

# Handbook of Remote Interpreting

Edited by

**A. Amato, N. Spinolo, M.J. González Rodríguez**



*SHIFT in Orality Erasmus+ Project*

*Shaping the Interpreters of the Future and of Today*

ERASMUS + KA2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Project n. 2015-1-IT02-KA203-014786

Project Coordinator: Prof. Félix San Vicente

DOI: 10.6092/unibo/amsacta/5955

ISBN: 9788898010851

*Cover photo credit: Photo by Daniel Falcão on Unsplash*

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.





# Table of contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. General Background.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1. Basic tenets and features characterising telephone- and video-based remote communication in dialogue interpreting .....	12
<i>Nicoletta Spinolo, Michela Bertozzi, Mariachiara Russo - University of Bologna, Forlì Campus</i>	
1.2. Linguistic, paralinguistic and kinetic features in remote interpreting.....	26
<i>Emilia Iglesias Fernández, Juana Muñoz López - University of Granada</i>	
1.3. Social, pragmatic and ethical implications of distance interpreting.....	39
<i>Sabine Braun, Elena Davitti - university of Surrey</i>	
1.4. Settings and subject areas requiring remote interpreting.....	47
<i>Mariachiara Russo - University of Bologna, Forlì Campus</i>	
1.5. Parties, factors and instrumentalities involved .....	53
<i>Cabriel Cabrera Méndez - Dualia SL, Enrico Capiozzo, Lisa Danese - VEASYT Srl</i>	
<b>2. Telephone interpreting .....</b>	<b>65</b>
2.1 Face-to-face vs telephone-mediated communication – monolingual.....	66
<i>María Jesús González Rodríguez - University of Bologna, Forlì Campus</i>	
2.2. Traditional face-to-face vs telephone-mediated communication – with an interpreter .....	72
<i>Nicoletta Spinolo - University of Bologna, Forlì Campus</i>	
2.3 Challenges and Solutions: Some Paradigmatic Examples.....	79
<i>Amalia A.M. Amato - University of Bologna, Forlì Campus</i>	
<b>3. Video-mediated interpreting.....</b>	<b>103</b>
3.1. Face-to-face vs. video-mediated communication - monolingual .....	104
<i>Sabine Braun, Elena Davitti - University of Surrey</i>	
3.2. Traditional face-to-face vs. video-mediated communication – with an interpreter .....	112
<i>Sabine Braun, Elena Davitti - University of Surrey</i>	
3.3 Challenges and solutions .....	119
<i>Elena Davitti, Sabine Braun - University of Surrey</i>	
<b>4. Basic requirements and prerequisites for successful communication with remote interpreting .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<i>María Jesús González Rodríguez - University of Bologna, Forlì Campus</i>	

<b>5. Teaching materials .....</b>	<b>143</b>
5.1 Preparatory exercises .....	144
<i>María Jesús González Rodríguez - University of Bologna, Forlì Campus</i>	
5.2 Role-play simulations .....	150
<i>Elena Davitti, Sabine Braun - University of Surrey</i>	

## 1.1. Basic tenets and features characterising telephone- and video-based remote communication in dialogue interpreting

*Nicoletta Spinolo, Michela Bertozzi, Mariachiara Russo – University of Bologna, Forlì Campus*

### *1.1.1. Introduction*

The goal of this chapter is to help would-be remote interpreters to get familiar with pragmalinguistic and interpreting concepts that are key prerequisites for successful interpreter-mediated remote dialogues. The following concepts will be introduced: characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of remote interpreting (RI) vs. face-to-face interpreting (§ 1.1.2), impact of space allocation on RI (§ 1.1.3), structure and dynamics of human verbal interactions with particular reference to remote interpreter-mediated service interactions (§ 1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.1.6), nature and contribution of non-verbal communication (§ 1.1.7) and paralinguistic features in human interactions (§ 1.1.8), note-taking and memorisation techniques specific to RI (§ 1.1.9) and, finally, some concluding remarks concerning the impact of RI on the quality of the service provided (§ 1.1.10).

### *1.1.2. Remote interpreting*

Remote interpreting is rapidly gaining ground in the interpreting market in a growing number of countries where it was not used before (see § 1.4) as a consequence of the relentless progress in communication technologies on the one hand and, on the other, of the need to manage communication in increasingly multicultural and multilingual societies. Companies and institutions need to communicate with non-native speakers who live in or travel to their country; and at the same time they want to reduce costs.

The focus of this Handbook is on remote **dialogue** interpreting, which includes two main modes: telephone-mediated and video-mediated interpreting. Telephone interpreting is the “oldest” remote interpreting mode (the first public telephone interpreting service started in Australia in 1973) and is still in use, serving a wide range of markets and specific fields (see § 1.4), while videoconference interpreting only entered the scene more recently.

