and course leaders are highly valued in the AS and the VC. Even though in the VC, tutors refer to many challenges such as *workload* and *isolation*, they come across as motivated to ensure students get exposed to remote interpreting. They lead and value *partnerships, and accessible resources.*

6.1.2.3 The centre stage of alumni

The AS invites the official involvement of alumni in interpreting studies. The outcome of the research showcases how their presence and contribution is of mutual benefit to both students, ambassadors and tutors. Their role is essential in supporting students. They have an opportunity to discover the added value of '*giving back*.' Ambassadors describe themselves as *an older sibling* with more experience and in a position to *share*, *guide* and *care, as illustrated by a participant in the focus groups (2014): '[I am] just like an older brother or older sister. I don't know how to put it. Just someone who is being very helpful and, you know, I'm here if you need me.'*

This identity is defined by their relationship with students. The feeling of *giving back* is the acknowledgement that learning has occurred and is worth sharing (Figure 7). In turn, they are acknowledged as knowledgeable peers and describe their identity and role as in-between students and tutors (*not a student, nor a tutor)*.Through this experience they grow in confidence and competence, aiding their own transition into the wider landscape of professional practice.

6.1.2.4 Students experience the CoP mindset - motivational factor

The experience of social participation between students and ambassadors reassures students. It motivates them to move forward in their professional development, knowing that ambassadors can share their experience, and give advice when needed. Students experience the community of practice mindset. It is an experience they value which motivates them to then join the AS, as ambassadors themselves. The identity of ambassadors has become a landmark that comes with a community experience, and a sense of belonging to this community. It fills the gap and the isolated experience of no man's land described initially. It also invites students to feel their experience on the course is fully integrated in the bigger picture of professional development.

6.1.2.5 Situating visible professional developmental stages with identity transformation: an opportunity to add value

Chapter 1, section 1.2.2 provides a detailed account of the competitiveness of the interpreting market whereby new graduates are often associated with the 'free for all grey market' where it is difficult to differentiate between the professional interpreters and those who are not (Pöchhacker, 2016). This reinforces a *landscape of practice with impermeable boundaries*[93] and mistrust observed in the post-participatory stage of the VC.

The observations of this research invites the use of two new terms that describe graduates at different professional developmental stages: the ambassadors, and the PINEIM[94]. But other terms could be suggested, such as 'Junior professional interpreters.' The terms used for this research fitted well in the context of the two case studies. But the concept is an invitation to make the professional development stages visible to the interpreting profession, so that it supports the process of identity transformation and invites established interpreters to build trust and connect to the CoP, hence developing a sense of *togetherness* that PINEIM describe as *an asset to get started on the market*[95].

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[93] See figure 8
[94] PINEIM: Professional Interpreters Newly Engaged in the Interpreting Market
[95] Figure 8

The data provides ample evidence that supports identity transformation for students, ambassadors and PINEIM but also for course leaders and staff. At each stage of their professional development, the research findings show value creation (Chapter 5, section 5.2).

The research outcomes offer an invitation and opportunity for the interpreting profession to come closer together across boundaries of professional development stages to negotiate their identity, organisation and role in the world. This may be a process that takes some time, trial and error and that will hopefully be supported with further research. But it has the potential to be a turning point for the interpreting profession to go beyond the apprenticeship model and build confidence to place students, graduates and PINEIM at the very heart of the CoP that will encompass the profession as a whole, as explained in Chapter 5, section 5.3 and illustrated in figure 20. The profession could then embrace the active role to protect, nurture, guide and learn from the value creation opportunities offered by the newcomers to the profession, who are not only the graduates, the PINEIM, but also the students. Together, they represent the profession.

6.2 Conclusion 2: CoPs are strategically visible and sustainable in HE when they integrate the academic calendar - cycles of participation

The findings that shape conclusion 1 offer insights on designing for the emergence of CoPs for interpreting studies that run at postgraduate level in universities across the globe, and that are transferable to other professional courses such as Sports studies (Owen-Pugh, 2007; O'Donavan and Kirk, 2008) or Doctoral studies (Bitterman, 2008).

6.2.1 Alumni are essential in the design and sustainability of CoPs in HE

The research outcome highlights the value of participation of graduates as alumni. Their presence is currently accidental in interpreting studies and in HE. This research is an invitation to reconsider their role and identity in HE. What the research outcome demonstrates is that their presence is an extraordinary asset that motivates new students and peers (see Chapter 4). They set an example of good practice to

students and peers that no tutor could ever do. Contrary to existing schemes[96] that bring together participants from different courses who do not know each other, ambassadors set a community of peers who not only know each other from their experience of togetherness on the course (see Chapter 4), but have established trust from the experience of participation as students. Since the group already has a history, it contributes to the community being alive, together and vibrant, and capable of negotiating meaning so as to define the domain, practice and community at its new stage of development.

The CoP contributes to creating resources that are of great value to the community but also to the university. Students are grateful to the university for its commitment to them. It enhances the mission universities have to transform lives. This was very well captured by AC1:

> 'I kind of felt that it was too soon to be left completely on my own, - [laughs] yes – you know, that [I] really valued the contact, maintenance of contact, with the profession, with the course, with the university, with the whole atmosphere; I felt being left on my own suddenly was going to be very strange and quite difficult actually, I thought (...) I need more input, I need more for my interpreting, I need more practice, and I need, I still need to definitely improve.' (AC1)

6.2.2 The academic calendar sets a momentum for the sustainability of fully integrated CoPs in HE

One key aspect in the designing and sustainability of CoPs emerges from this study: the academic calendar is strategically used to create a momentum of participation that is predictable and that regulates the life cycles of the community (Chapter 5, section 5.2.1.4.2, and illustrated by figures 14 and 15). It counteracts the fear that all the work invested into the community ends with the departure of students. In this case, the cycles of participation offer regularity and predictability.

As a result, there is an opportunity for the negotiation of meaning to be refreshed and continuous. The regularity of the cycles of participation allows a trajectory that gradually allows trust to develop. As CoPs need time to develop, the cycles of

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[96] An example of such scheme at London Met is the PASS Scheme (Peer Assisted Student Success): https://student.londonmet.ac.uk/your-studies/study-resources/pass-scheme-peer-assisted-student-success/ (Accessed 7th July 2021)

participation allow the community to be vibrant and continuous, building strength and knowledge. This is a sustainable way to maintain the CoP alive over academic years and to fully integrate CoPs to the academic life.

6.3 Recommendations for institutions that run interpreting courses

Not all social learning spaces need to be CoPs. Networks and other structures can also be beneficial. But at the heart of these initiatives we should find the values of CoPs that have the potential to enrich the ethical values of the profession.

- The AS is a model that has the potential to inspire other universities to welcome their alumni as active partners in the curriculum design of master programmes.
- The AS is a model that demonstrates it goes further than bridging the gap between graduation and finding work. It is an opportunity to rethink learning as social participation. Seeber (2021, p.228) identifies the gap as the 'last mile' of training programmes. However, this study shows the gap is within the apprenticeship model and the skills-based approach that is essential but far too narrow.
- A top-down approach may be prevalent in some educational systems. It is not possible to change this approach overnight. But the process can start with creating small scale opportunities to offer students and staff the opportunity to negotiate meaning on a small scale.
- A CoP may feel challenging to initiate as it requires the confidence to create a safe space where participants can come together and establish trust or 'microclimate of trust' (Kubiak et al, 2014) to negotiate meaning (Wenger et al, 2002). This takes time (deChambeau, 2014) It can start with embracing a CoP mindset that gently introduces the ethical values of CoP. This can be observed in this study with the students' experience on the course who feel they are part of a community that *share the same motivation* and gradually *converge towards a common interest.* This study demonstrates the CoP mindset implies social participation that is likely to be informal, a collaborative approach that fosters engagement, a sense of *togetherness* and care for one another.

- Course leaders have a key role to play as designers of CoP or social learning spaces. There is already an existing network of tutors. It may be transformed into a CoP or be used to exchange good practice.

- This research is an opportunity to rethink the concept of virtual classes with all participants, to potentially explore what is beyond the existing *mutual benefits.*

- The academic calendar has to be considered as a momentum to sustain efforts and achievements.

- This research invites a conference that could perhaps initiate the spark to introduce the social theory of learning and social learning spaces so that further CoP inspired initiatives, however modest they may seem, develop and encourage a shift in the mindset of what professional development means for the interpreting profession.

