

Editorial

Issue 30 of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* gathers only some of the numerous submissions received in 2025 and takes the reader on a journey from the present day fast-evolving technologies to the emotional human beings that shape interpreting in its different modes and settings.

Many threads sew together the main aspects dealt with in each contribution, like process and product-oriented studies on Computer-Assisted Interpreting (CAI), cognitive and eye-tracking studies on Simultaneous Interpreting with (SIMTXT) or without text (SI) and Sight Interpreting/Translation (SIT), or analyses of interpreter-mediated encounters having crucial implications for dialogue interpreting (DI) education, to name but a few. It was therefore very difficult to put them in order, and what we are suggesting here is only one of the many reading journeys we have jointly and passionately discussed. Readers are obviously free to opt for alternative paths, or only pick-out the contributions they are interested in. However, in this brief overview, we will try to explain our rationale and hopefully awaken curiosity for papers that may fall outside of one's research domain but offer invaluable food for thought.

The issue starts with a thought-provoking position paper by Claudio Fantinuoli on Artificial Intelligence (AI). The author usefully shifts attention from the interpreting process to the interpreting product, inviting us to think of machine interpreting as an agent *without intelligence*, which can achieve similar outcomes through radically different processes. He then raises a crucial issue for the interpreting ecosystem, which is not “whether machines can achieve functional parity with human interpreters [...], but rather in which domains of practice such parity will be socially, ethically, and institutionally accepted, where it will not, and why”. The key contention of this paper is

that the decisive grounds for delineating the respective roles and spaces of machines and human interpreters “lie not in technical metrics (accuracy, fluency, etc.) but in the broader dimensions that shape consequential interpreter-mediated encounters”, and the author proposes seven such dimensions as a way of conclusion.

The two contributions that close the issue are literature reviews: albeit very different in type (scoping *versus* systematic) and topic (interpreting for survivors of gender-based violence *versus* SIT), they both respond to our call for these types of paper, whose originality lies in the fact that they are, to the best of our knowledge, the first reviews of their kind in their respective fields of inquiry. On the one hand, Serena Baroni provides the first scoping literature review of community interpreting and transcultural mediation with survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), thereby filling an important gap in the literature, where not many studies have been dedicated to this topic. Reviewed contributions are thematically divided and analysed in four subtopics and the paper is complemented by a long list of references in English, French, Italian and Spanish, which highlight the wide range of environments, professionals and communicative setting that interpreting in GBV and sex trafficking entails. Mathieu Veys, Anne Delizée and Hanne Cardoen, on the other hand, offer the first systematic review of cognitive studies of Sight Interpreting/Translation, inviting us to call it SIT, following Ho (2022). While this hybrid mode has attracted increasing research interest in recent years, as reflected in the two scoping reviews published by Li (2014) and Ho (2022), the growing literature on the cognitive underpinnings of SIT has yet to be systematically examined. The authors thus fill this gap by presenting a systematic review of 49 publications in English and French based on the PRISMA approach. They additionally have the merit to critically discuss paper results, with a particular focus on future research directions, but also informing professional and pedagogical practices.

The ten further contributions included within this frame can be divided into two groups. The former mainly focuses on SI or SIMTXT, presenting two studies on a CAI tool called SmarTerp, available tools and technologies for SI practice and training, along with two cognitive studies using different data and methodologies and clearly showing the difference between the objective and subjective methods reviewed by Veys and colleagues. The latter group mainly deals with DI and gradually moves from technology-mediated resources and encounters to settings where the presence of human interpreters can really make a difference, like in education, healthcare and religious contexts.

