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“Teaching and practising interpreting: from traditional to new remote approaches”

Preface

This volume brings together specialists of different research and training fields who from their respective perspectives offer experiences and reflections on interpreter education and on how technology is positively affecting it.

These are very topical issues in the light of today’s world-wide changing, societal needs concerning cross cultural-language communication and given the institutional calls for financially sustainable curricula. So much so that the 2019 edition of the SCIC-Universities Conference, held in Bruxelles on April 4th and 5th, gathered as many as 80 different interpreter training institutions from Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas under the title “Preparing for Interpreting 3.0” (https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/interpretation-preparing-interpreting-30-2019-apr-04_en).

Faced with the demand for interlinguistic communication when no interpreters are available on-site, language service providers (LSPs) began to supply telephone interpreting as early as in the 70s (the first service was pioneered in Australia in 1973 by Telephone Interpreting Service-TIS) and, more recently, video-based interpreting. This applies both to dialogue interpreting in fields like legal and court, healthcare, public service, tourism etc. and to conference interpreting.

Only later did scholars start to investigate the effects of remote communication on participants and interpreters. Over the years, several large-scale studies were carried out in the field of telephone interpreting (Rosenberg 2005, Kelly 2008). As far as video-based interpretation is concerned, seminal EU- funded research projects in legal settings were AVIDICUS 1-3 (Braun and Taylor 2012), but also the studies promoted, among others, by European Commission, on conference interpretation and, and more generally, remote interpreting (Moser-Mercer 2003, 2005; Mouzourakis 2006; Roziner and Shlesinger 2010; Braun 2015, Napier, Skinner and Braun 2018). Also professional associations like AIIC have engaged in investigations to ensure quality conditions both for interpreters and clients (<https://aiic.net/node/56/remote-interpreting/lang/1>). The recent Erasmus Plus-funded project “Shift in Orality - Shaping the Interpreter of the Future and of Today” investigated both telephone and video-based dialogue interpreting comparing face-to-face with remote interpreter-mediated communication and produced a great variety of educational and reference resources (www.shiftinorality.eu).

Contrary to the hitherto-held belief that dialogue and conference interpreters automatically transfer their face-to-face interpreting competence to remote communication, results obtained within the framework of the Shift project indicate that this is not the case and specific training is required (<http://www.shiftinorality.eu/en/resources/2017/06/19/report-2-remote-technologized-interpreting-telephone-based-and-video-based>).

Hence the need to include remote communication competence in interpreter education curricula, together with a whole set of other competences that theory and research have highlighted as necessary. And here Claudia Angelelli rightfully regrets that theory and research have so far scantily, if ever, permeated *interpreter pedagogy*. Indeed, interpreter training has mainly focused on cognitive and cultural-linguistic dimensions, thus missing other necessary components:

“When interpreting is conceptualized mostly as a cognitive undertaking, or when coursework is not accounting for pragmatics, interpersonal communication, social and interpersonal roles, to name only a few important areas, then students only learn a practice by doing it. And they learn what they are told or what they can easily observe.”

And she adds: “Learning about the theories on which their practice is grounded means unpacking CI/PSI [Community Interpreting/Public Service Interpreting] in all its dimensions [...]. In so doing we look at theories of interpreting as well as some relevant *theories of language, communication and teaching and learning*.”

Some steps towards this direction have been taken in the several institutions that offer courses on Interpreting theory. This aims at making trainees aware of the research carried out also in the above-mentioned fields and their implications for the interpreting practice. Furthermore, there are already students who focus on the socio-pragmatic implications of original speakers’ and interpreters’ utterances in their corpus-based graduation. By reflecting on actual performances, trainee interpreters become aware of discourse mechanics and socio-cultural interaction as evidenced by the use of hedges, appellatives etc. (Russo 2010). It is to be hoped that in their future career as conference or community interpreters they will further enhance their pragmatic competence. The need is always there, however, to ensure that interpreting students acquire and hone those competences through adequately designed curricula.

A way to strengthen that awareness is another pedagogic component, the *student’s diary*, which, as we learn from Leticia Madrid, seems to have been particularly implemented and investigated in Spanish interpreter training institutions. The value of this practice is manifold both for the teacher and the student. In the latter it stimulates reflection, metacognition, self-assessment, the setting of objectives, self-regulation, self-awareness of progress and shortcomings, the expression positive emotions and fears. In the former, it is a means to correctly appraise students’ emotions and to better monitor their progress.

Another aspect key to interpreter education is raised by Giovanni Garofalo: language patterns and language use in specific communicative situations to achieve certain goals, such as deceive, persuade, etc. He maintains that the study of the *linguistic structures and language manipulation* by an accused of murder in a judicial hearing is a very insightful exercise for court interpreters for face-to-face interactions, but possibly all the more so, when working remotely. In this case, the contextual cues are minimal, if not totally nihil, especially for telephone interpreting, therefore an interpreter has to make the most to infer and co-construct meaning out of the way language is used, but also of tone and prosody.

This insightful volume also illustrates how the new technologies help ensure multilingualism and equal right to access course content by the hard of hearing and deaf students in the classroom. This is made possible by *educational interpreting both for spoken and sign languages*. It favours multilingualism in class and is usually practiced in countries where students of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are trained together to prevent segregation, a notable example being Stellenbosch University in Cape Town (South Africa): in this case, especially trained interpreters work on a daily basis. For some years now, the need has arisen also in Europe due to student mobility within the framework of the Erasmus Plus program. To meet this need, some academic institutions have developed machine translation solutions like the University of Karlsruhe in Germany or the University of Valencia in Spain. But the need to attend university courses on an equal footing as normally-hearing students is felt also by other student populations such as the hard-of-hearing and deaf students. Not always is a sign language interpreter available on site and this is precisely when technology can help: remote video-based interpreting is the perfect solution which guarantees equal rights to all students. This practice may be not so widespread, certainly not in Italy, and it is, therefore, quite insightful to be able to read an experience of *video-based interpreting with Italian Sign Language* being described by Margherita Greco. This solution is still at a testing stage, albeit advanced from a technical and operational point of view, but very promising and, undoubtedly, indispensable to ensure an inclusive academic experience.

Time and space have become rare commodities: demand for interpreting services and training make no exception. *Distance learning*, remote interpreting technologies and free digital training modules (*moocs*), as illustrated here by Perramon and Ugarte, and by Vitalaru and Valero, respectively, earlier on were only promising educational and service tools and nowadays are increasingly widespread teaching modalities to meet the need of interpreter higher education institutions which, in order to favor their graduates' employability, are spurred to diversify their curricula and keep abreast of the latest technologies.

This special volume will provide an excellent opportunity to gain an insight into what it takes to shape the interpreter of the future (and of today) thanks to modern technologies for remote communication.

Mariachiara Russo

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