6.4 Recommendations for HE

- Universities need to make some space for alumni as their loyalty is a driver for H.E (Iskhakova et al, 2017; Snijders et al, 2019): they are an incredible source of knowledge, resources, energy and motivation for students. Alumni still need the support of the university after they graduate. This is an opportunity for universities to go further in their mission to transform lives , especially in the COVID-19 context. This was recently highlighted by Kelly[97], (2020):

    > (...) surveys tell us alumni are asking for additional career support, also tell us that alumni are willing to pay it forward and mentor students. Many leaders in the space have already put the call out to their alumni asking them to support this year's graduates so that the institution avoids these graduates becoming the Lost Class of 2020.

- Universities need to take the time to understand how communities of practice and social learning spaces operate (Herrington et al, 2008). During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was suddenly realised in Higher Education that the concept of community was essential to bring people together at a time of crisis

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and transition (WonkHE, 2020[98]; AulaCon 2021[99]) This is an opportunity to go beyond the word 'community' and truly develop a horizontal culture of community based initiatives.

- Universities need to explore leading as an 'act of service' (Wenger-Trayner, 2012). This is a value that can be transformative for leaders and participants.

- As organisations, universities need to acknowledge the value creation of CoPs that involves formal and informal learning. Their added value should be integrated and made visible (De Laat, 2012) not only at course level, but also at a university wide level, with tools such as the Value-Creation Framework discussed in Chapter 5 to audit their process and outcomes..

- CoPs are so powerful that large organisations in the business, local government and the health sectors have adopted them (Garfield, 2020. Wenger and Snyder, 2000). Yet, in education, they far too often remain accidental. Universities need to acknowledge, support and sustain CoPs and their leaders. This final quote expresses exactly what is at stake:

  > The strength of communities of practice is self-perpetuating. As they generate knowledge, they reinforce and renew themselves. That's why communities of practice give you not only the golden eggs but also the goose that lays them. The farmer killed the goose to get all the gold and ended up losing both; the challenge for organizations is to appreciate the goose and to understand how to keep it alive and productive. (Wenger and Snyder, 2000)

6.5 Recommendations for further research

Up to now, very little has been written about the integration of CoPs, social learning spaces, or the application of social theory of learning in interpreting studies. Through two detailed, longitudinal case studies, this research has thrown light on the challenges, processes and affordances of establishing CoPs as transformative social learning spaces for prospective interpreting professionals. I hope it inspires others to

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[98] The WonkHE Show podcast, 'The secret lives of students'. Episode 2, Season 7. Available at https://wonkhe.com/blogs/s07e02/. Accessed 27 July 2021. The researcher was part of the panel for the podcast (42mn26 starting point of the discussion)

[99] 'Community building in the post-pandemic learning experience' 14 May. Accessible: https://vimeo.com/552817733 (Accessed 27July 2021). The researcher was part of the panel for the podcast. Link to the full day conference: https://hopin.com/events/aulacon-2021 (Accessed 27 July 2021)

pioneer further initiatives that involve partnerships across boundaries so that little by little the interpreting profession becomes more collaborative and less competitive.

A fruitful area for further work would be to revisit the concept of virtual classes and explore a CoP approach, involving students and staff in the negotiation of meaning process. Researching this transformative process and its outcome in the light of the findings of this research would be an extraordinary opportunity to understand how much they contribute to the emergence of CoPs and add value to practitioners, the transformation of identities, and a collaborative approach within the interpreting profession. It would also take into account the recent context of new technologies recently integrated to the interpreting process, more accessible online means of communication, and the change of mindset interpreters had to adopt as a result of the COVID-19 world crisis (D'Hayer, 2021).

Since the beginning of this research, interpreting practice groups have developed for interpreting graduates, in Brussels[100], Paris[101], Madrid[102] and London[103] (Guichot de Fortis, 2014). The way these groups work could be explored further to understand their value in the landscape of practice, especially in supporting graduates in their professional journey. They could perhaps be further connected to universities to support students. In addition to interpreting practice, these groups could interconnect to exchange knowledge, experience of national markets, and offer further informal support activities to build support and trust. This is something they may do informally without the full understanding of its relevance. The interest would be to explore the impact they have on the professional development of graduates and how much they influence the landscape of practice as potential social learning spaces. Does their presence contribute to travelling over boundaries with confidence? How does this experience contribute to the process of identity transformation? Has the mindset of their participants been influenced by their experience and thus made them more

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[100] IBPG, Interpreters in Brussels Practice Group. Available at: http://interpspracticegroup.com/ (Accessed 27 July 2021)
[101] PIPS, Paris Interpreters Practice Session. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/parisinterpreterspracticesessions (Accessed 27 July 2021)
[102] REPRIS, Red de Prácticas de Interpretación Simultánea de Madrid: Available at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChOp3asnuNBYctTgMp-3Bew (
[103] LIPG London Interpreters' Practice group. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/3280838865274076 (Accessed 27 July 2021)

collaborative partners? Does it contribute to a less competitive landscape of practice?

Finally, the findings of this research are focused on conference interpreting. Adapting a CoP model to enhance learning in public service interpreting could open doors to revisit the way PSI education and professional development are delivered. It could contribute to explore further opportunities for professional associations, the National Register of Public Service Interpreters to be integrated in a CoP model with universities, colleges and training centres to support students and professionals. Further research in the field would be highly desirable and could have an impact on the professionalisation of the sector.

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List of tables

Table 1	Distinctions between Communities of Practice and other structures. Adapted from 'Cultivating Communities of Practice: a guide to managing knowledge', p.42 by Wenger et al (2002), Cambridge, MA Harvard Business School Press	p.53
Table 2	Ambassadors' Scheme - Sampling of participants and research methods	p.74
Table 3	Virtual classes - Sampling of participants and research methods	p.74
Table 4	Six-step thematic analysis procedure - Braun & Clarke (2006, p.87)	p.89
Table 5	Overview of the number of students and ambassadors participating in the research (2013/2016) presented in the wider context of the AS and the MACI between 2004 to 2021	p.100

List of Figures

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[104] This figure was uploaded by Jill Willis

Appendices

Appendix 1. Description of Ambassadors' Scheme with FAQ

Ambassador Scheme at London Metropolitan University

The Ambassador Scheme for MA Interpreting and MA Conference Interpreting graduates at London Metropolitan University brings together current, former and potential students as well as staff, and allows for skills, knowledge and facilities to be shared for mutual benefit.

Who are ambassadors?

Ambassadors are former students who have passed one of the postgraduate interpreting courses at London Metropolitan University and choose to maintain a close relationship with their alma mater. Graduates fill a form to apply to join the AS scheme. All applicants have always been accepted as ambassadors. The main criteria is willingness to work collaboratively.

What do ambassadors do?

They may get involved in a range of activities, e.g. informal interpreting practice either in person, via Skype, Google Hangout, Virtual Classes or internet platforms, sharing experiences with current students, reporting back on employment matters, or taking a leading role in enrichment activities such as interpreted guided walks and interpreting practice groups.

Ambassadors may also come to represent the university at external events such as the London Language Show, conferences, professional development days, or visits to other organisations.

What are the benefits for ambassadors?

In return, ambassadors may benefit from the networking opportunities London Metropolitan opens up, and continued access to the university's facilities and expertise, for example access to the interpreting suite and the EU speech repository,

or even short courses such as the Advanced Conference Interpreting (EU/UN context) short course.

How to register as an ambassador?

There is a registration form distributed to all interpreting students at the end of their course. Fill it and send it back to Danielle D'Hayer d.dhayer@londonmet.ac.uk. It includes a short essay that demonstrates the motivation to join the AS and how the AS was beneficial to the applicant as a student.

Can everyone become an ambassador?

The option is offered to every student. However, London Metropolitan University reserves the right to accept or not graduates as ambassadors. The scheme encourages collaborative work. As such, in their application, potential ambassadors need to demonstrate they adopted a collaborative approach during their studies, and are ready and willing to work collaboratively with staff, students on the course and colleagues.

 Frequently Asked Questions:

1.   I would like to get involved as an ambassador, but I don't have much time and I don't know how. What can I do?

Speak to the course leader, Danielle D'Hayer. There are many different ways in which you can get involved, and it may be possible to tailor your contribution to your particular needs and keep it flexible.

2. Do ambassadors get paid for the work they do?

The ambassador scheme is based on the idea of an exchange of skills and expertise. Any contribution from an ambassador will be matched by a corresponding offer on the university's part. Where an ambassador's input exceeds what can reasonably be returned in kind, in rare cases, a modest financial remuneration may be possible.

3. Can I attend the Advanced Conference Interpreting short course? Will I have to pay?

The Advanced Conference Interpreting short course was designed with the ambassadors in mind. It offers an opportunity to continue interpreting practice with professional feedback, with the aim to prepare the EU/UN accreditation test for interpreters.