Telephone and video interpreting offer many advantages (see Amato 2017). The first that springs to mind is ease of access: interpreting services become more accessible in terms of space, time and possible language combinations. Let us think, for example, of a late-night health emergency: it is much easier and faster to find an interpreter on the phone or on a video call than to have him/her get to the hospital or the emergency site. Furthermore, remote interpreting reduces travelling costs for interpreters and primary participants (the expression primary participants is used to refer to the parties in the interaction who do not share the same language and can communicate only through an interpreter), thus contributing to cutting costs. Remote interpreting offers major benefits to users and interpreters, too: it can help protect their privacy (think of an obstetrician-gynaecologist’s practice) and/or safety (for example, in emergencies such as natural disasters or accidents). Interpreters, in particular, enjoy the additional advantage of accessing a larger and potentially global market, with more flexible working hours and the possibility of working from home even if they live in remote areas.

Remote interpreting, however, also involves additional difficulties (or, rather, peculiarities) as compared to face-to-face dialogue interpreting. It is important for remote interpreters to be aware of such peculiarities in order to develop adequate managing and coping strategies to overcome them. As Amato (2017: 54) sums up quoting several authors, remoteness has an influence on the features of interaction for all participants:

- The lack of social presence in remote interaction makes it more difficult for participants to build a **rapport** (that is, a relationship based on communication), as compared to face-to-face interactions;
- The **lack of some components of communication**, such as some visual, tactile and kinetic clues, generates a certain degree of uncertainty between participants, who may tend to rephrase or repeat what they say, since, due to the lack of such clues, they are not always sure that their recipients are understanding them;
- Finally, difficulties in communication can be generated by technical problems, such as poor audio quality, connection problems, line being cut off, etc.

The first and most obvious difference vs. face-to-face dialogue interpreting is the lack of visual input, which is total in telephone interpreting and partial in videoconference interpreting, since the camera only shows a portion of the speaker(s) and of the venue. In addition, the dialogue interpreter's role as coordinator and gatekeeper<sup>2</sup> of the interaction (Wadensjö 2002 [1993]) is made more complex by remoteness and (partial) lack of visual input and output. Therefore, specific strategies will be needed to manage conversation remotely (see § 1.1.6). Furthermore, since remote interpreting relies on technology, interaction can be sometimes hampered, interrupted and/or made more complex by technical problems that might occur, such as a bad line on the phone (§ 2.3.3) and poor Internet connection. Finally, the advantage of remote interpreting of being time- and space-flexible can lead to the interpreters often having to begin work at very short notice.

Precisely because of the peculiarities and differences of remote dialogue interpreting as compared to face-to-face dialogue interpreting, interpreters willing to work remotely will need specific training and preparation for these interpreting modes.

#### 1.1.3. Shared space and virtual space: possible constellations

There are three main constellations (i.e. space distribution patterns of participants) during a remotely-interpreted interaction).

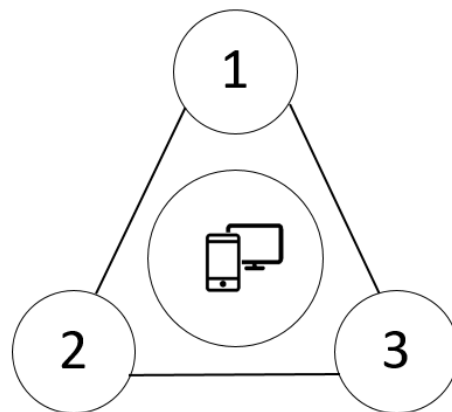


Figure 1. Constellation 1. All primary participants and the interpreter are located in different places

<sup>2</sup> As Wadensjö (2002 [1993]) explains, a dialogue interpreter's role is not only that of a *relayer*, reporting the message from one party to the other, but also that of *gatekeeper* or *coordinator* of the interaction, contributing, together with speakers, to the management of turns and of communication. The expression gatekeeper is also used in the literature to describe the action of giving or denying access to the floor or to information content, as performed by interpreters (Davidson 2000).



Figure 1 illustrates a first possible constellation, in which the interpreter (position 1) and the primary participants (positions 2 and 3) are all located in different places. An example of this situation might be a doctor calling a patient for a follow-up telephone or video call, with the interpreter working from his/her home or office. Ideally, the call should be on a single line, so all participants should be able to hear each other.

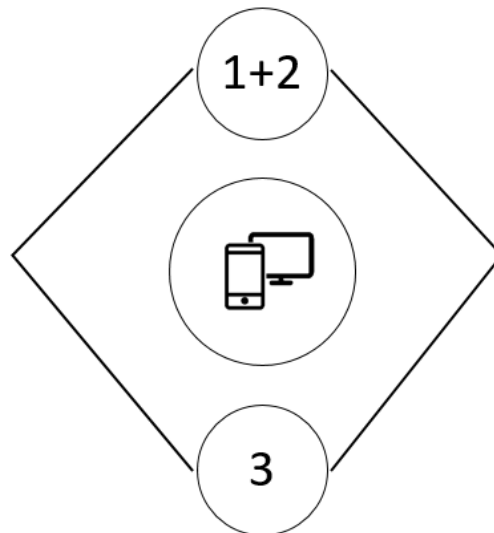


Figure 2. Constellations 2 and 3. The interpreter is located with one of the primary participants or the primary participants are co-located

Figure 2 illustrates two other possible constellations. In the first case (constellation 2), the interpreter is located with one of the primary participants (positions 1 and 2), while the other primary participant is located remotely (position 3). Finally, in the third possible constellation, primary participants (positions 1 and 2) share the same space, while the interpreter is located remotely (position 3).

