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Technology affordances in training interpreters for asylum seekers and refugees

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Abstract

The promotion of social and legal inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees can be greatly enhanced by providing specific training to those called upon to facilitate smooth communication between them and the relevant authorities to overcome linguistic-cultural barriers, i.e., interpreters in the field, also called humanitarian interpreters. These particularly sensitive settings are often deprived of properly trained language professionals, which jeopardises the asylum seekers' and refugees' rights to access public services and fair treatment in their dealings with the relevant authorities. The lack of trained language professionals is mainly due to a shortage of specific training on humanitarian interpreting and the language pairs required for interactions with refugees applying for international protection. Building on our expertise gained through one particular blended course with untrained interpreters working for refugee status determination bodies in Italy, this chapter illustrates the design of a conceptual and pedagogical solution based on innovative educational approaches and digital technologies for synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning. This solution may apply to all language-pairs to meet humanitarian interpreters' challenges and needs.

Introduction

Over the centuries, interpreters have played the role of "critical link"[1] to overcome language and cultural barriers between individuals of different nationalities in times of both peace and war. The 21st century, however, has witnessed the emergence of unprecedented demands for interpreter mediation in a new, highly sensitive setting, the humanitarian setting. With the implementation of the International Humanitarian Law for the protection of victims of wars and armed conflicts - including the First Geneva Convention of 1864, the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Aja Protocols of 1977, as well as the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, interpreters have been increasingly called upon to work in conflict and non-conflict scenarios where migrants, forcibly displaced people, and refugees have escaped persecution, poverty, natural disasters, and life-threatening risks. At the 2016 "First Symposium on Interpreter Training and Humanitarian Interpreting,"[2] Marc Orlando voiced concern about the level of preparation of interpreters working in these settings. Admittedly, this is a particularly challenging field where interpreting techniques do not suffice unless they are accompanied by intercultural and interactional skills and psychological and physical stamina.

To tackle the issue of interpreter preparation for humanitarian settings, the University of Geneva pioneered training initiatives by setting up in 2010 the *InZone* Centre for Interpreting in Conflict Zones[3] led by Barbara Moser-Mercer, and by providing short courses for humanitarian field interpreters[4] led by Lucia Ruiz Rosendo. Recently, two other academic initiatives have come to the fore (Moser-Mercer et al. 2021): the diploma courses opened by the Yarmouk University in Jordan and the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Finally, a university online asynchronous course for interpreters working with refugees is now offered by the University of Glasgow within the framework of the only European project on this topic. This Erasmus+ Inter4Ref project provides interdisciplinary resources and materials for humanitarian interpreters. Other organizations and institutions offer guidelines to humanitarian interpreters in the field, such as Translators Without Borders' Field Guide to

[1] To recall the seminal "critical link" conference series https://criticallink.org (last accessed 5 February 2022)

[2] https://www.monash.edu/arts/languages-literatures-cultures-linguistics/news-and-events/articles/2016/symposium-on-humanitarian-interpreting-and-interpreter-training (last accessed 5 February 2022)

[3] https://www.unige.ch/inzone/ (last accessed 5 February. 2022)

[4] https://www.unige.ch/formcont/cours/field-interpreters (last accessed 5 February 2022)

Humanitarian Interpreting and Cultural Mediation,[5] the UNHCR: Self-study module (2009) and the Handbook for Interpreters in Asylum Procedures (2017). However, apart from these few training opportunities, it is generally acknowledged that interpreters working in humanitarian settings are usually non-professional bi/multilinguals who, therefore, lack both technical and deontological preparation. This lack of training may jeopardise the goal of interpreter-mediated encounters involving refugees and asylum seekers as these non-professional interpreters risk violating basic deontological principles and may engage in side conversations with refugees without involving the public officer or omit important information due to inadequate translation skills (Pöllabauer 2004). Providing adequate training is, therefore, key to professionalism, as an interpreter is not so much someone who knows languages, but someone who behaves as an interpreter, as Uvarov wrote (1981, as quoted by Straniero Sergio 1999), who is aware of their role and limits, is able to set boundaries with the other interlocutors and is prepared to learn (as also stressed in the UNHCR module 2009).

In the current chapter, we will present the design of a training course for interpreters working with refugees and asylum seekers in the Italian context where no such courses officially exist. In Italy, humanitarian interpreters are regularly required for two different types of services (González Rodríguez and Radicioni 2021). The first type is provided to asylum seekers and concerns material, legal, health, and language assistance. The second type is provided to international protection holders and concerns social integration activities and employment counselling. We will focus on the first type of service, capitalising on the experience gained in training interpreters for asylum seekers in a pilot course organised by our Department of Interpreting and Translation of the University of Bologna at Forlì Campus and on new technological affordances, some of which were also developed within our Department.

