HELP OR HINDER? THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE ROLE OF INTERPRETERS /¿AYUDA O ESTORBO? EL IMPACTO DE LA TECNOLOGÍA EN EL PAPEL DEL INTERPRETE

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Abstract: The role of the professional interpreter, seemingly timeless and universal is to convey verbal communications from one language to another accurately, in confidence and with impartiality. These principles appear to have been valid since the dawn of cross-cultural and interlingual verbal communications. Why should technology have an impact on the professional role, which is both agreed by professional interpreters, and expected by clients? This paper outlines, through literature review, of both Sign and Spoken language settings, the development of the role of interpreters across different settings and the deontology for the interpreting profession over time. This is then superimposed with the effect of technology, both its facilitation and pressures on its practice. The result highlights the intersection between interpreting studies and technology away from curriculum development. Rather than adopting technology wholesale, practitioners and researchers ought to become more aware of this increasingly important aspect and take appropriate actions.

Keywords: Role; Technology; Interpreting; Interpreter; Professional Associations.

Resumen: El papel del intérprete profesional, que pareciera ser eterno y universal, se basa en transmitir enunciados verbales de un idioma a otro de forma precisa, confidencial e imparcial. A estos principios se los ha considerado válidos desde los albores de la comunicación interlingüística e intercultural. ¿Por qué debería la tecnología impactar en un papel profesional sobre el que los intérpretes coinciden y que los clientes esperan? Mediante el análisis de publicaciones desarrolladas en el campo de las lenguas habladas y de la lengua de signos, este artículo intenta describir cómo evolucionan la función del intérprete en diferentes escenarios y la deontología de su profesión a lo largo del tiempo. A ello se le superponen posteriormente los efectos de la tecnología, tanto en la forma en la que esta facilita la práctica profesional como en las presiones que se generan de su uso. El resultado enfatiza la intersección entre los estudios en interpretación y tecnologías fuera del ámbito del desarrollo curricular. En lugar de adoptar la tecnología indiscriminadamente, los intérpretes y los investigadores quizá deberían prestar más atención a un aspecto de importancia creciente en la práctica profesional, así como adoptar medidas adecuadas.

Palabras clave: Papel; Tecnología; Interpretación; Intérprete; Asociaciones Profesionales.

1. Introduction

The act of interpreting is as old as human interactions requiring oral communications in both signed and subsequently spoken modality. Correspondingly, interpreters and anyone who has tried to perform this transference communicative act throughout history, collectively known as the "profession" of interpreting, is equally old, and commonly referred to as the "second oldest profession in the world" (Stähle, 2009). Many would argue that the practice of such a timeless and inherently human activity has stood the test of time and remained predominantly

unaltered despite various technological advances. Certainly, few would argue that the role of the interpreter, professional or otherwise, would be subject to and altered by technology. Or would it?

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first, I would be so bold as to undertake a panoramic survey on the issue of roles across interlingual 'interpretative' communications. Then, in the second, I hope to demonstrate the close interaction between 'interpretative' communications and technology and that the speed of adoption and direction of change in the day-to-day practice for interpreters is usually beyond the control of individual practitioners, our national, regional and even international professional associations, the users and communities we serve, and importantly interpreting researchers, scholars and educators. And, when the practice is changed by technology, there is a corresponding change in expectations and pressures, and therefore roles. Or, put it in any other way, is our academic literature on roles of interpreting still relevant in the technologically mediated environment?

This paper arose from a combination of two events: a serendipitous conversation between Anthony Pym and yours sincerely at the 5th International Symposium on Eco-Translatology in Tainan, Taiwan, which reinvigorated the relationship between EST and FIT and led to the dedicated panel at the 8th European Society of Translation Studies (EST) in Aarhus in 2016. The latter, which we co-chaired, generated much heated debate and discussion on the inter-relationship between academicians and professionals.

The second (unrelated) event was that of my collaboration with Michaela Albl-Mikasa on the future direction of research in interpreting studies and how researchers can benefit from the profession and/or the industry and vice versa.

The synergic result of these two events culminated into this paper, which aims to provide a historical overview of how technology has impacted on the practice of interpreting and on interpreters, with special emphasis on the dimensions of roles and ethical professional practice. It is hoped that this review and subsequent exploration, would provide fresh insights into research directions for interpreting studies and would give emphasis to how practitioners can contribute towards this research.