For the sake of simplification, Figures 1 and 2 only present cases in which the interaction occurs between two primary participants; however, there may be more than two participants. Let us take the example in constellation 1: a video-call between a lawyer and his client, with the interpreter located remotely. The lawyer might be with an assistant, or a colleague. In such a case, we would have two primary participants located in one site (lawyer+assistant), and another one (client) located remotely.

#### 1.1.4. Structure of an interaction

Although the specific features of telephone and video-mediated interpreted interactions will be explained in detail in chapters 2 and 3, we shall provide here a basic introduction to the structure of an interaction, including the role of the remote interpreter. Communication in any context mostly takes place through conversation, as Heritage explains: “the social world is a pervasively conversational one in which an overwhelming proportion of the world’s business is conducted through the medium of spoken interaction” (Heritage 1984: 239; see also Amato 2012). In this section, we will present some fundamental concepts regarding the main components, the bricks that build verbal communication (§ 1.1.5), and how they interact with each other (§ 1.1.6).

Conversation can be divided into three main parts: opening, body of the interaction and closing (Schegloff & Sacks 1973).

- **Opening:** a conversation can be opened through various linguistic and communicative resources, such as greetings, questions (*How are you? How can I help you?*), or with more explicit opening utterances/turns (*I need to talk to you*).

- **Body of the interaction:** participants need to cooperate for this part of the interaction to be successful. They must agree on topic, tone, roles (and on variations to them); and must make the effort to be as clear as possible.
- **Closing:** this part usually includes four stages: 1) closing offering 2) acceptance of offering; 3) goodbye; 4) goodbye and closing. Conversational turns in phases 1 and 2 usually contain elements such as *OK* or *well...* while phases 3 and 4 usually contain typical farewell formulas such as *goodbye*, *bye-bye*, etc.

In this Handbook, we will focus on service calls (i.e. calls with institutions or private services), as remote interpreting services are usually not required for informal calls with acquaintances, friends and/or relatives. Service telephone or videoconferencing calls are usually made up of 5 parts (see SHIFT Report 1<sup>3</sup> for further details):

- **Opening** (synthetic, usually with no greeting – or at any rate not extended greeting – and *how-are-you* phases; Schegloff 1986)
- **Reason for call** described by the caller
- **Collection of information** by the operator, usually based on a few question/answer turns
- **Reply** to caller's request
- **Closing**

In all these phases, the interpreter plays a major role in managing and coordinating the interaction, as s/he confirms openings and closings with both parties and often manages question/answer sequences.

#### 1.1.5. Basic components of conversation

Conversation is a primary activity in human communication. According to Levinson (1983), it is the prototypical way of using language.

The first and fundamental feature of a conversation is the fact that it is usually organized and not chaotic, for three main reasons: (1) there are some types of recurring sequences; (2) people, events and groups employ recognisable interaction schemes and (3) people and groups bring to conversations expectations and resources that contribute to the order of conversation itself (Zorzi 1990: 1).

Conversation Analysis, a research paradigm developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), aims at analysing real conversations and detecting the main structures of the interaction, by describing the competences and resources used by speakers when they are involved in social interaction. Conversation analysts detected and mainly studied the following basic elements in an interaction:

- Organisation of conversational turns (turn-taking)
- Organisation of sequences (that is, the order of actions in conversation)
- The concept of preference
- The concept of repair.

Remote interpreters should know and be aware of the existence of such features for two main reasons: in the first place, because if the interpreter is aware of the main elements of an oral interaction it is more likely that s/he will be able to predict or understand and decode conversational behaviours; and, secondly, because the interpreter's role and behaviour during an interaction can have an impact on all these aspects.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.shiftnorality.eu/en/resources/2017/01/23/report-1-characteristic-features-remote-discourse>

### 1.1.6. Dynamics of conversation

Knowing the basic features that regulate conversations can boost dialogue interpreters' confidence during their service, and even more so in the case of remote dialogue interpreters, because they can better respond to and anticipate communicative exchanges.

In the next few paragraphs, we will provide a brief overview of the dynamics and main features of conversation: turn-taking (§ 1.1.6.1), adjacency pairs (§ 1.1.6.2), overlapping speech (§ 1.1.6.3) and repair strategies (§ 1.1.6.4).