Italy, the Southern gateway to the EU

Italy has traditionally been a home country of economic migrants who, from the turn of the XIX century on, have had to leave their homes to find better livelihood opportunities either in the Northern part of the country or abroad. Yet, for several decades now, Italy has witnessed a reversal of the trend and has become a country of destination for migrants due to economic and, more recently, humanitarian reasons.

[5] https://translatorswithoutborders.org/resource/field-guide-to-humanitarian-interpreting-and-cultural-mediation/ (last accessed 5 February 2022)

Refugees reaching Italy follow the Mediterranean route and land on its southern shores, with Lampedusa in Sicily becoming a symbolic point of arrival. The suffering of these refugees fleeing from conflicts, persecution, and natural disaster in their homelands starts even before venturing to cross the Mediterranean Sea as often they have walked hundreds of miles before arriving in Libya, where they are put in inhuman detention centres and submitted to the most degrading and atrocious conditions, or even outright criminal treatment.[6]

The Mediterranean route is hazardous. Refugees are the prey of ruthless human traffickers who embark on overcrowded fortune boats. These often sink and cause the death of its occupiers. Another deadly threat comes from Libyan coastal guards - equipped by Italy within the framework of the 2018 agreement - who push them back at gunpoint. Since 2014, when the IOM started monitoring "Missing migrants," 23,150 human beings have lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea: they are today's *desaparecidos* as they are defined by human rights associations, a new human tragedy.

Despite being aware of the deadly risks, many refugees take to the sea every day. According to UNHCR data, waves of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea reached a peak in 2016 (181,436 migrants), then after the Libyan-Italian agreements in 2018 ("Security Degree") there was a sharp reduction (23,370 in 2018 and 11,471 in 2019), but recently, numbers of successful landings has risen again (67,477 in 2021), and also that of victims, according to the UNHCR operational portal.[7] In descending order, the top countries of origin are: Tunisia, Egypt, Bangladesh, Iran and Ivory Coast (ranking first in the Sub-Saharan Africa).

In compliance with the Dublin Regulation adopted in 2013,[8] migrants have to be identified in the country of entry. So, for a decade now, Italy has been struggling to meet the challenge of managing the multilingual inflow of economic migrants and refugees in its Rescue, First Assistance and Identification hotspots close to landing areas - which over the years has ranged between approximately 11,000 to over 180,000 a year. Most migrants and refugees only transit through the country, but many decide to stay and apply for international

[6] https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/libya/ (last accessed 1 April 2022)

[7] https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205 (last accessed 5 February 2022)

[8] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application-dublin-regulation_it (last accessed 5 February 2022)

protection. If they do not meet the requirements to enter Italy, they are sent to Permanence Centres for Repatriation (CPR, *Centri di permanenza per il rimpatrio*, which are administrative *detention* centres), but if eligible for refugee status determination (RSD) procedures, they enter the Italian 2-tier reception system: the First level reception centres (CPA, *Centri di prima accoglienza* for further identification and beginning of asylum application procedures) and the Second level reception and integration centers (SAI, *Sistema di accoglienza e integrazione*)[9]. At each level, some sort of language assistance to enable communication between local authorities/staff and refugees is provided. This is usually carried out by unqualified interpreters in vehicular languages, as most African or Asian languages are not covered.

Interpreters' services are also required by the many NGOs active in this humanitarian setting and, most importantly, by the first degree authorities responsible for Refugee Status Determination (RSD) called *Commissione territoriale per i richiedenti protezione internazionale* (Territorial Commission for international protection applicants, from now on TC), which have been the target setting for our training course.

Mapping local needs

As Moser-Mercer et al. (2021) rightfully stress, any humanitarian interpreter training ought to be designed within a country to cater for the needs of that particular country. In our case, Italy is a frontline country on the EU southern "border" that has to face a "by now permanent" refugee emergency situation. Its institutional and societal structures, however, are not always up to the daunting task of smooth refugee identification, protection and integration. One crucial stage of refugee protection and integration is the interpreter-mediated interview with the TC, the first degree governmental body competent for RSD. There are 44 such TCs in Italy and one of them is located in the Prefecture of Forlì.