2. Part I

2.1 Problem of Definition: Which Interpreter?

Before any discussion of impact of technology on our professional role or roles, we must define the interpreter or the interpreting profession. The difficulty in presenting a unifying notion of an 'interpreter' can be highlighted by a simple question relating to our role(s): what does the Code of Ethics of our professional body tell us about our role and our professional responsibility?

One could surmise that even if you asked this question to conference interpreters at the pinnacle of their careers working for organisations such as the UN or the EU, the terms "impartiality" or "neutrality would be unlikely to feature (Zwischenberger, 2011 and Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker, 2010). Whereas, if you asked any liaison / community / public service interpreter, either or both terms would be likely to feature, almost universally.

This is hardly surprising, as a thorough read of the *Code of Professional Ethics of AIIC* (first adopted in 1957 and hitherto referring to in its 2014 version) does refer to accuracy and confidentiality. However, the term "role" or the oft overlapped academic counterpart, norm (Toury, 1995), is nowhere to be found. Nor can we find any mention of the aforementioned terms "impartiality" or "neutrality" or their derivatives.

Indeed, in the seminal work of Seleskovich (1968), the only mention of role and responsibility pertains to accuracy of the message. The first paper concerning the role of conference interpreter was Shlesinger (1989), whereas the issue of role has been fundamental to community interpreting practice and policy since as early as 16th century Spain (Pöchhacker, 2016; Pym, 2017). More contemporarily, it first appeared in the *Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Code of Ethics* in 1965 and has indeed been a constant focus of discussion since the very first Critical Link conference, often seen as the first academic conference for community interpreting, in Orillia, Ontario in 1995 (Rudvin, 2006).

2.2 Same Code Different Interpretations?

2.2.1 Do Different Settings Mean Different Roles?

Can we then infer that the frequency which impartiality is referred to as the demarcation between conference and non-conference interpreters? Or, in other words, by how much interpreters should or should not / do or do not intervene?

It has often been cited that conference interpreters facilitate communications between audiences of equal power, whereas non-conference interpreters facilitate communications between those with (often vastly) different power (Gile, 2016). In addition to the power imbalance, non-conference interpreting is often associated with migrants and refugees mainly in the public service domains, as well as with almost quintessential reliance on public funding (notable exception being insurance funded medical interpreters in USA), meaning that accountability to the public and the public purse have been particularly important. Indeed, this has a high correlation with the notion of trust (vide infra). Whereas the pressure on funding community interpreting comes from institutional austerity and increasing nationalism, the pressure on paying for conference interpreting in major international forum comes from increasing use of English as a lingua franca (ELF)(Albl-Mikasa, 2017).

Another related phenomenon to the notion of impartiality is the often confounded notion of non-intervention. In reality, often cited fieldwork conducted by Wadensjö (1998), and before her, the groundbreaking work of Roy (1996), highlighted the gulf between ideal interpreting and actual performance, and the different between practice and publicised norm in the form of the various incarnation of Codes of Ethics of local, national, regional and even international professional associations (Keselman, 2010).

Thanks to their work, for the first time we had evidence and the means to measure and show the frequency and extent of intervention in interpreter-mediated interactions. From this began the ability to challenge that which Dam (2010) termed the almost schizophrenic attitude towards the principle of neutrality/impartiality. Moreover, the assumption that a non-interventional interpreter is impartial and its corollary (i.e. being partial) is, therefore, non-professional and is not founded. The two notions —impartiality and interventionality— are not identical. How related are they? Whilst some preliminary studies have been undertaken (Liu, 2007), it remains under-explored and will continue to be so until the profession, and more importantly the research community, revise the rigid notion of an impartial interpreter as a universal ideal (AUSIT, 2012). This change would be the only means to encourage practising interpreters to disclose and acknowledge either partial behaviour or interventions previously considered unprofessional. And, in doing so transform such norm deviations from opaque to transparent (Martinez-Gomez, 2014)

But, is an impartial interpreter indeed an ideal? In all contexts? And if so, is it achievable? The lack of debate amongst the conference interpreting research literature would seem that it is either a non-issue or a settled issue (c.f Zwischenberger, 2011). But if we are to believe in public perception of interpreters, the answer would be no, highlighted by one of the

best known dictum on translation, certainly in Italian but probably worldwide: "Traduttore-Tradittore" (the translator-traitor paradigm). Many studies have since confirmed that the public does not believe in this notion. Talpas (2016) remarked in his ethnographic study that the public perception of interpreters is often distortional: "Multiple faces of the interpreter: (mis)informer, (manipulative) cultural mediator, traitor". This mistrust and tension is further exacerbated as