Francesca Maria Frittella, Bianca Prandi and Susana Rodriguez report on a usability study of the ASR-AI CAI tool SmarTerp conducted in a naturalistic setting during a multilingual meeting at the European Patent Office. Six experienced interpreters worked simultaneously from three remote ‘dummy’ booths, offering a test of CAI performance under demanding conditions. Data were collected through interpreter observations recorded in digital logs, a post-task usability questionnaire, and focus groups. The findings emphasise the importance of tailoring the automatic speech recognition engine to handle highly technical content, as well as the necessity of providing targeted training to help interpreters integrate CAI tools effectively. SmarTerp is also the topic of Mariachiara Russo, Amalia Amato and Ira Torresi’s study, which chronologically precedes that of Frittella and colleagues but moves from process to product,

investigating the impact of this CAI tool on the performance of 24 interpreting students. Its novelty lies in a multi-measure approach, whereby subjects were tested for CAI-enhanced performance, CAI-induced stress, and tool usability and satisfaction. Performance was assessed at the trigger and sentence levels, showing improvements in both, and students reported general satisfaction with the tool's usability and support, emphasising, however, the need for specific training. Taken together, the two studies on SmarTerp advocate for more empirical research to optimise digital support in interpreting practice and education.

Michela Bertozzi addresses this fundamental issue by designing a broad methodological framework to select digital tools for SI practice and training, distinguishing them according to when they are used (i.e. before, during or after SI). Existing tools are reviewed for each stage and useful recap tables are provided to give practitioners and trainers a clear roadmap. Based on the observations conducted and the feedback received in her three fields of inquiry (professional practice, academic training, and Continuous Professional Development), this “practisearcher” (Bendazzoli 2016) draws some preliminary conclusions, which will require further confirmation and experimental validation. SI and especially SIMTXT are also one of the main aspects dealt with in Isabelle S. Robert, Esther de Boe and Priya Saxena's paper, which aims to determine whether the availability of the transcript of a speech and other variables (speech rate, speech difficulty and visual attention) affect performance in SI. Their study adopts a quasi-experimental within-subject design study involving 12 English-Dutch junior interpreters performing two similar speeches simultaneously, without transcript (SI) and with transcript (SIMTXT). The two authors seek to address a two-fold cognitive and methodological gap characterising previous research on SIMTXT. Despite the study's limitations, its findings are relevant not only for future research but also for training. The cognitive side of SIT, as well as the links between research and training, are also shown by Ewa Gumul and Jessica Pérez-Luzardo Díaz. Firstly, the authors analyse the interpreting constraints in SIT, comparing them to those of SI. Secondly, through a quasi-experiment involving two SIT tasks of varying difficulty and a five-phase protocol, they investigate how 11 trainee interpreters perceive and manage task-induced cognitive load during SIT and respond to the constraints inherent in this hybrid written-to-oral mode. Data were collected through retrospective verbal reports, structured interviews, and the NASA-TLX. This research, beyond its limitations and in line with the previous study, highlights the importance of targeted training for interpreters.

The paper which inaugurates the second group of contributions is by Raffaella Merlini and Laura Picchio, who start from the assumption that technology-mediated resources are now widely used also in DI education, where the focus has increasingly been on situated learning approaches based on real-life data. The authors first report a qualitative investigation of educational resources available on YouTube in the fields of healthcare and media interpreting and clearly show the presence of simulation-based learning materials in the former *versus* the absence of pedagogically embedded resources in the latter. To fill this gap, they put forward a research-based proposal called On-the-Tube Role-play Method (OTRM), which takes inspiration from the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method already used in interpreter education (Niemants/Stokoe 2017) and aims at enabling DI students to engage with authentic