The course costs £950. External students (non London Met interpreting graduates) will pay the course fees. Ambassadors commit to give 30 hours of their time in exchange for access to the course for free.

Language combinations are limited. Only 15 students can attend the course. As such, some ambassadors will not be given this opportunity. But ambassadors can still attend mock conferences on the MA Interpreting and MA Conference interpreting and continue their practice.

4. Where can I get further information?

- This is the link for the Advanced Conference Interpreting course: http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/courses/short-courses/2013/advanced-conference-interpreting-for-euun-accreditation-test/
- A blog post was written by the course leader: http://communityofpracticeforinterpreting.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/the-interpreting-ambassadors-scheme-at.html

Appendix 2. Example of script used to plan and deliver interpreting virtual classes

Script for Video-conference XX

London Metropolitan University
Topic: XX
2.30PM– 4.30PM (London time)
Partner University 1 (Local Time)

Join us on our closed Facebook group dedicated to interpreting students connecting with LondonMet on virtual classes:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/776606119020407/

Time	Speakers and Assessors	Topic and keywords	Comments
2.30PM		Opening remarks and introductions	Welcome address and introduction.Partner University 1 and London Met.
2.40PM	Tutor at Partner University 1 delivers: *Speech in lang A*	Title of the speech with keywords (6 min)	Consecutive at Partner University 1 into EN Interpreter 1 : language combination
			Consecutive at London Met into English Interpreter 2: language combination
	Partner University 1 London Met Assessor 1		Debrief with teachers and students

	Assessor 2		
3:PM	Tutor at London Met delivers: *Speech in English*	Title of the speech with keywords (6 min)	Consecutive at London Met into lang X Interpreter 3: language regime
			Consecutive at Partner University 1 Interpreter 4: language regime
	Partner University 1 London Met Assessor 1 Assessor 2	Feedback on performance	Debrief with teachers and students
3:20PM	Partner University 1 delivers *Speech in Language X*	Title of the speech with keywords (6 min)	Consecutive at Partner University 1 Interpreter 5: language regime
			Consecutive at London Met into English Interpreter 6: language regime
	Partner University 1 London Met Assessor 1 Assessor 2	Feedback on performance / mic off as this is a different language combination for both sides	Debrief with teachers and students

4PM	Tutor at London Met delivers: *Speech in English*		Consecutive at London Met into lang X Interpreter 7: language regime
			Consecutive at Partner University 1 into lang X Interpreter 8: language regime
	Partner University 1 London Met	Feedback on performance	Debrief with teachers and students
		Conclusive remarks	Space for students to introduce themselves more thoroughly and say what they need from students in London and what they can offer.
4:20PM	All partners	Wrap-up conclusions	

Appendix 3. Guidelines for interviews of tutors leading virtual classes

Topic Area	Questions and Probes
Introduction	● Purpose of the interview and approximate length. ● Confidentiality and right to leave or interrupt the process. ● Any questions. ● Permission to record. ● Signing consent form Interview. ● Explaining process: speaking freely first and guided questions then to cover all areas of interest. ● Summary of profile (gender, age group, previous studies and previous professional background).
Describe your experience of virtual classes (free speech)	● Let tutors explain the different forms of virtual classes they have experienced. ● Let tutors express their perception of virtual classes: ○ at personal level, ○ from the point of view of the students, ○ from the point of view of learning, ○ from the point of view of partnerships and connections with other institutions ● Tutors may discuss: ○ the technicalities of virtual classes ○ the workload challenges ○ the assessment challenges ● How do students perceive virtual classes?

Beyond virtual classes	● Beside the virtual class itself, have you noticed any other forms of connections:
	○ between students of other institutions
	○ between your students and London met students
	○ between students and members of staff
	● If there was no connection, do you think that this was because students did not want to connect?
	● Did they have an understanding of the additional values of connecting?
	● If so, what stopped them?
	● Do you know if students joined the Facebook group called Connect. Virtual interpreting at London met?
	● Do you think that the virtual classes should be set up differently or include an additional dimension to encourage students to connect?
	● Is there anything within the virtual classes that presents/discourages students from connecting later on?
Your role and identity	● Once the virtual classes were over, did you discuss:
	○ how to possibly make connections between students
	○ additional value of informal practice with peers
	○ joining the closed facebook group called Connect, virtual classes at london Met
	● If you discussed these points with students:
	○ When did you do so (straight after the class etc?
	○ How did you discuss this? (informal meetings?)

	○ What communication tools did you use? (face to face, e mail etc) ● How did students react when you spoke to them? Did they seem keen? ● Did you feel that you had a role to play to make these informal connections between students happen? ● If so, how would you describe this role? ● When you interacted with students about possible connections, did you feel that one or two students stood out as being more engaged, motivated or ready to motivate others, organise etc? ○ If you did identify such people, how would you describe what you noticed? ● Thinking about it now, do you feel you could have played a different role to engage students in connecting with students from London Met?
Fostering digital homes, setting boundaries	● Are you aware of any platforms students have used to practice together after virtual classes? ● Are you aware of any digital platforms students used to stay in touch with one another? ● If students did not connect, do you think that: ○ technology, ○ knowledge of social media, ○ access to an internet connection Was it an issue?
Sense of belonging and identity	● Do students strongly feel that their identity as interpreting students is connected to your course and institution? ● Do you feel that students feel that connecting with interpreting students from a different university would enhance their identity as junior interpreters OR

	on the contrary move them away from their identity that is connected with the institutions where they do their course? ● Is this an important factor in your mind? ● How challenging do you think it is for students to create a practice group and shape their own identity as a group?
Moving towards a CoP?	● In your own mind, do you feel there is potential for further sharing expertise between students, formally and informally? ● If so, what would be needed? ● What would be the added value in their learning ● Are students aware there is an Ambassadors' Scheme at London met? ● Do you have such a scheme? ● Do you think that your students would like to become ambassadors? At your own institution? At London met? ● What are/would be the benefits?
Conclusions	● Is there anything else you would like to add? ● Are you willing to participate in follow up interviews? ● The transcript will be sent to you for verification. ● Thank you

Appendix 4. Interview guidelines for Ambassador Coordinators

Topic Area	Questions and Probes
Introduction	● Purpose of the interview and approximate length. ● Confidentiality and right to leave or interrupt the process. ● Any questions. ● Permission to record. ● Signing consent form Interview. ● Explaining process: speaking freely first and guided questions then to cover all areas of interest. ● Summary of profile (gender, age group, previous studies and previous professional background).
Pre Ambassadors' Scheme (AS) Stage	● What has your experience been like as an interpreting student on the course, as an ambassador, as a coordinator (Adapt according to interviewee) ● How did you become aware that there was an AS at Londonmet? ● What did you understand the AS was about? ● What structure did you think the AS had? ● You are not a London Met graduate; how did you hear about the AS? (==question for non LondonMet ambassadors only==). Who informed you about the AS? ● Did the AS influence your choice of course provider for your MA interpreting/MACI?
Reasons and expectations for joining	● Why were you interested in joining the AS? ● What did you expect?

the Ambassadors' Scheme	● Did you participate in the end of year meeting for potential ambassadors when you were an interpreting student at London Met? How did this meeting influence your opinion of the AS?
	● What attracted you the most in the AS?
	● Did you think the AS could influence your interpreting practice, your interpreting career, your networking?
	● Did you join the Advanced Conference Interpreting short course?
	○ As such did you pay for the course or joined the special scheme to help interpreting students on the postgraduate courses in exchange for free access?
	○ Did the access to the Advanced Conference Interpreting course influenced your decision to be an ambassador?
	○ What attracted you to join the Advanced Conference Interpreting course?
	○ How did the course help you:
	■ in your daily interpreting practice?
	■ in finding work?
	■ in networking with others?
	■ in your motivation to continue engaging in a professional career (interpreting or others)?
	■ building your confidence as a person, as a professional?
	● Was coming back to London Met for the AS an opportunity or a hindrance? Can you describe it?