> the interpreter seemed to be stranded between the expectations of the others –be they direct participants in the act of interpreting or third parties –and their actual performance, dictated as it is by both external and personal constraints

Furthermore, professional users like doctors and judges as well as funders like ministries of health and ministries of justice expect and demand impartiality and neutrality as a 'short-cut to trust' (Snellman 2016). This has been co-constructed by the profession itself, as demonstrated in codes of ethics of professional associations. This is also one of the rationales behind the conduit analogy 'inert and lossless'. Where does this model come from? Some believe that the simplification of the interpreting process into a comprehensible analogue of conduit originated from simultaneous interpreting research and the power lobby of AIIC (Zwischenberger, 2011), where the prima donna of interpreting profession become the de facto supernorm. Others might cite from R v Attard Central Criminal Court (1958), where interpreters were referred to as "mere ciphers". The actual term "conduit" originated from Gain v R (1960) 104 CLR419, where Badham QC first coined the term "conduit pipe". And, thereafter, this historical burden rests on the industry. Thus, history would suggest that this is client expectation and user-imposed, rather than from research modelling.

Speaking of client expectation, there is now an increasing body of field data, mostly reported in the other specialty journals. This is particularly in healthcare (Ferner, 2009), especially in maternity (Bedström, 2014), psychiatry (Bauer, 2010), and oncology (Schapira, 2008). A study by Brisset (2013) supported an earlier preliminary study, first reported by Liu in 2007, on psychiatrists' perception of the role of interpreters and their intrinsic input in diagnostic pathway. However, on the other side of this communication triad, the investigation of the expectations of non-dominant language speaking clients remains poor.

Meanwhile, even though authors like Claudia Monacelli and researchers in community and sign language interpreting has continued to dispel this "mechanical model myth", research, especially in conference interpreting, has continued to propagate this myth citing

> the primary function of a conference interpreter is to act as a passive and emotionless channel that solely has to convey a sense that is inherent in the message as delivered by the speaker." (Zwischenberger, 2011).

In the last few years, research by Lenglet has started to highlight the prevalence and acceptability of intervention amongst conference interpreters, especially in face-threatening acts (Lenglet, 2015).

Indeed, there has been notable success stories of research influencing practice, most notably the revamp of the *Oceanian Code of Ethics* of both the Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT) and New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) (Ozolins, 2014). This act was also historically significant because the resulting code became the first trans-national Code of Ethics.

So, how universal is the notion of impartiality and its ideal status? Is this doctrine as universal as the similarities of the Codes would imply? (c.f. Hale, 2007). Any seasoned participants to international conferences of community interpreters would notice the different

expectations the users (both professional and migrants, although that of the latter is much less frequently studied) have in different countries or jurisdictions.

2.2.2 Are There Geographical Variations on Role?

In an upcoming Bloomsbury Companion, Albl-Mikasa (2018) cites one such example in Malaysia. Far from being an anomaly, deviations from the proscribed Codes of Ethics or norms are common. Indeed, the terminology each country has adopted to describe the already heterogeneous sector of community interpreting sheds much light on the variation of this norm.

In most European countries where the dominant or official language is non-Germanic, community interpreters are often called '[inter]cultural mediators' or variants thereof ('mediazione linguistica' in Italian, 'mediador lingüístico' in Spanish, 'interprète-médiateur' in France and 'interpret-mediator' in Romania). This suggests that these [inter]cultural mediators are expected, condoned, if not authorised, to perform roles beyond what most Code of Ethics of professional associations proscribe, and certainly in contravention to the notion of professional impartial interpreters in norm based research literature (Rudvin, 2014)

Within the European context, this "North-South" divide may have arisen from a more fundamental difference in approach in migrant settlement. In most "Northern" countries, until recently migrants were encouraged to retain and maintain their own culture, with the societies broadly embracing the notion of multiculturalism and, thereby, adopting a primarily non- or minimal-interventional approach. In "Southern" countries, the priority appears to be more of integration (c.f. Rudvin, 2014; Baraldi, 2014 for the case in Italy; Ciordia, 2016 for the case in Spain), assimilation and culturalisation. This philosophical difference is translated into differing expectations from the authorities and the wider public.

