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Introduction

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## Introduction

The widespread availability of communication technologies such as tele-, web- and videoconferencing has created ample opportunities for distance communication in real time in all sectors of society and has changed the way people meet, communicate and interact in their professional and personal lives. Similarly, these technologies are increasingly used in business settings, by international organisations and local public service providers to optimise access to interpreters. This has led to new modalities of remote interpreting (RI) whereby the interpreters are connected to some or all participants by audio or audiovisual link (Braun 2019).

In practice, RI is often perceived as a double-edged sword. On the positive side, RI arguably opens up new ways of meeting linguistic demand, and can increase the efficiency and sustainability of interpreting service provision. On the negative side, the use of RI as an alternative to onsite interpreting has raised questions about interpreting quality, communicative dynamics, as well as the training and skills required of interpreters and clients in RI. In addition, the introduction of RI has been linked to a deterioration of working conditions and remuneration, and to questions of fairness and equal access, e.g. to healthcare or justice.

In the research literature, RI has been associated with a reduction in interpreting quality and increases in physiological and psychological challenges such as stress and fatigue (Braun 2013; Braun & Taylor 2012; Moser Mercer 2003; Roziner & Shlesinger 2010), alterations to the patterns of communicative interaction (Licoppe & Verdier 2014; Licoppe, Verdier & Veyrier 2018; Warnicke & Plejert 2012) and changes in working conditions (Bower 2015; Braun 2018; Ko 2006; Lee 2007; Tyer 2018), although the precise extent of these problems is still subject to debate and seems to vary from one type of interpreting to another.

The interpreters' own perceptions of RI have also been found to vary, for example in relation to the setting, the technical quality and configuration, the location of the interpreter relative to the participants, the modality of interpreting and other factors (Braun 2018, 2020; Braun et al. 2018; Brunson 2018; Devaux 2017; Iglesias & Ouellet 2018; Koller & Pöchhacker 2018; Moser-Mercer 2003; Roziner & Shlesinger 2010; Seeber et al. 2019). Regarding the modality, questions have been raised about the suitability of telephone interpreting (TI) in view of the lack of visual cues, which are normally highlighted as being crucial in the context of

interpreting. Kelly (2008) cites a number of advantages of TI, but Ozolins (2011) cautions that market conditions and levels of sophistication of TI vary across countries.

Despite the variations in research findings and perceptions of RI, there is broad consensus that RI, regardless of the modality, adds a further layer of complexity to the interpreter's task and to the communicative situation for all involved. One aspect that is therefore uncontested is that future interpreters need to be able to work with communication technologies and that they need to be trained and tested in their knowledge of RI (Hvalac 2013). In view of the many prevailing research questions for RI, it is unsurprising that the extent of the training and education required is also still a matter of exploration and debate. However, the identified training need is underscored by research showing that interpreters are able to adapt their strategies to situations of technological mediation (Braun 2004, 2017) and more broadly by research highlighting the interpreter's adaptation potential and adaptive expertise (Ericsson 2000; Moser-Mercer 2008). Braun's (2004) research on video-mediated dialogue interpreting suggests that adaptation is possible especially in relation to the interaction. Iglesias & Ouellet (2018) show how seasoned telephone interpreters have fully adapted to this medium, although Moser-Mercer (2005) argues that experienced interpreters may find it more difficult to adapt to RI because they rely on automated processes, whilst novice interpreters may have a greater potential for adaptation.

A number of initiatives have been launched in the past decade to train and prepare (trainee) interpreters for RI. For example, conference interpreter training courses in collaboration with the European institutions have used videoconferencing for simulations of interpreting (Virtual classes; Biernacka 2018). The European projects IVY (Interpreting in Virtual Reality, 2011-13) and EVIVA (2013-15; www.virtual-interpreting.net; both coordinated by the University of Surrey) have evaluated different technological solutions, including a videoconferencing platform and a 3D virtual world, for the simulation of interpreting practice. The European AVIDICUS projects (2008-16; www.videoconference-interpreting.net; coordinated by the University of Surrey) have developed and evaluated training modules for interpreting students, professional interpreters and clients of interpreters to train these groups in how to use video-mediated interpreting in legal settings (Braun & Taylor 2012). The European SHIFT in Orality project (2015-18; https://www.shiftinorality.eu/; coordinated by the University of Bologna) has built on this work by analysing monolingual and interpreter-mediated interactions—onsite and remote—and systematising the development of training resources with a view to extending them to cover other settings in which RI is needed.

Alongside of the evolution of RI, communication technologies have been exploited to enrich the training of interpreters in RI. The associated body of research into the educational affordances of communication technologies in the context of interpreting suggests that virtual learning environments provide a safe space for learning and practising, which can constitute a stimulating environment for students to learn to interpret while also learning to interpret in a technology-enhanced environment (Braun *et al.* 2013; Ko & Chen 2011, Moser-Mercer, Class, and Seeber 2005).

However, there is currently a gap in research that explores the pedagogical implications of research on RI and/or links investigations of RI with pedagogical research on the use of communication technologies in interpreter education. The study of the paralinguistic layer of communication has also been neglected while offering opportunities for improving the flow of talk. The present special issue fills this gap by presenting original research relating to the pedagogical dimension of RI, with the primary aims of highlighting pedagogically important insights from research on RI (both via telephone and video link) and developing practical solutions for training and education informed by these insights.

The first contribution by Russo and Iglesias "A multidisciplinary theoretical and methodological framework for the study of telephone interpreting" is a proposal to frame the study of RI interactions, and TI in particular, according to four research paradigms that jointly provide a consistent approach ranging from a macro-level to a micro-level of analysis, i.e. from the identification of telephone interpreters' situated goals and functions to the evaluation of the actual linguistic and paralinguistic exchanges between the service provider/call-taker, interpreter and caller. The suggested framework is exemplified by detailed applications for TI trainers and trainees.

The use of Virtual Learning Environments for developing interpreting skills and strategies that are also relevant for RI is the subject of the third contribution "'It's like being in bubbles': Affordances and challenges of virtual learning environments for collaborative learning in interpreter education" by Braun, Davitti and Slater. This innovative study is the only contribution to this special issue that is not related to the SHIFT project but is part of a larger project on evaluating the use of different VLEs in interpreter education. Its results provide insightful indications for dialogue interpreter education.

A novel holistic approach to the study of video-mediated dialogue interactions with evidence-based implications for interpreter education is suggested by Davitti and Braun in "Analysing interactional phenomena in video remote interpreting in collaborative settings: implications for interpreter education" where resources other than talk (such as gaze, gestures, head and body movement) are investigated through micro-analytical observations of interpreters' embodied communicative moves within each aspect of the interaction.

This special issue is intended for interpreting students, interpreter trainers and the scholarly community—particularly those interested in interpreting, interactional linguistics, applied conversational analysis, sociolinguistics, social anthropology, prosody in interpreting—and for those who are approaching RI for the first time.

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