#### 1.1.6.1. Turn-taking

In conversation, turn-taking is usually carried out smoothly, with no excessive overlaps and/or long pauses. According to Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), turn-taking usually happens in a moment they define as *transition-relevance place* (TRP). A TRP is a moment in the conversation in which participants understand that a turn has been closed. TRPs are identified by speakers through various clues:

- Syntactic clues (a sentence is complete)
- Lexical clues (presence of tags such as *and that's it*)
- Prosodic clues (falling intonation, pause)
- Embodied clues (gestures, movements)
- Direct reference to another participant (*What's your opinion about this?*)

Transition from one turn to another is negotiated by participants in the conversation, and it can happen in three possible ways:

- The next speaker is selected by the current speaker  
e.g. What do you think, Alex?
- One of the speakers self-selects him/herself by starting to speak  
e.g. a: I'm not sure what to say about this.  
b: Well, I believe...
- If nobody takes the turn, the current speaker keeps speaking  
e.g. a: I'm not sure what to say about this. Well, maybe...

Turn-taking in remote interpreting differs from that of monolingual conversation in many respects. Although the conversational exchange between primary participants is a spontaneous one, the interpreter's presence as a third party marks the rhythm and order of turn-taking in various ways. As already explained in paragraph 1.1.1, a dialogue interpreter's role in a conversation is not only that of a *relayer* conveying the information in two different languages, from one party to the other; a dialogue interpreter is also a *coordinator* or *gatekeeper* and effectively contributes to turn-taking mechanisms both implicitly (marking turns through the mere rendition of one turn and then the other, as turns contain indications on who should speak next) and explicitly, by actually intervening in the conversation through *non-renditions*, that is by producing utterances that are not the rendition of a speaker's turn. Merlini (2015) describes this as a "a meta-communicative activity, whose aim is to resolve communication problems by, for instance, clarifying, expanding, repairing, questioning, or formulating understanding of the meaning of conversational actions". A remote dialogue interpreter's coordinating and gatekeeping role is made more complex by the complete (for telephone) or partial (for videoconference) lack of visual clues and, in some cases, by the fact that remote conversation relies on technology, which can sometimes imply technical issues such as delays, transmission and connection problems. Finally, and especially in the case of three-point calls/videoconferences, in

which neither the participants nor the interpreter share the same space, turn-taking and management is already complicated for the two primary participants, who cannot see each other or see each other only partially; this makes the interpreter's role essential in coordinating the communicative exchange.

As we will see in chapters 2 and 3, it is often the remote interpreters who mark the tempo of turn-taking, either by selecting the following speaker through their renditions or by explicitly putting one of the speakers on hold and asking them to wait while they deliver their rendition.

Turns in remote dialogue interpreting can also be managed through various conversational strategies, which have been analysed by the SHIFT research group on a set of data provided by the two remote interpreting companies that are partners of the project and are summed up below (see also Braun & Davitti 2017b):

- **Chunking:** remote dialogue interpreters may use verbal (e.g. *excuse me...*) and embodied (e.g. raising a hand, or a finger, especially in videoconference) resources for chunking long or particularly dense turns. Or, on the other hand, they may decide not to resort to chunking to avoid speaker's turn disruption.
- **Latching/short overlap:** if they do resort to chunking, they may need to use latching or short overlaps with primary participants to continue their turn and complete the information.
- **Handling of dyadic sequences:** dialogue interpreting frequently includes dyadic sequences in which the interpreter exchanges a series of turns with one of the primary participants. Such sequences may be necessary, for instance, to complete information or to ask for clarification, and can be initiated either by the interpreter or by one of the participants. Remote interpreters should be able to manage such sequences ensuring that participants do not feel excluded (e.g. *please hold on a second while I interpret this for the other party*) and then regaining the "excluded party's" attention after a dyadic sequence.

#### 1.1.6.2. Adjacency pairs and preference

In many cases, not only does turn structure allow predicting who is going to speak next, but also what kind of turn will follow. This is the case with adjacency pairs (Schegloff 1968). Such turn pairs are subject to a relation of "conditional relevance", as the first part of the pair makes the second relevant. The second part is relevant not only because these pairs are usually composed of two parts, but also because when the second part is missing, its absence is justified by the speakers (cf. Gavioli 1999). Some examples of adjacency pairs are:

- greetings, after which we expect another greeting;  
e.g. a: Good morning!  
b: Hello!
- questions/answers  
e.g. a: Could you please send me a copy of the patient's records?  
b: Sure, no problem.
- offerings/acceptance  
e.g. a: Would you be interested in receiving more information on our tourist card?  
b: Yes, thank you!
- apologies/minimization  
e.g. a: I'm so sorry for all the trouble I'm causing.  
b: Don't worry, it's no problem at all.

Some adjacency pairs have two possible answers: for instance, an offering or an invitation can have a positive or negative reply, or speakers can agree or not on a certain opinion. Acceptance and agreement are “preferred” replies, while rejection and disagreement are “dispreferred” (Levinson 1983). Although both alternatives are possible, participants do not treat them in the same way: while a preferred second part is usually pronounced immediately after the first, a dispreferred one is often preceded by hesitations, apologies or justifications from participants in the interaction (Pomerantz 1984; Briz 1998).