One could argue that the migrants and refugees who form the majority of community interpreters and [inter]cultural mediators (in "Southern" countries) are often weaker in social standing for a myriad of reasons. These include not being organised or accepted into the many national or regional professional associations of translators and interpreters (Katan and Liu, 2017). Without strong institutional backing, there is more of a tendency to bend to societal and systemic expectations, become complicit to active intervention beyond that of misunderstanding arising from linguistic or culture-linguistic realities, and, thereby, compromise their impartiality.

Is this a uniquely "Southern" phenomenon? More recently, with the more welcoming migrant policy Germany has adopted, there is an increasing use of *Sprachmittler(in)* and *Laien-Dolmetscher(in)*. Whilst the exact definition remains fluid, I would argue that one of the motivations may be to draw a sharper distinction between this group working with refugees and migrants, in contradistinction with that of *Dolmetscher* "proper" (c.f translation equivalent in Dizdar, 2009), the pure(r) professionals, who are predominantly conference interpreters in major world languages and are more likely to be members of professional associations.

2.2.3 Role and its Hidden Implications?

How does the "North-South" divide and differences in philosophical and ideological approach affect the day-to-day interpreting decisions made by interpreters working with government agencies, in refugee camps and in hospitals remains unknown and under-investigated. One of the author's previous research projects sought to compare the rate of interventions made by interpreters working in the two distinct cultural-linguistic environments in a general community medical setting in Spain and in the UK. However, it failed to

secure funding at the time of Global Financial Crisis. The broader question remains that of whether the socio-cultural and cultural-linguistic backgrounds of the individual interpreter affects the decision s/he makes, and whether the socio-cultural landscape of the interpretation act affects the interpretation outcome. The relative effects of these two factors and their inter-relationship remains unexplored.

Why is this important? I believe that this is particularly of concern in mental health, counselling and psychological intervention settings (Tribe, 2008), where the extent and frequency of interventions of professional interpreters have a major impact on assessment, diagnosis and treatment (Castelain, 2015), and yet, at this time, all the parties involved are potentially blinded to this important factor (Liu, 2007).

2.2.4 Interpreters in No Man's Lands

Any discussion on roles in interpreting must now go beyond the "North-South" divided Europe and incorporate the field of conflict zone interpreting, and more specifically, the work of military interpreters in conflict and peace keeping (Baker C., 2010b). I would argue that confining military interpreters or linguists to a separate special category, i.e. the professional no man's land, because they are accidental linguists (Baigorri-Jalón, 2010) or any other reasons, defiles the principle of solidarity.

There is now finally an increasing body of research that explores the dilemma brought about by the modern introduction of impartiality and neutrality as standards of interpreting (Baker M., 2010). The established civilian guidelines are a recognised and firm foundation for ethical considerations, but their explicit and unquestionable demand for neutrality may be confusing and misleading in settings of crisis and war (Snellman, 2016). Why does it matter? It hinders the professional interpreting community accepting military interpreters and linguists as colleagues except when they are in danger (Kahane, 2007) and, consequently, it hinders the professionalisation of those working for the military whether in intelligence gathering, during peace keeping or conflicts. It is clear that as Probirskaja (2016: 207) states, "[t]he picture of the neutral, impartial interpreter who simply interprets does not suit the war context in any way". Nonetheless, military interpreters' apparent partiality or non-neutrality (Cowley, 2016) as such should not be perceived as a negative or unacceptable attribute.

One of the consequences of conflicts is displacement of people in the form of refugees. Interpreting for purpose of refugee determination and settlement is also in a metaphorical "no man's land" in that it is nearly always beyond the jurisdiction of national authorities or professional associations and in language pairs or dialects that are not common nor standardised. Whereas the importance of accurate interpreting especially in the initial stage of refugee assessment has been established (Barsky, 2012; Smith-Khan, 2017), and, at the same time, the field of refugee interpreting and especially how the role of interpreters, both trained and untrained, impacts on the process and the outcome remains the most unexplored (Leon-Pinilla, 2016). As a result, en bloc adoption of norms and Codes into highly specialised areas remains the prevailing practice, like that of the European Asylum Support Office's own training material on the use of interpreters in assessing credibility with children applying for asylum (UNHCR, 2014).

Speaking of children, it is important to remember that children remain a significant proportion of the interpreting "workforce"; arguably, it is largest when there are no professional interpreters (Antonini, 2015). This put into perspective the even less defined roles and expectations of the wider group of people working in the even wider no-man's landscape currently called "non-professional interpreters and translators" (NPIT) (Perez-Gonzalez 2012).