videos of media interpreting. Videos are also one of the aspects of the contribution by Han Wang, who proposes a study on video-mediated interpreting, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of diversified technology-based interpreting practices. The study examines a video conference involving four primary interlocutors and an interpreter connected from distributed locations, with an audience observing the interaction. Drawing on the multimodal approach in Conversation Analysis (CA), the author elucidates how multiple remote participants manage turn-transitions (TT) by focusing on intra-turn gaps and overlapping turn-beginnings. Findings show that lengthy gaps are common while overlaps occur seldom, and that the presence of the audience also impacts participants' behaviour. Federica Ceccoli and Daniele Ullotti similarly draw on CA to analyse instances of interpreter-mediated encounters, but they use it with totally different data – mediated parent-teacher meetings – and for highly different purposes – observing what happens when primary speakers can partially speak and understand each other's language(s). Their study provides insights into code-switching (CS) by Italian teachers when English is used as the language of mediation with migrant parents. The authors clearly identify two patterns, where CS serves to tackle specific trouble sources and to establish direct communication. Their analysis reveals that mediators orient to cooperating with teachers by either adapting their renditions to the teachers' utterances or withholding their intervention, thereby offering food for thought on stand-by interpreting (Angermeyer 2008), so far mainly studied in healthcare (Anderson 2012) and police settings (Monteoliva-Garcia 2020).

The second set of contributions finishes with two papers which cover two under-investigated topics. Almudena Nevado Llopis and Ana Isabel Foulquié Rubio focus on interpreters' emotional strain in healthcare, thereby filling a gap in the literature, where few studies have addressed interpreters' exposure to emotionally charged situations and its consequences for their well-being. By means of a questionnaire, the authors examine the symptoms associated with vicarious trauma in healthcare interpreters in Spain and the United States, as well as the interpersonal and organisational strategies available to them to mitigate the effects. Results show differences between the two countries but clearly point to training as a key protective factor, along with adequate interpersonal and organisational strategies that may potentially prove useful also in other emotionally charged situations, including that of GBV and sex trafficking reviewed by Serena Baroni. The paper by Piroska Szentirmay is finally an attempt to map interpreting in religious contexts, although limited to the Roman Catholic Church. The author fuels the debate on the different terms used in this vast but under-explored domain, to which Issue 29 of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* also devoted some space, and covers the various linguistic and non-linguistic characteristics of this field. Her inquiry into the religious context can contribute to the discussion on the uses and boundaries of the various existing interpreting modes, as well as on the role of human beings and technologies in interpreting.

From this brief overview it clearly appears that papers in this Issue are representative of the ongoing debate on the future of Interpreting Studies, where on the one hand technology is challenging the notion that language and interpreting are exclusively a human faculty and increasingly affecting conference interpreting, and on the other hand human beings continue to make a difference especially in DI settings, where interaction is co-constructed and emotions can also play an important role.

As Claudio Fantinuoli usefully argues at the end of his opening paper, “the future of interpreting will be decided not solely by performance metrics but by how trust, accountability, flexibility, embodiment, symbolic recognition, resilience, and law are negotiated between humans and machines”. In this scenario, it seems reasonable to adopt a techno-realist position, rather than embracing the extremes of techno-optimism or techno-pessimism. To put it simply, we strongly believe that the interpreting profession will continue to exist, in its different modes and settings, but it will certainly require new and different skills. The booths and dialogue settings of the future will indeed be more technological, and thus require up-to-date interpreters able to properly integrate machines in their workflow, but there will always be human beings involved in situated and co-constructed interactions. For this very reason it is in our view essential to understand what really makes the difference between interpreters and machines (Downie 2020), by delving both into technological tools and human qualities, as Issue 30 admirably does, through the 13 contributions of 25 researchers whose voices deserve to be heard and reflected upon. Since “at a time when technologization is taking hold in all domains of life, not least interpreting, we may all realize that the capacity to engage in self-reflection and action about the decisions we make every day is one of the most inimitable assets of human interpreters” (Diriker 2021: 490). Both research and training can play a pivotal role in fostering self-reflection, as more or less explicitly highlighted by the papers in this issue. Yet, to be truly effective, efficient, and appropriately targeted, they must not overlook interpreters’ needs, personalities, strengths, weaknesses, and cognitive dimensions. In other words, they must be grounded in the centrality of human beings and in the ever-changing actions, reactions and interactions that shape human life.

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