Experience as an Ambassador ● beginning ● middle ● end	● You did not graduate at London Met. You are an Ambassador at London Met. How did you feel when you first joined the group? How did you feel about joining a different institution? Were you worried about anything in particular? Did you know anyone from the London Met group before joining? If so, how did you connect? (==question for non London Met ambassadors only==). ● Did you feel the AS was not what you expected? ● Did you leave the AS, why? ● As the AS coordinator, how did the ambassadors engage with you?
Relationship with peers and interpreting students: roles and identities	● How was your relationship with current interpreting students and other ambassadors? ● Was it comparable to the relationships you had with your peers during your MA Interpreting / MACI course at London Met? Or at your institution?(==question for non London Met ambassadors only==). ● Has the AS changed your relationship with: ○ students on the MA interpreting/MACI course? ○ other ambassadors? ○ Interpreting staff?
View on knowledge and group management in relation to employability.	● Can you describe the bond between you and students, you and peers, you and staff? ● How do you feel you, as an ambassador, were perceived by interpreting students? ● From your point of view, how has the AS evolved during the year?

	● What were the factors that allowed evolvement? ● How did the AS allowed you to grow as an informed interpreter (current affairs, employability, CPD events, networking)? Maybe it did not allow you to grow as an informed practitioner: can you explain why?
Personal perception of the AS influence on self, teaching and learning, CPD and involvement in the interpreting profession.	● What have you discovered about yourself from the experience of the AS? ● How has your perception of working with others evolved? ● What will you take away from your involvement in the AS ? ● Do you practice interpreting differently as a result of the AS? Can you describe it? ● How has the AS changed your perception of working with others? How has your participation in the AS changed your peers' views and ways of working together as a group, practicing interpreting together, giving each other feedback, supporting each other to interpret in a professional setting as a volunteer or as a paid interpreter? ● Have you noticed a difference in collaboration between peers during the year? Can you describe it? ● As the coordinator of the AS, how did you perceive your role? How did you understand it? How did it materialise? What did it feel like? ● Your time as an Ambassador (or Ambassador coordinator) is now over: ○ Will you carry on as an Ambassador?

	○ Will you continue to practice interpreting, interact with peers on the AS?
	○ Will you consciously put some effort into keeping some relationships alive? Can you explain why?
	● Are you working as an interpreter? Do you feel that being an ambassador (or coordinator) contributed to the interpreting assignments you have or have had since you began being an ambassador?
	● Are you involved in a professional interpreting organisation such as the ITI, CIoL or an informal network?
	● Can you describe how and why you decided to join and get involved?
	● Has the AS helped you to make these decisions, or not at all?
Conclusions	● Is there anything else you would like to add?
	● Are you willing to participate in follow up interviews?
	● The transcript will be sent to you for verification.
	● Thank you

Appendix 5. Coding of participants as reported in Chapter 4 - Data Analysis

Case study 1: The AS	Case study 2: the VC
Semi guided interviews for ambassadors	**Semi guided interviews for tutors**
3 ambassador coordinators were interviewed. To ensure non traceability, They will be coded as AC1, AC2, AC3 4 Professional Interpreters Newly Engaged in the Interpreting Market (PINEIM) were interviewed: Interview with 1 PINEIM referred to as Elodie or PINEIM1 Focus group with a group of 3 PINEIM referred to as Cecilia, Anna, Maria or PINEIM3	6 tutors were interviewed. To ensure non traceability, they will be coded as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6. References to languages, locations or universities have been removed.
Focus groups (June and September)	**N/A**
Names of participants have been changed. References to languages, locations or culture have been removed or replaced.	
Questionnaire	**Questionnaire**
When referring to questions, the following reference applies: ASQ1: question 1 of the AS	When referring to questions, the following reference applies: VCQ1: question 1 of the virtual classes

questionnaire	questionnaire

Appendix 6. Mapping of research questions and aims with questionnaires

Virtual Classes & Ambassadors' Scheme

1. **Mapping of research questions and aims with questionnaires Ambassadors' Scheme**

	Ambassadors		Non Ambassadors	
	Connected with others	Did not connect with others	Connected with others	Did not connect with others
Practising interpreting together: Impact on learning (research question 1)	21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,34,35	21,35	9,10,11,13,14,16,17,35	9,10,35
Feeling connected to others (question 1)	21,22,24,25,27,28,29,30,34,35	21,35	10,11,12,15,19,35	10,35
Defining roles and identities (Research question 2)	23,27,28,29,30,35	23,35	18,35	35

Facilitating entering the profession (research question 2)	30,31,33,34,35			
General information	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 20,21,22,35	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 20,21,22,35	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 35	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 35
Features of CoP Ambassadors' Scheme and non Ambassadors' Scheme	32,33,34,35	35	35	35

2.   **Mapping of research questions and aims with questionnaires Ambassadors' Scheme**

	London Met students		Non London Met students	
	Connected with others	Did not connect with others	Connected with others	Did not connect with others

Practising interpreting together: Impact on learning Formal/informal (research question 1)	9, 11, 12, 13,14, 15,17,19,20, 21,24,25, 26	9, 11,12, 13,14, 15,17,19, 20,22, 23,24,25, 26	9, 11, 12, 13,14, 15,17,19,20, 21,24,25, 26	9,11, 12, 13,14, 15,17,19, 20, 22, 23,24,25, 26
Feeling connected to others (question 1)	15,16,17,18,19, 20,21,24,25, 26	15,16,17,18,19, 20,22, 23,24,25, 26	15, 16, 17,18,19,20, 2122, 23,24,25, 26	15,16,17,18,19 ,20, 22, 23,24,25, 26
Defining roles and identities (Research question 2)	11,19,21,24,25, 26, 28	11,19,24,25, 26	11,19,21,24,5, 26, 28	11,19,24,25, 26
Facilitating entering the profession (research question 2)	17, 21,24,25, 26	22, 23,24,25, 26	17, 21,24,25, 26	22, 23,24,25, 26
General information	1,2,3, 4, 6, 7,8, 10, 27	1,2,3,4, 6, 7, 8, 10	1,2,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 27	1,2,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10

Features of CoP for virtual classes				

Appendix 7: Invitation letter sent to research participants

Dear....

I am writing to ask you if you would consider taking part in a research study I am conducting to explore a possible model of Community of Practice applied to Interpreting Studies, more specifically to the Interpreting Virtual Classes Partnership and the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University. This study is a doctoral research project supervised by Associate Professor Digby Warren and Associate Professor, Dr Alex Krouglov, both from London Metropolitan University.

Interpreting studies are challenging for both students and teaching staff. They require complex settings that can be resource hungry. As a result, funding such courses has been increasingly difficult to justify. Consequently, some renowned interpreting courses have closed down and the number of language pathways has decreased. Interpreting courses tend to be very competitive and intensive, aiming at employment with international institutions that also need to approve of the course structure, delivery and assessment methodologies. Course leaders then have to balance the pressure from universities to reduce cost and recruit well; the pressure from international institutions to be highly selective and produce interpreters at their level; and finally the pressure from students who have unique language profiles and complex backgrounds, with high levels of expectation.

Competitiveness is the key feature of interpreting courses, employers and students. I am particularly interested to find out how a collaborative approach in networks, knowledge sharing and a community of practice mindset can enhance and enrich the learning experience of interpreting students not only on postgraduate courses at London Metropolitan University but also later on in life as they find employment. The Community of Practice model as first initiated by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave (1991) is used as the initial model to assess whether the Interpreting Virtual Classes Partnership and the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University can be the right model to encourage and develop collaborative learning in

networks and resource sharing amongst stakeholders. The outcome of the research will hopefully provide an adapted Community of Practice model for interpreting education based on the outcome of the Interpreting Virtual Classes Partnership and the Ambassador's Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University. The model could then be disseminated to enrich other aspects of learning in interpreting education, either at London Metropolitan University, with partner universities and across the profession. It can then be applied to conference interpreting and public service interpreting education.

Your participation in the research would involve taking part in either an interview, a focus group or answering questionnaires. The interview will be aimed at interpreting course leaders taking part in the Interpreting Virtual Classes Partnership, the Ambassador Coordinators (face to face and virtual practice) and the non LondonMet Ambassadors belonging to the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University. The focus groups will be aimed at interpreting students taking part in the Interpreting Virtual Classes Partnership and the Ambassadors on the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University. The questionnaire will be aimed at all participants. The interviews will take place face to face at London Metropolitan University or remotely using Skype; Skype will be used for course leaders who are not based in the UK. The focus groups will take place at London Metropolitan University.

If you agree to be interviewed, fill questionnaires and take part in focus groups, your permission will be sought to record the interview. I might also ask you for a follow up interview at a later stage, should there be any issues requiring clarification.

However, it is important for you to realise that your participation is entirely voluntary and there is no requirement for you to take part. If you do agree to take part, you will be free to withdraw at any time and if you are concerned about any of the questions of the interview or the questionnaire, you can skip those questions or choose to stop the interview/answering questions on the questionnaire at any time. The study is confidential, and no individual who is interviewed or/and has answered questionnaires will be identified in any way in any analysis or project report.