In 2017, we approached the TC to get to know their language assistance policy and the characteristics of the interpreting service provided. We learnt that it relied on external agencies providing 50 (mainly untrained) interpreters in 20 different languages (mainly African languages and French and English as vehicular languages). As there are no

[9] For a detailed account of the Italian refugee protection system see Arcella in this volume and https://www.openpolis.it/parole/come-funziona-laccoglienza-dei-migranti-in-italia/ (last accessed 5 February 2022)

interpreter training courses between Italian and the required African and Asian languages, anyone speaking one of these rare languages was recruited with a perfunctory selection procedure. This means that the TC had very little control over interpreting quality (accuracy and faithfulness) and was bound to be faced with unprofessional behaviour, such as questioning the reason why certain questions were being asked or the occurrence of other behaviour slowing down or disrupting the interview process, as reported by one of its members and in the literature (see Pöllabauer 2004). In collaboration with the Faculté de Traduction et d'Interprétation (FTI) of the University of Geneva, our Department decided to offer a free-of-charge pilot course in humanitarian interpreting to their pool of interpreters: 12 participated representing 8 different nationalities and 15 different languages (González Rodríguez and Radicioni 2021, Russo et al. forthcoming). It was the first course of this kind to be organised in Italy. It ran from June 30 to October 27, 2017 in a blended format: i) a two-day, face-to-face session (June 30 and July 1) to introduce theoretical and methodological topics, to get to know all participants and develop the teamwork spirit of a Community of Practice, ii) 6 online training activities with one-to-one tutorial via the virtual platform EVITA made available by FTI, iii) one-day, face-to-face session for course evaluation (October 27). The EVITA platform also featured a forum enabling discussions and collaborative work.

A pre-course and a post-course short test on IT>IT and FR/EN>IT consecutive interpretation was administered for all the participants during the two face-to-face sessions to check their initial and final competence.

The course main content and key features were the following (Russo et al. forthcoming):

- Awareness of the role: A bilingual person is not necessarily an interpreter, but someone who behaves as an interpreter (encourage reflection on what this implies and how this impacts on professional performance)
- Cultural issues (encourage a reflection on aspects given for granted - like for instance that there may be also intra-cultural differences between a Nigerian who migrated to Italy 20 years ago and a young Nigerian newcomer, due to societal changes - or that not all cultural differences are relevant)
- Conversational dynamics (draw attention to turn-taking, hesitations and pauses, communicative strategies and to verbal and non-verbal communication)

- Professional ethics (focus on the principles of neutrality, confidentiality and faithfulness, but also on the issue of advocacy *vs*. empathy, on preparation before an assignment, and on how to brief the "clients", i.e., both the interviewer and interviewee, about the interpreter's communicative needs and role, including the need to add clarifications or requests for specifications)
- Basic skills in consecutive interpreting
- Basic knowledge of the legislation and the procedures on international protection and migration laws
- Better comprehension and production skills in Italian (especially colloquial and specialised registers)
- Terminology and how to prepare glossaries

As already mentioned, in the first introductory face-to-face session the more theoretical and methodological topics were presented and discussed. In a two-way exchange, we invited the TC interpreters to share their working experiences and difficulties, and to express their learning needs and expectations. The resulting picture revealed few aspects concerning hard skills - language deficiencies-, but several soft aspects - psychological and interactional (Russo et al. forthcoming):

- Finding words: this highlighted the need for acquiring greater fluency and linguistic competence
- Asylum seeker's illiteracy: this feature was particularly challenging because it caused problems of understanding and also the need to simplify the language of interviewers and of written documents
- Listening to sad stories: this caused a heavy emotional load and could cause vicarious trauma (when not reviving personal painful experiences)
- Gender-based refusal or even hostility: for instance, a male interviewee's hostility towards a female interpreter could cause lack of collaboration; a different type of problem could arise when a homophobic interpreter and an LGBTQ+ interviewee have to interact
- Asylum seeker's doubts on his/her date of birth: this behaviour could challenge the interpreter's credibility, therefore, sometimes some additions on the part of the interpreter to explain different cultural traditions would be necessary, but not necessarily allowed

- Lack of collaboration from members of the Commission: this attitude tended to intimidate the interpreter and affected his/her performance; it was felt that in order to work efficiently and help the interviewee feel at ease and speak freely it is very important to favor an empathic climate
- Interviewers raising their voices and treating asylum seekers as in police interrogations: this made interpreters feel deeply ill-at-ease *vs* the interviewee.

Unlike conference interpreters, humanitarian interpreters usually do not work in pairs or in teams and those working for the TC in Forlì made no exception. Therefore, the very fact of being together to discuss and share working experiences, fears and dilemmas helped them to identify traits of the profession that were typical and common to all those performing that role, and, therefore, they were not just personal issues. Furthermore, the pilot course was an opportunity to get to know other interpreters' strategies and jointly try to find the best possible practices to tackle them. The need to discuss and share experiences was also described in other targeted training settings, such as that for professional interpreters working in UN field missions (Ruiz Rosendo et al. 2021).