Familiarity with the concept of adjacent pairs and preference, and the way they are dealt with by speakers, can be an important resource for interpreters in order to anticipate what is going to happen in the conversation.

#### 1.1.6.3. *Overlapping talk*

Turn-taking is not always smooth and synchronised: it can sometimes be simultaneous. In the case of overlapping and simultaneous talk, participants in the interaction are somehow “fighting” to gain their turn. Most simultaneous attempts at turn-taking do not become an actual turn in the conversation as they are often interrupted (Briz 1998). As the same author suggests, such interventions can have different functions: on the one hand, they can be a way to take the speaking turn, functioning as potential turn initiators, or they can be attention catchers; on the other, they can be used to express opinions on a speaker’s turn, or to correct, support, or confirm a previous utterance. According to various conversation analysts, and especially Jefferson (1983), overlapping talk often occurs at points corresponding to possible transition-relevance places (see § 1.1.6).

e.g. a: I’m not sure what to say about this. **[Well, maybe...]**  
 b: **[Well, I believe...]**

In remote communication, and hence in remote interpreting, overlapping talk may occur frequently, precisely because of the non-presence of participants in the interaction: the fact that they do not share the same space can lead to misunderstandings as to when a turn has finished and as to who should take the following turn. A pause, for example, could be interpreted (or mis-interpreted) as the end of a turn, or even as a technical problem. Also, a lack of turn organisation or a poor management of dyadic sequences may lead to confusion as to who is talking to whom and who should speak.

#### 1.1.6.4. *Repair strategies*

The concept of repair can be useful to understand many turn-taking and overlapping speech mechanisms. Repair strategies are mechanisms through which speakers manage problems of speaking, listening and understanding. There are four types of repair mechanisms<sup>4</sup>: *i) self-initiated self-repairs*, *ii) other-initiated self-repairs*, *iii) self-initiated other-repairs* and *iv) other-initiated other-repairs*<sup>5</sup>. Here are some examples:

- *self-initiated self-repairs*: the repair is initiated and carried out by the speaker who originated the problem:

e.g. May I speak to Mr- **ehm**, Ms Rogers?

- *other-initiated self-repairs*: the repair is initiated by the recipient and carried out by the speaker who originated the problem:

---

<sup>4</sup> For further reading on repair strategies, see Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks (1977), -the “founding fathers” of Conversation Analysis-; Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998); Levinson (1983).

<sup>5</sup> Most authors (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977; Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998; Sidnell 2010 among others) observe in their studies a systematic preference for self-repair in conversational mechanisms.

e.g. a: May I speak to Mr Rogers?  
b: Mr Rogers?  
a: **I mean Ms Rogers.**

- *self-initiated other-repairs*: the repair is initiated by the speaker originating the problem and continued by the other

e.g. a: May I speak to Mr Rogers... **ehm I mean...**  
b: You mean Ms Rogers.  
a: Yes.

- *other-initiated other-repairs*: the recipient of the problematic turn initiated and completes the repair

e.g. a: May I speak to Mr Rogers?  
b: **You mean Ms Rogers.**  
a: Yes.

Recognising and using repair mechanisms in dialogues, as we will see in many of the examples presented throughout this volume, can prove useful to improve remote interpreters' communicative skills.

#### 1.1.7. Non-verbal communication

In remote interpreter-mediated communication, some of the most important non-verbal cues that participants are most familiar with can vary considerably from face-to-face interaction: in some cases, they might just be less effective due to the spatial, technical and sensory constraints that these channels inevitably bring with them, but they can also be completely different (Amato 2017) due to remoteness and (partial) lack of visual input (§ 1.1.2).

While in face-to-face interpreter-mediated interaction movements and gestures play a fundamental role as a sign of mutual respect and interest (Poyatos 2002; Tonin 2017) through gaze, posture or greetings, thus providing wider communicative resources both for primary participants and for the interpreter, in remote interpreter-mediated communication these resources are not always available or are only partially available. These non-verbal features may slow down the communicative exchange: let us think of the time needed, for example, to enter the room, take a seat, put down one's personal belongings and so on, before the conversation actually begins. The lack of these elements makes remote communication a lot faster at the beginning or, at least, requires participants and interpreters to enter the interaction immediately, skipping this preliminary part, moving straight to the opening and starting with the initial greetings. Therefore, mutual identification cannot be negotiated in the same way as face-to-face interlocutors and interpreters do (§ 2.1.2).

Moreover, since the interpreter must rely only on the vocal channel (or, at best, may only have a partial visual input), the interaction appears to be simplified, as Bercelli & Pallotti (2002: 181) state:

[...] la restrizione delle risorse espressive alle sole risorse vocali semplifica drasticamente il gioco comunicazionale e lo linearizza, organizzandolo in sequenze meno variabili, meno articolate in flussi comunicativi paralleli<sup>6</sup>.