An information sheet about the project is attached, with my contact details should you wish to discuss anything about the research or ask further questions. If you are interested in being involved, please contact me by e mail.

Best regards.

Associate Professor Danielle D'Hayer

Doctoral Researcher

London Metropolitan University

A Community of Practice model for Interpreting Studies

Principal investigator: Danielle D'Hayer

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a PhD project. Before you decide whether to take part or not, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this information sheet.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Interpreting studies are challenging for both students and teaching staff. They require complex settings that can be resource hungry. As a result, funding such courses has been increasingly difficult to justify. Consequently, some renowned interpreting courses have closed down and the number of language pathways has decreased. Interpreting courses tend to be very competitive and intensive, aiming at employment with international institutions that also need to approve of the course structure, delivery and assessment methodologies. Course leaders then have to balance the pressure from universities to reduce cost and recruit well; the pressure from international institutions that are highly selective and require universities to produce interpreters at their required level; and finally the pressure from students who have unique language profiles and complex backgrounds, with high levels of expectation.

Competitiveness is the key feature of interpreting courses, employers and students. I am particularly interested to find out how a collaborative approach in networks, knowledge sharing and a community of practice mindset can enhance and enrich the learning experience of interpreting students not only on postgraduate courses at London Metropolitan University but also later on in life as they find employment. The Community of Practice model as first initiated by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave (1994) is used as the initial model to assess whether the Interpreting Virtual Class Partnership and the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters can be the right model to

encourage and develop collaborative learning in networks and resource sharing amongst stakeholders. The outcome of the research will hopefully provide an adapted Community of Practice model for interpreting education based on the outcome of the Interpreting Virtual Class Partnership and the Ambassador's Scheme for Interpreters. The model could then be disseminated to enrich other aspects of learning in interpreting education, at London Metropolitan University, with partner universities and across the profession, both for conference interpreting and public service interpreting.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary – it is up to you whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself or your organisation.

INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

The researcher is asking **7 Ambassadors' Coordinators from the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University** to be interviewed. You have been chosen because of your involvement with the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University. This will be conducted by the researcher who will arrange a convenient time to meet with you at London Metropolitan University. The interview should last around 60 minutes. If you agree to be interviewed, your permission will be sought to record the interview. It is important for you to realise that if you are concerned about any of the questions in the interview, you can skip those questions. Furthermore, you can stop the interview at any time. You might also be asked for an additional follow up interview at a later stage, should the researcher have any issues requiring clarification.

The researcher is asking **5 Ambassadors who did not study at London Metropolitan University but have been admitted to the Ambassadors' Scheme**

for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University to be interviewed. You have been chosen because of your involvement with the Ambassadors' Scheme at London Metropolitan University. This will be conducted by the researcher who will arrange a convenient time to meet with you at London Metropolitan University. The interview should last around 60 minutes. If you agree to be interviewed, your permission will be sought to record the interview. It is important for you to realise that if you are concerned about any of the questions in the interview, you can skip those questions. Furthermore, you can stop the interview at any time. You might also be asked for an additional follow up interview at a later stage, should the researcher have any issues requiring clarification.

The researcher is asking *course leaders from 9 universities and the European Commission who have participated in the Interpreting Virtual Classes Partnership with London Metropolitan University* to be interviewed. You have been chosen because of your involvement with the Interpreting Virtual Class Partnership at London Metropolitan University. This will be conducted by the researcher who will arrange a convenient time to meet with you at London Metropolitan University or on Skype, depending on your location. The interview should last around 60 minutes. If you agree to be interviewed, your permission will be sought to record the interview. It is important for you to realise that if you are concerned about any of these questions in the interview, you can skip those questions. Furthermore, you can stop the interview at any time. You might also be asked for an additional follow up interview at a later stage, should the researcher have any issues requiring clarification.

The researcher is asking *3 London Metropolitan University alumni who set up an interpreting practice group out of the UK* that looks like a community of practice to be interviewed. You have been chosen because of your involvement with the setting up of an interpreting practice group outside of the UK. This will be conducted by the researcher who will arrange a convenient time to meet with you at London Metropolitan University or on Skype, depending on your location. The interview should last around 60 minutes. If you agree to be interviewed, your permission will be sought to record the interview. It is important for you to realise that if you are concerned about any of the questions in the interview, you can skip those questions. Furthermore, you can stop the interview at any time. You might also be asked for an

additional follow up interview at a later stage, should the researcher have any issues requiring clarification.

FOCUS GROUP PROCEDURES

The researcher will organise **a focus group for Ambassadors involved in the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University** for each of the following academic years:

2013-2014; 2014 – 2015; 2015 – 2016.

You have been chosen because of your involvement with the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University. The focus group will be conducted by the researcher who will arrange a convenient time to meet with you at London Metropolitan University. The focus group should last around 60 minutes. If you agree to take part in the focus group, your permission will be sought to record the focus group contribution. It is important for you to realise that if you are concerned about any questions during the focus group, you can skip those questions and not contribute to the focus group. Furthermore, should anyone object to questions, contributions or recording, the focus group will stop. No recording will then be used during the focus group. You might also be asked for an additional follow up at a later stage, should the researcher have any issues requiring clarification.

QUESTIONNAIRE PROCEDURES

The researcher will send questionnaires to Ambassadors involved in the Ambassadors' Scheme for Interpreters at London Metropolitan University prior to the 2013 – 2014 academic year. The Scheme was implemented in 2007; it was first an idea that developed into a more substantial scheme from 2011.

The researcher will send questionnaires to interpreting students who have taken part in virtual classes within the Interpreting Virtual Classes Partnership. As students and Ambassadors from the involved, you are free to decide whether to fill or return the questionnaire or not. You will be able to omit questions that you do not wish to reply to. Answers will be totally anonymous.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

The final project report will be produced in 2017. This will be accompanied by a wide-ranging dissemination exercise, including publications in professional and academic journals, seminar and conference presentations. You will be advised where to access publications and send details of relevant seminars and conferences.

<u>PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS</u>

There is no organisational or individual payment for participation in the research study.

<u>CONFIDENTIALITY AND RISKS</u>

The information collected will be kept strictly confidential, and your responses will be anonymized. All published and unpublished reports will disguise the identity of individuals. Only aggregate/summary information will be reported. Due to the nature of the research proposed we do not expect that involvement in the study carries any risks.

<u>FURTHER INFORMATION OR QUERIES</u>

If you have any concerns about the research or any further questions, you can contact the researcher, Associate Professor Danielle D'Hayer, at d.dhayer@londonmet.ac.uk . Alternatively, you can email the researcher's academic supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Alex Krouglov at a.krouglov@londonmet.ac.uk or Associate Professor Digby Warren at d.warren@londonmet.ac.uk as independent contacts.

Appendix 8

Consent Form

A Community of Practice model for interpreting studies

Principal investigator: Danielle D'Hayer

	Please initial each box
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study (version 1 05 2014). I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	
I agree to the recording of the interview between myself and the researcher.	

Name of person	**Date**	**Signature**
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

First copy to be retained by interviewee; second copy to be filed by researcher with interview notes.

Appendix 9. Data analysis, step 1: example of transcript linear coding

Programme(s)	N/A
Date & time	Saturday 22 October 2015
Subject/Interviewee	PhD focus group 22 October 2015 ambassadors