Targeted course design

Taking stock

Designing a course drawing on the results of a pilot course enables trainers to take stock of trainees' experience and focus on what needs to be emphasised or added.

Trainees revealed the following personal difficulties:

- Understanding and speaking Italian

This was a somehow striking comment as one would expect a proficient level of passive and active competence in Italian from foreign humanitarian interpreters working with Italian institutional personnel in a sensitive setting, where word form and substance have such a heavy weight and also specialised (legal) language is used. In a new training course particular emphasis has to be laid on Italian listening/reading and comprehension activities, including activities with Italian legal and institutional terminology.

- Self-evaluation

Untrained interpreters are not used to record and evaluate their working performances and in a sensitive setting such as a TC this would not be allowed. But self and peer evaluation based on a content, language and delivery assessment grid is a pivotal exercise that needs practice to favor skill acquisition.

- Active listening and memorization

This is another preliminary exercise to interpreting that untrained interpreters have never practiced. As noticed, it requires a certain effort (for more details see chapter 17).

- Note-taking

This is a new skill that needs to be developed as consecutive interpreting is explicitly required by the TC contract.

- Use of the platform

The difficulties were mostly related to poor or unstable connections, and scant familiarity with IT devices. Admittedly, in the pre-Covid 19 era, the use of remote teaching and interpreting platforms was not very common and course trainees were understandably uncomfortable having to rely on them. The interpreting market has now drastically changed with most assignments being performed remotely. However, in Italian legal settings (including humanitarian ones) video-based and telephone-based interpreting are not yet fully-fledged modalities and on-site interpreting is still the standard procedure. Nevertheless, interpreters who have been properly trained and live, for instance, in Forlì could be asked to interpret remotely for refugees landed in Lampedusa. Therefore, training them remotely and teaching them how to use remote interpreting platforms has become a prerequisite. Our Department has acquired a considerable expertise in this field having coordinated the Erasmus Plus project *SHIFT in Orality: Training the Interpreters of the Future and of Today*[10] (Russo 2018, Amato et al. 2018), and as shown later in the chapter. This is definitely an aspect of training that technological affordances can only improve.

[10] Project details and all resources developed are available at https://www.shiftinorality.eu/ www.shiftinorality.eu(last accessed 5th Feb 2022)

In their opinion, the pilot course achieved the objective of improving their competence in understanding and speaking Italian, note-taking technique and knowledge of international protection legislation and terminology. Trainees' difficulties with the platform revealed their lack of familiarity with online training tools, but today the use of technology for remote communication has become a standard modality and, therefore, would be far less problematic. Finally, concerning recommendations for future editions they indicated more face-to-face training and further training.

New content design with more IT support

The trainees' requests stimulate some considerations. The request for more face-to-face training can probably be justified by the need for more human interaction (both one-to-one and collective) and rapport building opportunities. However, this could also be connected to the characteristics of the platform used for the pilot course that allowed only written one-to-one feedback on task completions. As we will see, the new learning platforms allow also video-based oral interactions that can favor more dynamic and efficient feedbacks and exchanges. The request for more training highlights the urgent need for a protracted and targeted training focusing on refugees' and asylum seekers' protection.

The new course could envisage a very interactive first introductory session on methodological and theoretical topics to foster human contact and collective teamwork spirit and at least 12 activities with one-to-one feedback covering the following hard and soft skills.

Enhancing hard skills

- Active listening and memorization (IT>IT, EN/FR>IT, IT>EN/FR)
- Lexical and register flexibility (IT comprehension and production)
- Terminology and how to prepare glossaries
- Background documentation on national and international legislation concerning refugees, asylum, international protection and subsidiary protection
- Command of international protection procedures in TCs

- Basic dialogue interpreting skills (sight translation, *chuchotage* and note-taking)

- Basic interpreting skills between IT and trainees' native languages
- Remote dialogue interpreting

Enhancing soft skills

- Awareness of code of ethics and deontological principles
- Awareness of interpreter relaying and coordination roles (Wadensjö ([1993] 2002)
- Empowerment and briefing (with the parties)
- Awareness of communication dynamics and specific TC communicative patterns
- Awareness of the relevant cultural differences
- Empathy and interpersonal relationship
- Self and peer evaluation

Finally, other course features could include:

- Group discussions and sharing of learning and working experiences
- Role-plays of realistic situations
- Role-plays with ethical and deontological dilemmas and other critical issues

This format will be implemented and enhanced thanks to new IT affordances as the next section will illustrate.