We must not forget that a simultaneous access to multiple sensory inputs (visual, vocal, or even tactile and olfactory) provides the interpreter (and primary participants as well) with a very wide range of expressive resources that can positively contribute to a better understanding of the interlocutors' role in the conversation and the relationships among them, as well as offer an insight into the setting, context, symmetries/asymmetries of power, or any other non-verbal clue that might be missing or only partially available in remote interpreting. Non-verbal communication is not just a qualifying element, it can even replace part of the conversation or serve multiple purposes at the same time (Poyatos 2002).

Some scholars have related the issue of "social presence" and interpersonal behaviour to the absence of non-verbal cues in remote interpreter-mediated encounters: Heath & Luff (1991) talk about the "relative insensitivity" towards the other participants' conduct due to the sometimes poor capacity of technological media to convey non-verbal elements. Braun & Davitti (2017a: 165-166), referring specifically to videoconference interpreting, postulate that:

In addition to the problems with verbal communication, video-mediated communication affects non-verbal embodied communication. Most noticeably, videoconferencing systems do not normally support direct eye contact or mutual gaze and make it more difficult to detect and understand the remote participants' head orientation and gestures, which play an important role in communication.

Mukawa *et al.* (2005) and Bohannon *et al.* (2013), comparing videoconferencing systems supporting direct eye contact with different systems not providing this possibility, came to the conclusion that, in the first case, the participants' communicative behaviour was similar to face-to-face interaction dynamics.

Therefore, the use of remote (telephone or videoconferencing) systems necessarily entails a further challenge for the interpreter who needs to be well aware of the lack of familiar and irreplaceable resources, often taken for granted, such as direct eye contact, multiple sensory inputs, gesture, posture, kinetics, back-channelling, latching and other non-verbal cues. As Braun & Davitti (2017a: 166) concluded "[t]his in turn leads to a feeling of reduced presence. Overcoming this feeling, i.e. recreating a sense of togetherness, is likely to require more cognitive effort than face-to-face communication".

#### 1.1.8. Paralinguistics

Paralinguistics involves a particular system of non-verbal elements characterising the way the message is produced, such as prosody and voice-related items, rhythm, intonation, pitch, volume and mimics (see § 1.2). As postulated by Poyatos (2002: 242), these elements always have a communicative value, regardless of whether they are conscious or unconscious:

The conscious or unconscious psycho-muscularly based body movements and intervening or resulting positions, either learned or somatogenic, of visual, visual-audible, and tactile or kinesthetic perception, which, whether isolated or combined with the linguistic and

---

<sup>6</sup> Restricting expressive resources only to vocal ones dramatically simplifies the communicative exchange making it more linear, organizing it in less variable sequences and avoiding its division in parallel communicative flows [translation by the author].

paralinguistic structures and with other somatic and objectual behavioral systems, possess intended or unintended communicative value.

In telephone/videoconferencing interactions, interpreters only have limited access to these cues: at first glance, voice-related items such as intonation, pitch or volume may seem to remain unchanged as compared to face-to-face to remote communication, but they can be very different: they can be distorted or partially modified by technical problems related to sound quality, poor internet connection, disturbed signal transmission or use of microphones, headsets and loudspeakers distorting the original sound.

Among all of these non-verbal components (§ 1.1.7), remote interaction only allows for a limited access to the linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of communication (Amato 2017: 146); this means that:

I segnali non linguistici che potrebbero dare indicazioni sia sullo stato “mentale” (ad esempio accordo, disaccordo, dubbio) sia sullo stato emotivo dell’interlocutore (ad esempio contentezza, scontentezza, soddisfazione, insoddisfazione) non sono accessibili all’altro parlante. Il sistema linguistico, paralinguistico e cinesico costituiscono una struttura indissolubile che deve essere recepita dall’interlocutore nella sua totalità per poter cogliere adeguatamente i messaggi durante lo scambio comunicativo<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, remote interpreters must be specifically trained and able to work without relying on the prototypical set of communicative resources (linguistic, paralinguistic, kinaesthetic and other non-verbal elements), and with more limited access to multi-sensory inputs that are normally present in face-to-face interactions.

#### *1.1.9. Note-taking and memorisation techniques*

Among the many different abilities that a remote interpreter is expected to master, note-taking and memorisation techniques are not less important. In this particular communication context, there is a further level of complexity that must be dealt with: the original message must move from one primary participant to the other, from an oral code to another through an intermediate written text (the interpreter’s notes) and, finally, it must travel through a remote channel (telephone or videoconferencing system). The differences with the traditional note-taking and memorisation techniques that are normally taught in consecutive interpreting training courses are manifold.