[Introduction] **Danielle D'Hayer, moderator**: *OK, so the first question, the first idea really, what do you understand by the Ambassadors' Scheme? What do you think it is? What do you understand it is?*	
Participant: A mentoring scheme.	The AS is a mentoring scheme
Participant: I think it's for mutual benefit, because it benefits current students. They have some extra opportunities to practice. They have got some extra support, networking opportunities, but also for us because we can keep in touch with the university and it's not such an abrupt cut. You graduate and you disconnected immediately.	The AS benefits students and graduates: mutual benefit (reciprocal) The AS allows us to remain connected to the university
Participant: It's a scheme to make sure that interpreters from this university keep in touch with each other, with the new students, with the tutors, and the teachers.	The AS allows us to remain connected to students and teaching staff
Participant: I think it's as well to keep the momentum going. You finished a course and some of us are maybe preparing for the accreditation test, it's just keeping the momentum going. You can always practice on your own, but it's a lot better and I think it's more practical, beneficial for all of us to still get together as a group and that scheme provides us with the opportunity.	The AS is about keeping the momentum going Remaining connected is beneficial to us
Participant: It also gives opportunity for the new students to have any questions answered that they have about the course and how the course runs, because there are so many things when you first start the course, despite the fact that there's lots of information available, there are still things which are not entirely clear about how assessments work, exactly what goes into things like the presentations that we have to give and things like that, so it's useful for them on that front. Personally, I'm currently finding it really useful as a way of reconnecting with basics and coming back to the things which I need to work on, and it's quite easy to forget that that practice needs to be structured and that you need to work on individual things, so the process of giving advice to people who are starting out is very useful,	Ambassadors help new students to understand how things work Learning from someone with a bit more experience Helping new students is an opportunity to revisit basics Giving advice is mutually beneficial

because it shows you things that perhaps you'd forgotten to pay attention recently. So it's useful from… yeah, as you say, it's mutually beneficial.	
DD: *And you've done a lot that. I can see that you spent a lot of time already. You were very generous with your time over the last year, weeks already.*	
Participant: [Inaudible]helping students , it's really good. It's useful though. It's helping me with my practice.	Helping others is helping my practice
Participant: I think if there was no pressure of the exams, which we haven't got anymore, you look at things very differently and you have students, I suppose I haven't had the pleasure of meeting anybody yet, hopefully that will come soon, they probably would ask the questions which they would feel that they've already received answers from the tutors, they still obviously didn't get it, so the reassurance that you can provide your student, because it was only a year ago that we were in the same boat and it seems terrifying for some of them.	As an ambassador you no longer have pressure from exams Without exam pressure, I look at things differently Ambassadors reassure students Ambassadors share their experience Ambassadors understand based on their experience as students Ambassadors empathise
Participant:Yeah, it's a great [inaudible] and it's nice how the students can see how like my God, they did it, I can do it as well. We're kind of inspiration to them as well and it's very nice.	Ambassadors inspire new students Ambassadors enjoy inspiring new students Ambassadors realise the value of their achievements
Participant: It's helpful to help the new students open up as well, because at least at first for me it was intimidating to meet just with the tutors and the lecturers, but if you can talk to another student, even if it's an older student, it's still a student; it's not a tutor, it's not a lecturer, so it's easier to ask questions, to say I didn't understand, can you explain that again, can we practice again, whilst maybe they wouldn't do it with tutors, but they'd do it with us as ambassadors, so it's really good for them as well.	Ambassadors are accessible Ambassadors are former students It is easier to speak to an ambassador than a tutor
DD: *Do you feel that the ambassadors have got a special status, a special identity in a sense?*	
Participant: Yes, because you're halfway through a tutor and a student, so I think we students… or at least that's how I related it to them last year, they were students but they knew stuff that I didn't know, so I could ask them questions without feeling intimidated, because they're actually not tutors.	Ambassadors have a special status, they were students but are not tutors Ambassadors know stuff students don't Ambassadors are less intimidating than tutors
Participant: I have gone through the whole experience, having done the course [inaudible] what to expect and what not to expect, and what not to do, and I think that it's very important for them as	The experience of ambassadors is an added value to new students The AS benefits students and graduates: mutual

students and for us it's very important to consolidate all the techniques, all the strategies that we have learnt throughout the whole year, and yeah, as A said, go back to revise all those basics and basically enforce them.	benefit (reciprocal) Helping new students is an opportunity to revisit basics
Participant: Also I think it's a nice way of building a community in a sense, because most of us aren't going to be staffers, we are freelancers, and even us graduates we're still not at the same level as very seasoned interpreters, of course we're going to have a community with different levels, different levels of expertise, of experience, but we can all be in a professional community and learn from each other.	The AS is a nice way to build a community Coming together whilst in transition between different statuses. We are freelancers Learning from peers in a professional community A community includes members with different levels of expertise and experience
Participant: I think it's also in terms of what we students get out of it then get very different opinions, because it's always slightly subjective. Of course there are things that are right and wrong, but there are things which one person may pick up on, which somebody else may not consider to be very important, and a good example What we get is slightly subjective	What we get is slightly subjective
The same goes actually for me [inaudible] particularly is very interested in sitting and listening to us interpreting, which initially I was quite… I don't know if I want you to do that. I don't know if I want you to sit and listen to me practicing.	Learning from peers
Participant: You've gone and burst my bubble.	
Participant: I know. I felt quite under pressure actually, because I thought, oh, I have to prove that I've learnt something, but actually it was very good because it really made me think about what I was doing and I have to perform, I have to finish my sentences, and I have to make sense in English, because I've just been telling her what she needs to do and if I don't do it then I'm a massive hypocrite. So yeah, it actually does put pressure on us.	Learning from peers who listen to you and provide feedback Ambassadors help new students overcome fear of feedback Ambassadors feel they need to evidence their learning to new students
DD: *And what was her reaction?*	Ambassadors lead by example
Participant: Today, it was a very difficult speech. She was very impressive though, but she has actually been giving me feedback as well, which is really useful, because my first reaction was a bit why are you giving me feedback, but I thought, well, actually no, of course it's valid, because there are things which I say in English which don't make sense when I'm interpreting and she's obviously well qualified to criticise that, because she speaks English, so yeah, it's been good to get different perspectives from everyone.	Ambassadors feel they need to evidence their learning to new students New students offer new perspective on interpreting practice to ambassadors Giving advice is mutually beneficial
DD: *OK, so what is pushing you to be an ambassador? I mean, I know that we already*	

mentioned a few things, but what is your prime motivation, what is pushing you to take the train from Manchester to come here? I mean, there's obviously something that is really motivating you here, so how would you define this?	
Participant: For me, it's the sense of community. For me, the last year has been extremely intense with lots of deadlines, lots of materials, lots of practices, drama, everything in one, and now when we were all looking forward to finish the university or finish the exams and complete everything we had to do, throughout the summer I was missing my travels to London. I was missing the regular buses, the communication of people, the networking of people, and for me it was about keeping the momentum going, keeping the motivational thing, because if you surround yourself with people who aim in the same direction, it just gives you drive. You will see… you compare yourself to one person and then the other person is like I really need to do a lot better than this. When you are at home and you start on your own, and you are self-employed, you're supposed to do it on your own, sometimes you do, sometimes you don't, you lose it and I think… and rightly so, I think you pointed out that at some point during the course that people just take 10 steps back whenever they finish a course. I've been trying… what gets me on that train, I have been trying to move on, but I don't know whether me approaching the accreditation test is going to happen next year or in two years, but it's a goal that I would like to achieve and I think if I stopped coming, it's not going to happen. In the busyness of everyday life, it is the sense of community, you know, we're all in the same boat, we represent different languages, and I think overall from our perspective we have created a very good mood. The networking amongst people was amazing. I've never really bonded with anybody as much as I have with such a large group that I've ever done, so I think we have to keep at it. And the new students, I mean, why are we trying to poison them with doubts?	What is motivating me to join the AS is the sense of community

Wanting to remain part of a community that share the same motivation

The AS is about keeping the momentum going

Sharing the same motivation gives you drive

==Meeting colleagues at dedicated times motivates me to keep my goal alive==

Sharing the same experience (struggle, goal) gives us a sense of community
We have created "a good mood"
Wanting the existing student bond to perdure as a community of ambassadors

Existing student bond is strong and unusual |
| END of EXTRACT | |

Appendix 10 Data analysis, Step 2: defining themes from subthemes, codes and quotes

(Extract) 22nd October 2015 focus group

Focus group ambassadors 22nd october 2015	Themes	Sub Themes	Codes	Quotes from the transcript
Chronological ly organised	Perception of the AS	mentoring scheme	The AS is a mentoring scheme	A mentoring scheme.
	Reciprocity		The AS benefits students and graduates: mutual benefit (reciprocal)	I think it's for mutual benefit, because it benefits current students. They have some extra opportunities to practice. They have got some extra support, networking opportunities, but also for us because we can keep in touch with the university and it's not such an abrupt cut
	Perception of the AS	connected	The AS allows us to remain connected to the university	we can keep in touch with the university and it's not such an abrupt cut. You graduate and you disconnected immediately.
	Perception of the AS	connected	The AS allows us to remain connected to students and teaching staff	It's a scheme to make sure that interpreters from this university keep in touch with each other, with the new students, with the tutors, and the teachers.
	Perception of the AS	continuity	The AS is about keeping the momentum going	I think it's as well to keep the momentum going. You finished a course and some of us are maybe preparing for the accreditation test, it's just keeping the momentum going.
	togertherness s	connected	Remaining connected is beneficial to us	You can always practice on your own, but it's a lot better and I think it's