Technological setup for a fully online course

Rationale

As explained above, a target group of students for a course on humanitarian interpreting would necessarily be a heterogeneous one, with participants covering different language combinations and also characterised by different ages, educational backgrounds, work experience, work-life balance (Bergunde and Pöllabauer 2019; González Rodríguez and Radicioni 2021).

On the other hand, for the course to develop smoothly and effectively, it is very important to build a sense of community and belonging in the class by engaging participants and stimulating their commitment to class activities and self-training practice.

It is therefore of paramount importance to design a solution that, while being flexible enough to accommodate participants' needs in terms of class hours and flexibility, will "promote

interaction, participation and communication in the online learning environment" (Robinson and Hullinger 2008, 7).

Remote teaching seems to be a challenge in humanitarian interpreting training; González Rodríguez and Radicioni (2021) and Russo et al. (forthcoming) report results of student evaluation questionnaires after the Forlì course and highlight that most students expressed a preference for face-to-face, synchronous learning as compared to the online mode. As a matter of fact, as illustrated above, when asked to offer suggestions on how to improve further editions of the course, they mainly asked for more face-to-face training and also for further training. While totally understandable and legitimate, these two requests may also be seen to clash with one another if applied to a group of learners who are not full-time students enrolled in an intensive "Monday-to-Friday" course, where extra face-to-face training would entail a less flexible as well as more intensive class schedule.

Furthermore, a face-to-face course undoubtedly offers advantages in terms of effectiveness of training and student engagement, but it can only address a reduced pool of participants who live in the area where the course is delivered; on the other hand, a fully online course can address a larger pool of participants located all over the country.

For these reasons, we venture this proposal for a fully online course by proposing different technologies and learning environments aimed at allowing students' synchronous and asynchronous learning, focusing as much as possible on free and open resources, not with the aim of being exhaustive in presenting all possibilities, but rather by focusing on what we found effective based on our experience both related to the course described above and as interpreter educators.

Asynchronous activities: Learning management system

A first decision will have to be made on the learning management system (LMS) to be used. An example of a well-known flexible, free and open-source option is Moodle.[11] Although it is not the only available option,[12] it seems to be particularly suitable for this kind of course with small groups, a high degree of interaction and a combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities.

[11] https://moodle.org/; credits: https://docs.moodle.org/dev/Credits.

[12] A list of open-source LMSs is provided here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_learning_management_systems

A Moodle course can be set up to be the virtual place where all the information on the course, course materials and activities are collected. Another advantage of the Moodle platform is the wide variety of resources it offers trainers, thus making it possible to really tailor-cut the course to their selected training activities.

In the case of this course, and considering that different participants may have different IT skills, we select and propose a list of "essentials" that we believe the Moodle course should have, although they can then be tailored to the course needs.
In the first place, the *Forum tool* on Moodle can be used to set up permanent billboards for anyone to post notices and information on the course. For instance, different forums can be set up for announcements, schedule changes, important deadlines, and participants' introduction. It may also be advisable to set up a forum for troubleshooting, where quick technical problems can be notified and dealt with quickly.

Furthermore, the *Assignment activity* can be employed to present students with an assignment by uploading different kinds of written, audio and video materials. The activity allows students to upload their assignments in different formats, including audio and video recordings which, considering the kind of course being taught, will probably constitute the greatest part of student work; the *Grading tool* in Moodle allows the trainer to offer feedback in writing or via audio or video recordings, thus speeding up the grading and revision process.
Moodle also includes a *Workshop activity*, through which students can grade other students' assignments (which can be audio/video, or written, such as portfolios, glossaries, etc.) in a peer-to-peer assessment practice led by the instructor, who can also share an assessment sheet for the students to use.

Finally, Moodle can work as a repository to upload and organise materials used during synchronous lessons as well as further materials for consultation or self-study by using the *Resources feature* to share links, documents, folders, etc.

Figure 1 is a (double) screenshot of Moodle's list of activities and resources; the "essentials" suggested here are circled in red. However, as it can be noted, many other options can be

available and used by trainers depending on their teaching style and course contents, as well as on the group's proficiency with technology.

