

Università degli Studi di Trieste  
Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche, del Linguaggio,  
dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione

# The Interpreters' Newsletter

*Changes in  
the Interpreting  
Landscape –  
New Developments  
and Old Modalities*

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e della Traduzione

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# Editorial

Research on the impact of technology on conference interpreting has seen a growing interest at all scientific levels, from monographs (e.g., Frittella 2023; Prandi 2023) to edited volumes featuring contributions from multiple authors (e.g., Corpas Pastor/De-francq 2023; Ji/Oakes, 2019; Fantinuoli 2018), as well as individual articles in collections focused on translation technologies, papers published in international journals and PHD and Master's theses. The latest issue of the journal *Interpreting*, published in October 2024, is a clear example of this trend, offering a selection of current research on interpreting and technology.

To keep up with the latest developments in interpreting studies, this special issue of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* includes four articles that explore how RSI platforms, hybrid forms of interpreting such as speech-to-text interpreting, and CAI tools equipped with automatic speech recognition and AI are shaping a new landscape for the profession. The impact of CAI tools and AI on speech processing and delivery in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting is still difficult to predict given the many variables that need to be taken into account in experimental studies, ranging from the subject matter to the type of meeting, the age and experience of the interpreters, the different types of speakers and speaking styles, among others. Much research remains to be done to get a picture of possible developments and outcomes.

While the fundamental elements of both conference interpreting modalities remain the same, the addition of new tools to the interpreting process paves the way for the augmented interpreter and augmented interpretation. Change always requires a degree of adaptation and resilience, and exploiting AI and CAI tools to the advantage of the interpreter can be challenging both for the interpreter, given the limits of their cognitive resources, and for the profession, in terms of working conditions.

The first two articles in this Special Issue are descriptive and discuss recent developments in remote simultaneous and speech-to-text interpreting.

Clare Donovan and Cecilia Manzoni, authors of *Remote interpreting: a game-changer for interpreters?*, provide a comprehensive review of the literature, as well as statements and position papers from professional associations and organisations on the subject. The positive and negative implications for conference interpreters and the profession of using remote simultaneous interpreting are discussed. At present, the interpreting market seems to have reached a new balance between remote and on-site interpreting. It is therefore now possible to take stock of the situation, consider possible future developments, and reflect on ways to help the profession develop resilience and adapt to ongoing technological advances. The final section of the paper is devoted to interpreter training and the ongoing debate about whether or not to include a seminar or course on RSI in interpreter training and when to introduce it.

Alessia Valente and Judith Platter describe how speech-to-text interpreting has developed and become established as a service for people with hearing impairments. The first part is a literature review of its main characteristics and how it works. Speech-to-Text interpreting involves the simultaneous transcription of a spoken text by an interpreter and is therefore also defined as written interpreting in Scandinavian, English and German-speaking countries. In Italy, it is mainly used for live subtitling during live broadcasts or film festivals and is less known for overcoming hearing barriers for students in schools and universities. The article reviews and compares the diffusion of speech-to-text interpreting and regulatory frameworks in Austria and Italy, looking at what has been achieved in one country and what still needs to be improved in the other. The more favourable situation in Austria could serve as a benchmark for possible improvements in Italy.

The next two articles are experimental studies, the first carried out in presence, the second online.

Automatic speech recognition (ASR) in consecutive interpreting (CI) is analysed by Michele Restuccia using Sight-Terp, a CAI tool developed for CI and equipped with both ASR and Machine Translation. The aim of using ASR tools to support CI is to provide an accurate transcription of numbers, names and figurative language, which can often be misinterpreted. The study compares the results of consecutive interpretations based on handwritten notes with those obtained using Sight-Terp. Data triangulation was used to observe the same phenomenon from different viewpoints. The results indicate that the ASR tool was used to transcribe the source language speech in the first stage of consecutive interpreting, while its output (the transcript) was used by the interpreters in the second stage of CI, either as a source text for a sight translation or as a backup text for the consecutive notes. The advantages and disadvantages of this approach are discussed, contributing to a better understanding of how effective the use of ASR can be in consecutive interpreting.

The online experimental study by Martina Behr, Markus Martini and Pierre Sachs investigated the relationship between working memory (WM) and simultaneous interpreting (SI) by varying the cognitive load in the first case and the source text difficulty in the SI task. The WM and SI tasks were administered online to 20 students on Master's degree programmes in conference interpreting from seven universities in Germany. The WM task had two cognitive load manipulation conditions, low and high. The interpreting task consisted of simultaneously interpreting a four-minute general

speech from English into German. The source text was manipulated by defining two levels of difficulty, alternating between easy and difficult paragraphs. The chosen procedure provided a more detailed picture of the specific relationships between WM and SI. Contrary to expectations, low and high WM load manipulations were similarly related to difficult ST passages, but not correlated with easy ST passages.

I hope that this selection of papers will provide an overview of some of the latest developments regarding the role of technology in different settings and help stimulate further interest in this area of research of Interpreting Studies.

Alessandra Riccardi

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