				more practical, beneficial for all of us to still get together as a group and that scheme provides us with the opportunity.
	Role of ambassadors	help	Ambassadors help new students to understand how things work	It also gives opportunity for the new students to have any questions answered that they have about the course and how the course runs, because there are so many things when you first start the course, despite the fact that there's lots of information available, there are still things which are not entirely clear about how assessments work, exactly what goes into things like the presentations that we have to give and things like that, so it's useful for them on that front.
	Learning	from more experienced colleagues	Learning from someone with a bit more experience	It also gives opportunity for the new students to have any questions answered that they have about the course and how the course runs, because there are so many things when you first start the course, despite the fact that there's lots of information available, there are still things which are not entirely clear about how assessments work, exactly what goes into things like the presentations that we have to give and things like that, so it's useful for them on that front.
	Reciprocity		Helping new students is an opportunity to revisit basics	Personally, I'm currently finding it really useful as a way of reconnecting with basics and coming back to the things which I need to work on, and it's quite easy to forget that that practice needs to be structured and that you need to work on individual things, so the process of giving advice to people who are starting out is very useful, because it shows you things that perhaps you'd forgotten to pay attention recently. So it's useful from… yeah, as you say, it's mutually beneficial.
	Reciprocity		Giving advice is mutually beneficial	the process of giving advice to people who are starting out is very useful,

				because it shows you things that perhaps you'd forgotten to pay attention recently. So it's useful from… yeah, as you say, it's mutually beneficial.
	Reciprocity		Helping others is helping my practice	helping students , it's really good. It's useful though. It's helping me with my practice.
	Learning	no exam pressure	As an ambassador you no longer have pressure from exams	I think if there was no pressure of the exams, which we haven't got anymore, you look at things very differently
	learning	no exam pressure	Without exam pressure, I look at things differently	I think if there was no pressure of the exams, which we haven't got anymore, you look at things very differently
	Role of ambassadors	reassure	Ambassadors reassure students	they probably would ask the questions which they would feel that they've already received answers from the tutors, they still obviously didn't get it, so the reassurance that you can provide your student, because it was only a year ago that we were in the same boat and it seems terrifying for some of them.
	Role of ambassadors	share	Ambassadors share their experience	they probably would ask the questions which they would feel that they've already received answers from the tutors, they still obviously didn't get it, so the reassurance that you can provide your student, because it was only a year ago that we were in the same boat and it seems terrifying for some of them.
	Role of ambassadors	share	Ambassadors understand based on their experience as students	they probably would ask the questions which they would feel that they've already received answers from the tutors, they still obviously didn't get it,

				so the reassurance that you can provide your student, because it was only a year ago that we were in the same boat and it seems terrifying for some of them.
	Role of ambassadors	empathise	Ambassadors empathise	they probably would ask the questions which they would feel that they've already received answers from the tutors, they still obviously didn't get it, so the reassurance that you can provide your student, because it was only a year ago that we were in the same boat and it seems terrifying for some of them.
	Role of ambassadors	inspire	Ambassadors inspire new students	Yeah, it's a great [inaudible] and it's nice how the students can see how like my God, they did it, I can do it as well. We're kind of inspiration to them as well and it's very nice.
	Role of ambassadors	motivate	Ambassadors enjoy inspiring new students	Yeah, it's a great [inaudible] and it's nice how the students can see how like my God, they did it, I can do it as well. We're kind of inspiration to them as well and it's very nice.
	Added value to ambassadors	acknowledge their achievements	Ambassadors realise the value of their achievements	Yeah, it's a great [inaudible] and it's nice how the students can see how like my God, they did it, I can do it as well. We're kind of inspiration to them as well and it's very nice.
	Identity of ambassadors	accessible	Ambassadors are accessible	It's helpful to help the new students open up as well, because at least at first for me it was intimidating to meet just with the tutors and the lecturers, but if you can talk to another student, even if it's an older student, it's still a student; it's not a tutor, it's not a lecturer, so it's easier to ask questions, to

				say I didn't understand, can you explain that again, can we practice again, whilst maybe they wouldn't do it with tutors, but they'd do it with us as ambassadors, so it's really good for them as well.
	Identity of ambassadors	former students	Ambassadors are former students	It's helpful to help the new students open up as well, because at least at first for me it was intimidating to meet just with the tutors and the lecturers, but if you can talk to another student, even if it's an older student, it's still a student; it's not a tutor, it's not a lecturer, so it's easier to ask questions, to say I didn't understand, can you explain that again, can we practice again, whilst maybe they wouldn't do it with tutors, but they'd do it with us as ambassadors, so it's really good for them as well.
	Identity of ambassadors	accessible	It is easier to speak to an ambassador than a tutor	It's helpful to help the new students open up as well, because at least at first for me it was intimidating to meet just with the tutors and the lecturers, but if you can talk to another student, even if it's an older student, it's still a student; it's not a tutor, it's not a lecturer, so it's easier to ask questions, to say I didn't understand, can you explain that again, can we practice again, whilst maybe they wouldn't do it with tutors, but they'd do it with us as ambassadors, so it's really good for them as well.
	Identity of ambassadors	not teachers	Ambassadors have a special status, they were students but are not tutors	Yes, because you're halfway through a tutor and a student, so I think we students… or at least that's how I related it to them last year, they were students but they knew stuff that I didn't know, so I could ask them questions without feeling intimidated, because they're actually not tutors.

Appendix 11: Data analysis, step 3: reporting themes and subthemes

Focus group ambassadors 22nd october 2015							
THEMES	subthemes						
Perception of the AS	mentoring scheme	connected	continuity	building a community	dedicated to professional development	practice	
Reciprocity	support	peer learning					
Role of ambassadors	help	reassure	share	empathise	inspire	motivate	facilitate practice
Learning	from more experienced colleagues	no exam pressure	peer learning				
An enjoyable experience							
Added value to ambassadors	acknowledge their achievements	support from staff					
Identity of ambassadors	accessible	not teachers	former students	one step ahead	freelancing professionals		
Added value to students							
togetherness	building a community	mixed professional levels	facing challenges together	connected			
Safe familiar professional dedicated space							
Perception of CL	motivational	committed					
Intrinsic motivation	integrated in a community	sharing same motivation	commitment	improve practice	making friends/connecting	reach next professional step	give back

journey	situating oneself within the professional landscape						
extrinsic motivation	competitiveness						

Appendix 12: Data analysis, step 4: organisation of data into a visual map (stage1)

Dynamic participatory journey of participants to the Ambassadors' Scheme.

[Click here to read the map in detail](#)