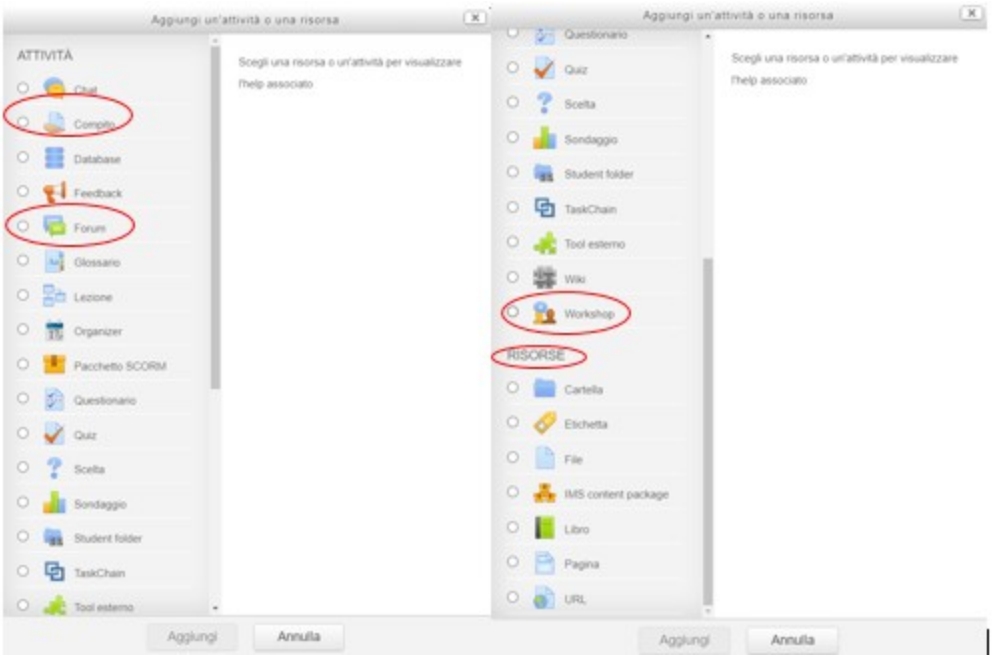

Figure 1: list of Moodle's activities and resources

Synchronous activities

For synchronous activities, a variety of tools and platforms can be used. The choice of platform may vary depending on each Higher Education Institution's practices and guidelines. However, and especially for interpreting practice, some specific platforms could be employed.

For plenary lessons, any videoconferencing platform suitable for teaching (i.e., allowing for screen and sound sharing and for interaction with participants) can be used.

It might be advisable to also encourage students to use videoconferencing platforms to meet among themselves as a whole class or in groups not only to practice, but also to exchange opinions and get to know each other outside class activities.

Since the student group will be a heterogeneous and multi-language one, intensive peer-to-peer practice and assessment will be required, and participants will have to be paired up with partners with the same language combination. For peer-to-peer practice, different platforms and tools can be used besides or in combination with regular videoconferencing tools.

For peer-to-peer practice, for example, the InTrain[13] (Carioli and Spinolo 2019) platform can be used. It is a free and open-source platform developed at the Department of Interpreting and Translation of the University of Bologna at Forlì which can be used by anyone with no need to subscribe or download.

InTrain was conceived and designed as a web-based training system for Remote Simultaneous Interpreting (RSI). However, it can also be used more creatively to practice other interpreting modes, since RSI is likely not to be the focus of a course in humanitarian interpreting. The platform has three different user profiles: Interpreter, Speaker and Supervisor, where the interpreter is the student practicing interpreting, the supervisor is the trainer or the peer assessing the student, and the speaker is the person delivering a speech or, alternatively, a video played by the supervisor. In the case of humanitarian interpreting, it can be used to practice *chuchotage*; the supervisor can listen to the original video and to the interpreter at the same time and record the interpreter's performance for self-assessment.
The same platform (Figure 2) can also be used for practicing dialogue interpreting in groups of three as, in the briefing mode, it allows all participants (interpreter, supervisor, speaker) to speak and to hear everyone in the session, which can also be recorded and downloaded for successive assessment either by the trainer or by peers.