The first level of complexity affects the gap between traditional consecutive note-taking and the specific needs of dialogue or community interpreting: Interpreting Studies literature has recently begun to focus more and more on this particular interpreting mode, which necessarily entails a new approach to note-taking. One of the first studies investigating this issue (Schweda Nicholson 1990) reaffirms the primacy of memory over note-taking in dialogue interpreting, which is usually characterised by short speaking turns and rapid turn shifts among primary speakers; notes, however, are essential to recall non-contextualised unpredictable concepts such as figures, dates and proper names: therefore, even in a context where communicative exchanges and turns are quite short, a specific note-taking technique must be activated. More recent studies (Tedeschi 2014) seem to prove that, in dialogue interpreting, non-linear note-taking techniques – including graphs, concept or mind

---

<sup>7</sup> Non-linguistic features that may provide an indication both on the “mental” status (i.e., agreement, disagreement, doubt) and on the emotional status of the interlocutor (i.e., happiness, unhappiness, satisfaction, dissatisfaction) cannot be accessed by the other speaker. The linguistic, paralinguistic and kinetic system represent a tightly-knit structure that must be perceived as a whole by the interlocutor in order for him/her to be able to grasp the message correctly during the communicative exchange [translation by the author].



maps, spider diagrams, symbols and keywords, as opposed to linear methods where the message is organised with the same syntactic structure as the original speech – can be more effective. This approach would appear to confirm that, in this interpreting mode, it is not always necessary to write down every single sentence (as in traditional consecutive interpreting), but rather a selection of unpredictable and difficult-to-memorise items (numbers, proper names, etc.), since speaking turns are usually short and the interpreter is normally asked to translate after each of these turns.

A second level of complexity is given by the additional challenge of remoteness: as already shown, telephone or videoconferencing systems only allow for partial access to the multi-sensory inputs that are normally present in face-to-face interaction; this aspect cannot but affect the way interpreters take notes as well. This particular field has not been thoroughly investigated yet, but references to/reports of professional experience seem to confirm that interpreters tend to rely strongly on memory and limit their notes to a set of challenging elements (figures, proper names, etc.).

#### 1.1.10. *Quality: some concluding remarks*

Having all the above-mentioned conditions in mind, ensuring quality in remote interpreting is the object of ongoing heated debates and comparisons with face-to-face interactions. This prerequisite of a professional service can be considered from a double perspective: the quality of the service provided by the interpreter, where the focus is on the interpreter's performance, on the one hand; and the quality of the service provided by the operators, where the focus is on the effectiveness of the medium in achieving the interlocutors' goals.

Limiting our concluding remarks to the dialogue interpreting settings, we can quote Wadensjö – one of the pioneers in investigating on-site and telephone dialogue interpreting – who wrote, back in the late Nineties (1999: 3):

It is evident from empirical studies (e.g. Wadensjö 1998), the outcome of interpreters work **is dependent on the primary participants, on their mutual relations, on how they relate to the interpreter**, and on their communicative style.

Subsequent studies have also shown that despite the limitations and difficulties inherent in remote interpretation, well-functioning equipment, adequate preparation and a high level of experience on the part of interpreters and other participants can minimise RI shortcomings and ensure high quality RI services (Andres & Falk 2009; Braun 2012).

#### **Points for discussion**

- What are the specific features of remotely interpreted interaction that make it different from traditional face-to-face dialogue interpreting?
- Why is it important for remote interpreters to be aware of such differences?
- What are the possible constellations in remote interpreting?
- What are the basic components of conversation?
- How is non-verbal communication affected by remote interpreter-mediated communication?
- Why is it important for remote interpreters to be able to use memorization and note-taking?

#### **Recommended readings**

Hutchby, Ian; Wooffitt, Robert (1998): *Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices and Applications*. Cambridge: Polity.

Merlini, Raffaella (2015): "Dialogue Interpreting", F. Pöchhacker (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*. London: Routledge, 102-107.

Poyatos, Fernando (2002): "Nonverbal communication in simultaneous and consecutive interpretation", F. Pöchhacker; M. Schlesinger (eds.), *The interpreting studies reader*. London/New York: Routledge, 235-252.

Sacks, Harvey; Schegloff, Emanuel A.; Jefferson, Gail (1974): "A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation", *Language*, 50, 4, 696-735.

Wadensjö, Cecilia (2002 [1993]): "The double role of a dialogue interpreter", F. Pöchhacker; M. Schlesinger (eds.), *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. Oxon: Routledge, 354-370.