Or

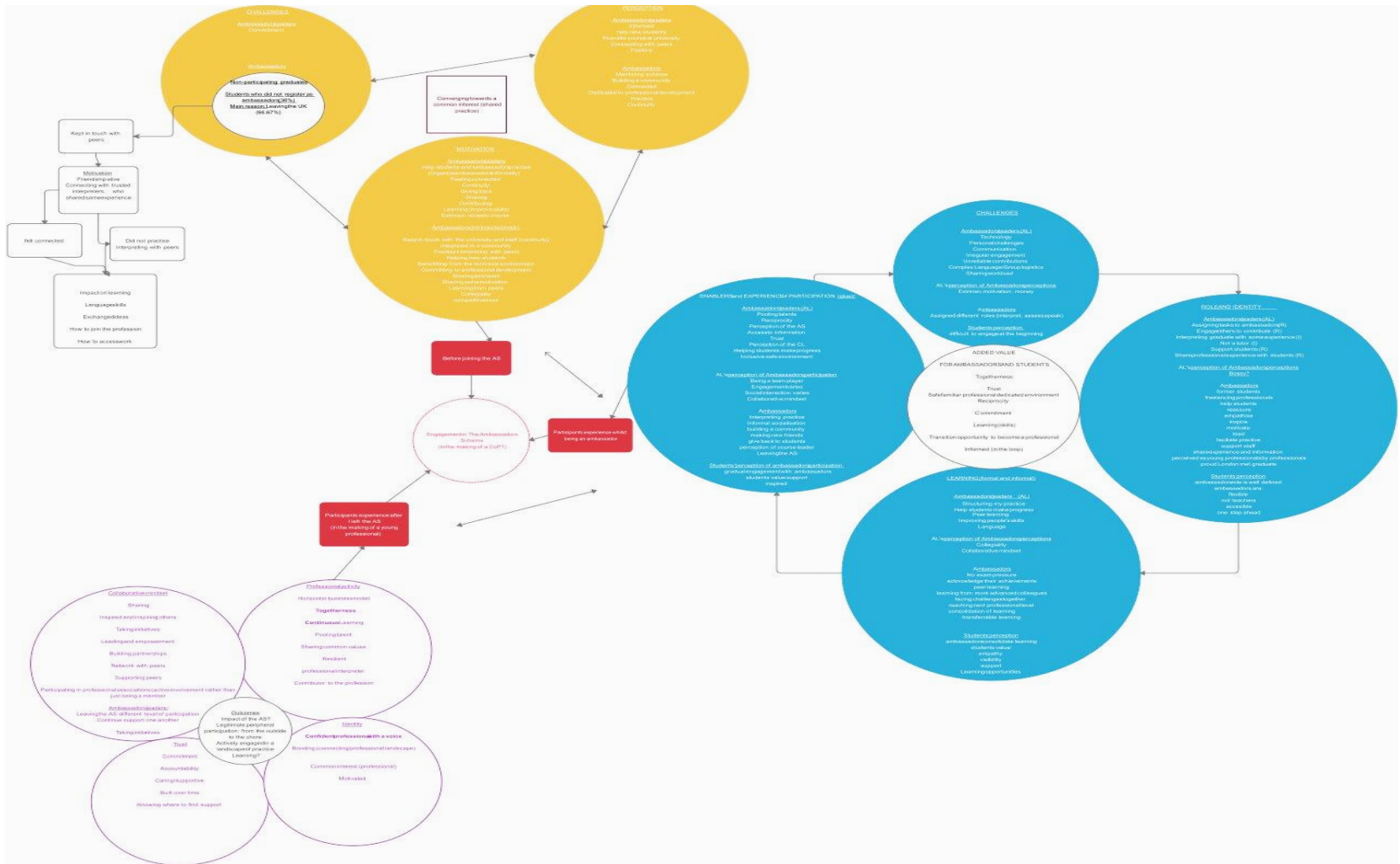https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uZZLOTYnG71PotJgknVBIQUn_QC0d2L-/view?usp=sharing
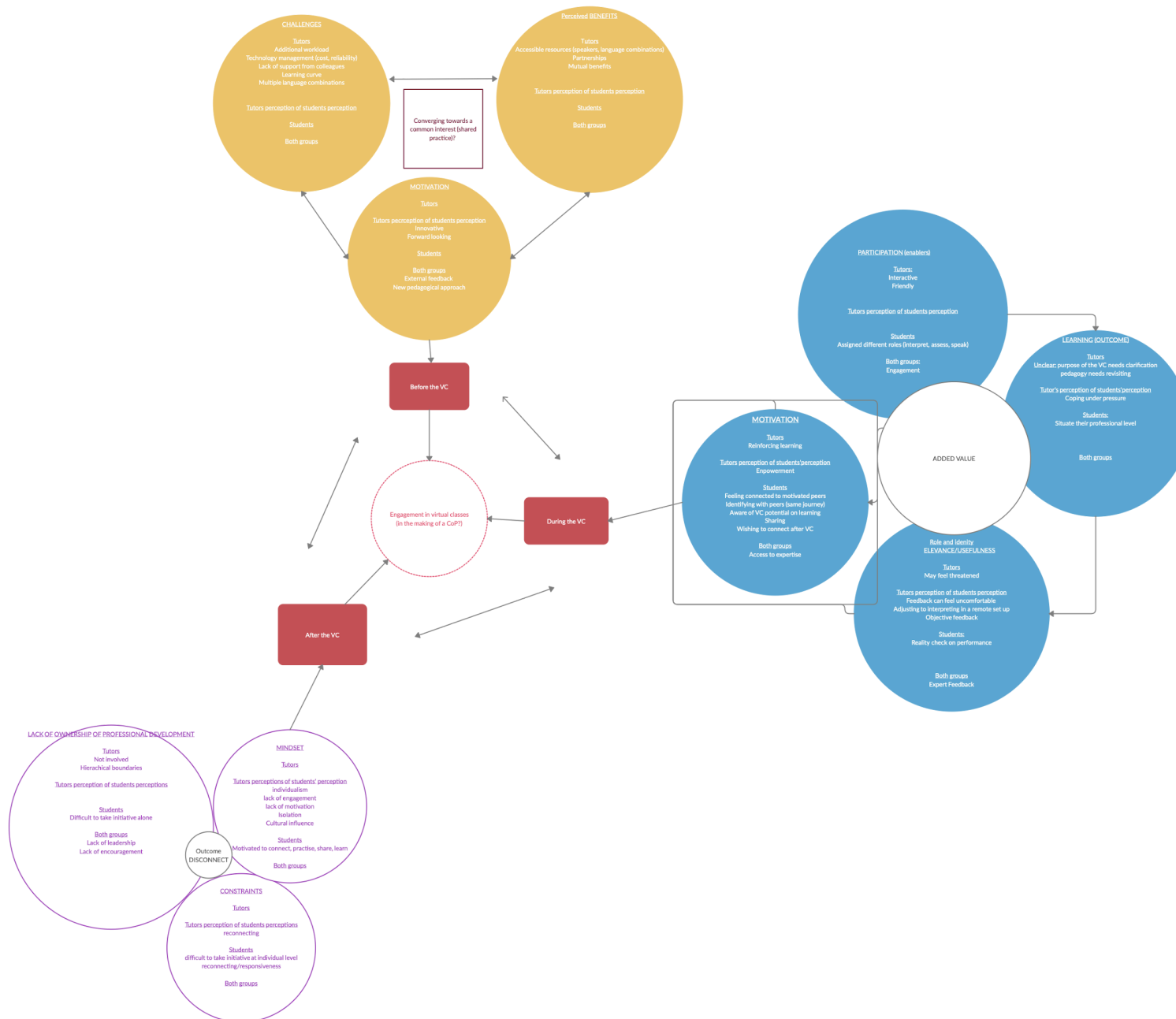
Appendix 13: Data analysis, step 4: organisation of data into a visual map (stage1)

Dynamic participatory journey of participants to the virtual classes.

Click here to read the map in detail

or

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GAYmTnJGm0ETmoKm4_PAfmQKujg1xxl7/view?usp=sharing

CHALLENGES

Tutors
Additional workload
Technology management (cost, reliability)
Lack of support from colleagues
Learning curve
Multiple language combinations

Tutors perception of students perception

Students

Both groups

Perceived BENEFITS

Tutors
Accessible resources (speakers, language combinations)
Partnerships
Mutual benefits

Tutors perception of students perception

Students

Both groups

Converging towards a common interest (shared practice)?

MOTIVATION

Tutors

Tutors perception of students perception
Innovative
Forward looking

Students

Both groups
External feedback
New pedagogical approach

Before the VC

Engagement in virtual classes (in the making of a CoP?)

During the VC

After the VC

PARTICIPATION (enablers)

Tutors:
Interactive
Friendly

Tutors perception of students perception

Students
Assigned different roles (interpret, assess, speak)

Both groups:
Engagement

LEARNING (OUTCOME)

Tutors
Unclear: purpose of the VC needs clarification
pedagogy needs revisiting

Tutor's perception of students'perception
Coping under pressure

Students:
Situate their professional level

Both groups

ADDED VALUE

MOTIVATION

Tutors
Reinforcing learning

Tutors perception of students'perception
Enpowerment

Students
Feeling connected to motivated peers
Identifying with peers (same journey)
Aware of VC potential on learning
Sharing
Wishing to connect after VC

Both groups
Access to expertise

Role and idenity
ELEVANCE/USEFULNESS

Tutors
May feel threatened

Tutors perception of students perception
Feedback can feel uncomfortable
Adjusting to interpreting in a remote set up
Objective feedback

Students:
Reality check on performance

Both groups
Expert Feedback

LACK OF OWNERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Tutors
Not involved
Hierachical boundaries

Tutors perception of students perceptions

Students
Difficult to take initiative alone

Both groups
Lack of leadership
Lack of encouragement

MINDSET

Tutors

Tutors perceptions of students' perception
individualism
lack of engagement
lack of motivation
Isolation
Cultural influence

Students
Motivated to connect, practise, share, learn

Both groups

Outcome
DISCONNECT

CONSTRAINTS

Tutors

Tutors perception of students perceptions
reconnecting

Students
difficult to take initiative at individual level
reconnecting/responsiveness

Both groups

316

Appendix 14: Links to questionnaires for AS and VC

The questionnaire analysis can be accessed by clicking on the following links:

The Ambassadors' Scheme:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J0s4KSAMvF35B§E86nEJkDFMA73SA26VH/view?usp=sharing

The Virtual Classes:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jkkUOCNn8FSQ032Fh6p8HrhQvkH_zzz9/view?usp=sharing

Please note that page 3 for each questionnaire has been removed for data protection purposes.