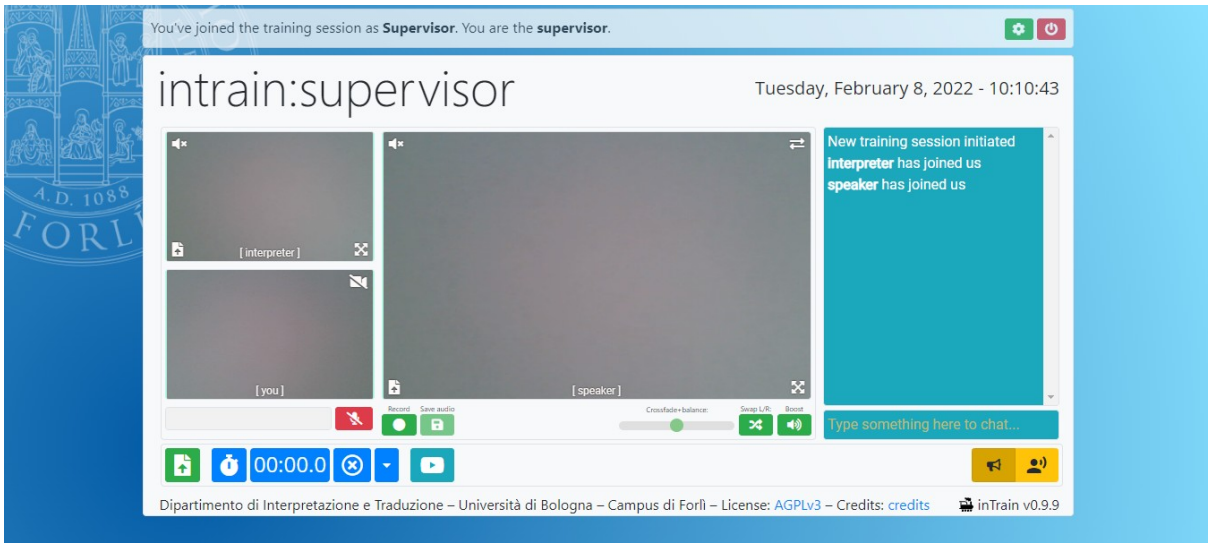

Figure 2: InTrain: Supervisor view

[13] https://intrain.ditlab.it/

Another platform that seems particularly suitable for the trainer to work with groups of students is ReBooth[14] (Carioli and Spinolo 2020). It is a free and open-source platform which also developed at the Department of Interpreting and Translation of the University of Bologna as a follow-up and further development of InTrain. ReBooth is free and open source, too, but, differently from InTrain, it requires having an account to access it. This is because, differently from InTrain, ReBooth needs to be hosted on a server, and therefore accesses need to be controlled. It can, however, be freely downloaded from GitHub and installed on any other institution's server.

ReBooth allows a trainer to remotely deliver practice sessions of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting while recording the performance of various students at the same time. An average ReBooth class can host 8-10 students (the exact number depends on the teacher's connection and hardware). In the case of humanitarian interpreting, again, it can be useful to practice *chuchotage* with multiple students at the same time as well as consecutive interpreting.

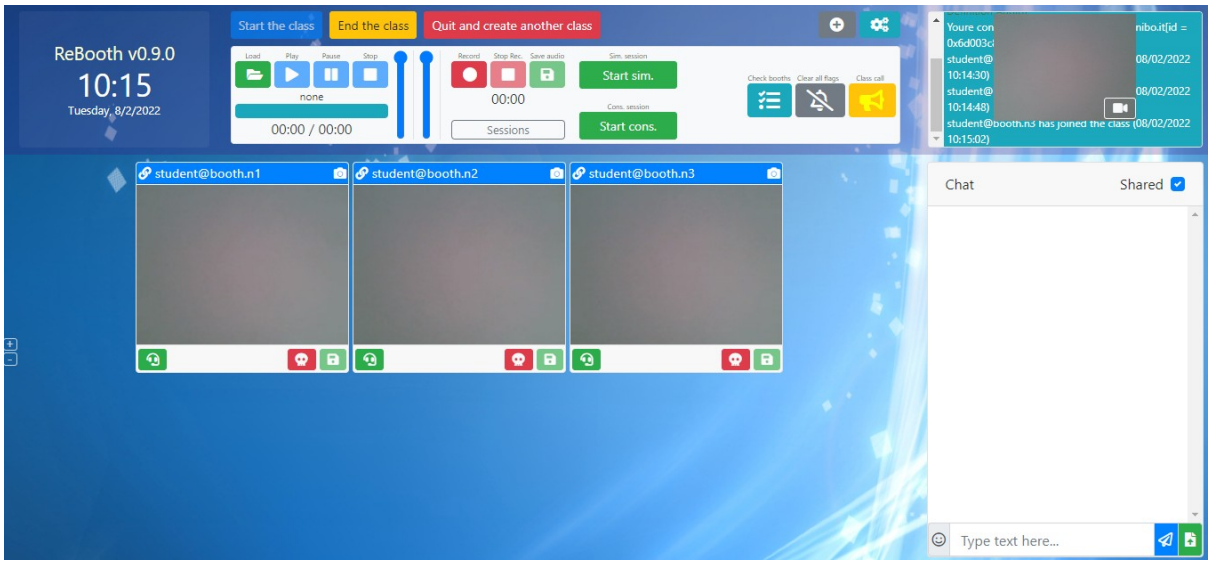

Figure 3: ReBooth, trainer's view

Finally, a simple, yet useful, free and open tool for practicing sight translation is the DIT Scroller[15] (Carioli and Negretti 2008). It was developed in 2008, also within the Department of Interpreting and Translation of the University of Bologna, to support trainers and students when practicing sight translation. It is freely available and can be used by anyone in its online

[14] https://rebooth.ditlab.it/

[15] https://www.ditlab.it/scroll/

version; it is a text scroller that allows user to paste any text to be sight translated in the text box, determine the size of the text to be visualised and the speed of scrolling and then play it for him/herself (self-practice) or for students (Figure 4).