2.3 Multilingualism?

In addition to differences in role, intervention and working conditions, there is another aspect that illustrates the seemingly two distinct tiers of interpreting professions: interpreters of languages commonly available in international conferences and interpreters of community, and those of non-standard language, the so called 'rarer languages' or 'languages of limited diffusion'.

There is little evidence of mixing between the two tiers. It could be argued that AIIC has been slow to accept the interpreters whose working language is either non-standard or relatively rare (in a specific locale). For example, it took many years of lobbying before the AIIC General Assembly in Buenos Aires in 2012 finally accepted sign language interpreters as equal.

Meanwhile, more often than not, interpreters working in the so-called 'minority languages' or ''indigenous languages' in conference settings remain under-trained and under-researched (Leal Lobato, 2017). From this "postmonodiscoursive order", delegates whose preferred languages are outside of the standard conference languages remain under-served in international fora, either served by interpreters without formal training or having to speak in one of the dominant languages, thereby affecting their rights of presence and accessibility. Similar pressure is seen in International NGOs, whose missions are often to be the voice of those who are "voice-less" (Tesseur, 2017).

Similar to the previous situation, there is an increase in voices challenging the definition of the roles and responsibilities of our profession. This is especially prevalent in the field of sign language interpreting and disability advocacy in national and international fora, where the added complexity of role and how it affects communication is more widely discussed (c.f. Best, 2017).

2.4 Court / Legal / Judiciary Interpreting

Why have I not yet made any mention of this vast area of practice? Amongst the controversies surrounding the area of legal interpreting, and, in particular, roles and responsibilities, there is the debate raging over whether those interpreting (and translating) in court ought to be interpreters (or translators) with specialist training in law or whether we should focus resources on training lawyer linguists.

It is easy to focus on guidelines of best practice like those of the EU (Reflection Forum, 2009; Hertog, 2015) but it is important that research results are not adopted en bloc without due consideration of the heterogeneity of the population of interpreters and those aspiring to be so (c.f. Hale, 2011; Hale, 2004).

Based on the earlier discussion, if we accept the notion that community interpreting serves two parties with vastly different power and that the Code of Ethics plays a central and defining role in non-conference interpreters only, then court interpreting or interpreting in judicial settings would squarely fall into the community and in the non-conference interpreting category.

However, there is considerable discussion, especially since the adoption of the EU Directive 2010/64/EU, mentioning that court interpreters, at least within the European Union, should have skills that more closely resemble those of conference interpreters than those of community interpreters (Hertog, 2015). In fact, this is not solely a European preference. A number of authorities have also issued similar recommendations or rulings including the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2015). On the other

hand, of note in a landmark case in New Zealand, the Chief Justice of New Zealand Dame Sian Elias in the Supreme Court of New Zealand ruled that "Consecutive interpretation at all times is highly desirable." (Elias, 2011)

In this context I wonder: Should we consider court interpreting as a special case, similar to that of military interpreting?

3. Part II

3.1 Technology and Interpreting

It could be argued that this very human experience, either oral, sign and/or spoken communications between individuals, requires little technology; technology is additional and augmentative. For example, thanks to the use of microphone specifically and amplification in general, the interpreters' voice can be transmitted further. Similarly, the invention of the recording device meant that interpreted speeches could be played across larger geographic distances and across time; thus, it proved to be an essential tool in a lot of interpreting research.

The development of simultaneous interpreting was inherently related to advancement in technology. 1928 marked the first revolution in conference interpreting when ILO conducted its 13th session in 7 languages. This is how simultaneous interpreting began, just 7 years after Hush-A-Phone ® was patented, marking what Baigorri-Jalón (2014) called "the first revolution of conference interpreting".

So, again, heavily mediated by technology, will remote interpreting (RI) be the herald of the second revolution in interpreting? How would it impact on the role and responsibility of interpreters? Of note, whilst I could extrapolate from the experiences in translation, I will not explore the far-from-matured and often hyped phenomenon of machine (mediated) interpreting in this paper.

3.2 On Visibility and How Technology Impacts on Interpreting and Interpreters

How has the introduction of simultaneous interpreting technology and, subsequently, that of remote interpreting technology, impacted upon the interpreting profession?

This brings us to another legacy that the interpreting profession has inherited, one that is again often confounded by impartiality and neutrality (Liu, 2007; Ozolins, 2016), which was at some stage widely propagated, and, in some countries, still persists as the norm: the notion of invisibility.