## References

- Amato, Amalia (2012): *L'interprete nel contesto medico*. Bologna: CLUEB.
- Amato, Amalia (2017): "Telephone Interpreting for Health Care Service: Potential Problems and Solutions", Vv.Aa., *Report 2: Remote Technologized Interpreting (Telephone-Based And Video-Based Remote Interpreting): Main Features And Shifts With On-Site Bilateral Interpreting*, 52-85. [<https://www.shiftinorality.eu/en/resources>]
- Bercelli, Fabrizio; Pallotti, Gabriele (2002): "Conversazioni telefoniche", C. Bazzanella (ed.), *Sul dialogo: contesti e forme di interazione verbale*. Milano: Guerini studio, 177-192.
- Bohannon, Leanne S. et al. (2013): "Eye contact and video-mediated communication: A review". *Displays*, 34 (2), 177-185.
- Braun, Sabine (2015): "Remote Interpreting", H. Mikkelsen; R. Jourdenais (Eds.) (2015): *Routledge Handbook of Interpreting*. New York: Routledge, 352-367.
- Braun, Sabine; Davitti, Elena (2017a): "Video-mediated communication", Vv.Aa., *Report 1: Characteristic Features Of Remote Discourse*, 150-167. [<https://www.shiftinorality.eu/en/resources>]
- Braun, Sabine; Davitti, Elena (2017b): "A Methodological Framework for the Study of Remote Interpreting", Vv.Aa., *Report 2: Remote Technologized Interpreting (Telephone-Based And Video-Based Remote Interpreting): Main Features And Shifts With On-Site Bilateral Interpreting*, 276-314. [<https://www.shiftinorality.eu/en/resources>]
- Briz, Antonio (1998): *El español coloquial en la conversación*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Davidson, Brad (2000): "The interpreter as institutional gatekeeper: the social-linguistic role of interpreters in Spanish-English medical discourse". *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 4/3, 379-405.
- Jefferson, Gail (1983): "Two Explorations of the Organization of Overlapping Talk in Conversation", *Tilburg papers in language and literature*, 28. Tilburg: Tilburg University, 1–28.
- Gavioli, Laura (1999): "Alcuni meccanismi di base nell'analisi della conversazione", R. Galatolo; G. Pallotti (eds), *La conversazione: un'introduzione allo studio dell'interazione verbale*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 43-65.
- Heath, Christian; Luff, Paul (1991): "Disembodied conduct: Communication through video in a multi-media office environment", *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI'91. New Orleans: Louisiana, 99-103.
- Heritage, John (1984): *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, in association with Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Hutchby, Ian; Wooffitt, Robert (1998): *Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices and Applications*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Levinson, Stephen C. (1983): *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merlini, Raffaella (2015): "Dialogue Interpreting", F. Pöchhacker (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*. London: Routledge, 102-107.
- Mukawa, Naoki et al. (2005): "What is connected by mutual gaze?: user's behavior in video-mediated communication", *CHI '05 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI EA '05)*. New York: ACM, 1677-1680.

- Pomerantz, Anne (1984): "Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes", J. M. Atkinson; J. Heritage (eds), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 57-101.
- Poyatos, Fernando (2002): "Nonverbal communication in simultaneous and consecutive interpretation", F. Pöchhacker; M. Schlesinger (eds.), *The interpreting studies reader*. London/New York: Routledge, 235-252.
- Sacks, Harvey; Schegloff, Emmanuel A.; Jefferson, Gail (1974): "A symplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation", *Language*, 50, 4, 696-735 [trad. it. (2000) *L'organizzazione della presa del turno nella conversazione*, G. Fele, P.P. Giglioli (eds), *Linguaggio e contesto sociale*. Bologna: il Mulino, 97-131]. [[http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~julia/cs4706/Sacks\\_et\\_al\\_1974.pdf](http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~julia/cs4706/Sacks_et_al_1974.pdf)]
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (1968): "Sequencing in conversational openings". *American Anthropologist*, 70, 1075-1095.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (1984): "On Some Questions and Ambiguities in Conversation", J. M. Atkinson; J. Heritage (eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 28-52.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (1986): "The routine as achievement", *Human Studies*, 9, 111-151.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A.; Jefferson, Gail; Sacks, Harvey (1977): "The Preference for Self-Correction in the Organization of Repair in Conversation", *Language*, 53, 361-382.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A.; Sacks, Harvey (1973): "Opening up closings", *Semiotica*, 8, 289-327.
- Schweda Nicholson, Nancy (1990): "Consecutive note-taking for community interpretation", D. Bowen; M. Bowen (eds.), *Interpreting – Yesterday, today and tomorrow*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins & SUNY (State University of New York), 136-145.
- Sidnell, Jack (2010): *Conversation Analysis: an introduction*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tonin, Raffaella (2017): "Telefonate di servizio, monolingue spagnolo e italiano", Vv.Aa., *Report 1: Characteristic Features Of Remote Discourse*, 104-118. [<https://www.shiftinorality.eu/en/resources>]
- Tedeschi, Beatrice (2014): *Note-taking in consecutive interpretation*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Bologna, Campus di Forlì, Forlì.
- Tusón Valls, Amparo (1997): *Análisis de la conversación*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Vv.Aa. (2017): *Report 1: Characteristic Features Of Remote Discourse*. [<https://www.shiftinorality.eu/en/resources>]
- Vv.Aa. (2017): *Report 2: Remote Technologized Interpreting (Telephone-Based And Video-Based Remote Interpreting): Main Features And Shifts With On-Site Bilateral Interpreting*. [<https://www.shiftinorality.eu/en/resources>]
- Wadensjö, Cecilia (2002 [1993]): "The double role of a dialogue interpreter", F. Pöchhacker; M. Schlesinger (eds), *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. Oxon: Routledge, 354-370.
- Zorzi, Daniela (1990): *Parlare insieme: la co-produzione dell'ordine conversazionale in italiano e in inglese*. Bologna: CLUEB.