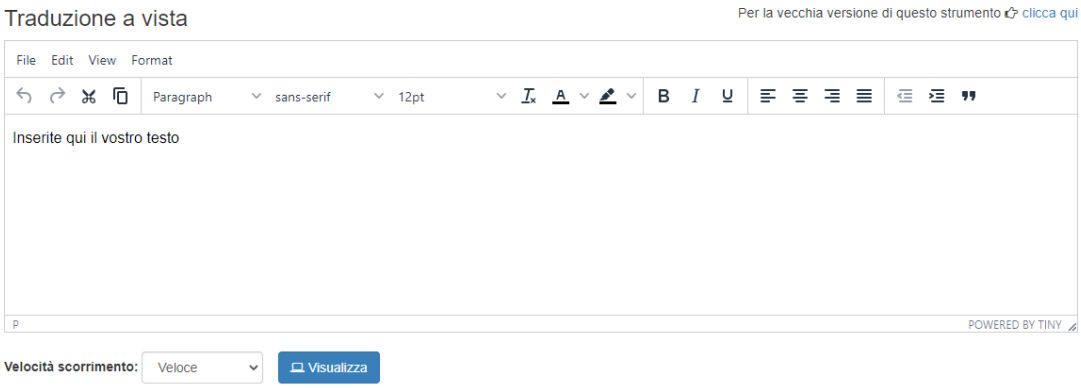

Figure 4: DIT Scroller.

The set of IT tools suggested will ensure an effective and dynamic interpreter training in the interpreting techniques required in humanitarian settings – sight translation, *chuchotage* and note-taking – and in the more theoretical aspects of interpreter education. It will also enable trainers and trainees to take advantage of IT resources to engage in intense and fruitful interaction.

Conclusions

Italy is a frontline, outer border country receiving large flows of desperate individuals seeking international protection every day. Bureaucracy and linguistic-cultural barriers hamper swift procedures to grant the satisfaction of this basic human right. From our perspective as interpreter educators and researchers, designing tailored training initiatives exploiting the most inclusive technological affordances is a necessity. Italian institutions and NGOs working with refugees and asylum seekers have specific needs that must be catered

for. It must be noted, however, that institutions both at national and European levels pay very little attention to the quality of the interpreting services provided and the need to support upskilling and adequate qualification of interpreters. In the light of the shortcomings of present Dublin Regulations, the Commission proposed a New Pact on Migration and Asylum[16] to better share responsibility among member states and speed up asylum procedures, and return when applicable, based on the following rationale:

> Migration is a complex issue, with many facets that need to be weighed together. The safety of people who seek international protection or a better life, the concerns of countries at the EU's external borders, which worry that migratory pressures will exceed their capacities and which need solidarity from others. Or the concerns of other EU Member States, which are concerned that, if procedures are not respected at the external borders, their own national systems for asylum, integration or return will not be able to cope in the event of large flows[17].

The legislative train schedule "to promote our European way of life" to final approval and implementation is still underway at the moment of writing. In this comprehensive and forward-looking document no mentioned is made of guaranteeing professional language assistance, as if linguistic and cultural mediation would not be part of a successful Pact implementation and refugee integration in European societies.

In the light of the importance of training to grant qualified language assistance, the aim of this chapter was to suggest an interpreter education proposal capitalizing on today's technological affordances. It first provided an overview of Italy's current situation concerning needs and requirements for humanitarian interpreting services, and then, building on the experience of a blended course for humanitarian interpreters offered at our Department, it provided suggestions for the use of technological tools in order to deliver a fully online course. While a blended course has the obvious advantage of fostering discussion, networking and a sense of belonging among participants, a fully online course would grant accessibility to a wider range of suitable participants over the country and allow more flexibility in managing synchronous and asynchronous activities. We hope that this by no means exhaustive overview of available IT training tools could be a useful source of inspiration for institutions involved in humanitarian interpreter education.

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[16] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-promoting-our-european-way-of-life/file-a-new-pact-on-migration-and-asylum

[17] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en

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