There is now considerable research on the need for visibility in interpreter-mediated communications, led by the 2004 landmark study by Angelelli, which she defined as beyond that of interpreters as active linguistic participants in interaction but also as encompassing social and cultural factors (Angelelli, 2004a).

What visibility has often been referring to is professional visibility. Yet, on another level, that of physical visibility. I would argue that the two concepts are linked. Mediated by technology, there have been moves, deliberate or otherwise, to make interpreters more invisible, both professionally and physically. How so?

Whilst it is intuitive that the interpreters have been historically (physically) visible in most bilingual communications (much more so than translators), thanks to the invention and wider-spread adoption of simultaneous interpreting, and the increase in multilingual conferences and consequent need to locate interpreters in sound-proof booths, interpreters are often outside of the visual fields of the delegates, diplomatics and dignitaries. With the increasing

use of remote technology, this increases the distance, both physical and therefore perceptional as well as professional, between the users and the interpreter, thereby rendering this inherently human experience much more impersonal. Furthermore, it is much harder to consider someone you cannot see as an active co-participant, let alone a member of your communication team.

Along the same vein, I would also argue it is also relatively easier for the interpreters to be more detached from the discussion and be impartial when the message is transmitted via a headphone with or without a closed circuit monitor, when we are physically not part of the conversation where the emotion is much more palpable. Could this account for the observations in part I, the divide between conference and non-conference interpreters?

Whether 'invisibility', alongside the use of ELF, confirms what Lawrence Venuti has argued as "a complacency in [...] relations with cultural others" (Venuti, 1995), I am not sure. But what is certain, is the uncanny coincidence of the increase of such remote technology with the increased commoditisation of interpreting as a product, initially via the headset and now increasingly via Apps and Google Pixel Buds.

3.3 Does Technology Impact on Role?

Much research on simultaneous interpreting and conference interpreters have been on cognitive load (c.f. Seeber, 2013), hence the emphasis on the accuracy aspect of the role of interpreters. Similar studies into the cognitive load of interpreters in a remote setting have been undertaken (Moser-Mercer, 2005; Braun 2013), therefore giving us a better understanding on how technology impacts on accuracy.

What about the impact of technology on impartiality (vide supra) and on confidentiality (vide infra)? Amongst the many gems unearthed by Braun's AUVIDICUS project, she showed that there is a significant increase in intervention during RI sessions, in particular, with respect to additions and expansions (Braun, 2016). Does this mean technology leads to less impartial interpreters because of the increase in intervention? Or is it related to the fact that interpreters are less visibility and may be related to being less accountable? On the other hand, does the 'distance' generated by technology help interpreters be more impartial as proposed earlier?

The phenomenon which Braun identified is no doubt multifactorial and warrants further in-depth exploration. As does the exact impact of technology on role. However, what it illustrates is that (1) new practice often becomes reality prior to research or availability of research data, and (2) that research data can bring into focus aspects of existing practice previously unknown but with significant hitherto hidden implications.

3.4 Impact of Technology on Occupational Health and Safety

In order to exercise our professional role and responsibility, interpreters must be appropriately resourced and placed in environments and conditions as safe as possible. Even the theatre of war is no exception, as Cummings (2010) noted "treat your interpreter as if he were your own soldier". Whilst most interpreters do not work in the physical hostility of war zones, health and safety in working conditions are paramount to professional practice. Most interpreters will see this as the responsibility of their professional body or association to advocate on their behalf.

Practitioners and consumers often associate the role of AIIC primarily as a protector of working conditions of conference interpreters. Indeed, the landmark AIIC Workload Study of 2002 opened the door to research of the physical, physiological and psychological well-being of and impact on conference interpreters.

In the sign language domain, Woodcock laid the foundation in 2008 with specific monograph on musculoskeletal injury for sign language interpreters (first mentioned by Johnson, 2005) and Bontempo was the first to explore the issue of vicarious trauma with further work by MacDonald (2015). Schwenke's work on burnout in 2015 extended that of spoken-language interpreters by incorporating personality and stressed the importance of post-assignment support.

These important studies finally brings into focus the issue of workplace health and safety. How would this translate into the cyberspace where it becomes the platform of work? There have been suggestions that virtual remote interpreting technology can reduce the chance of military interpreters in harms' way or bring together groups of interpreters around the world during a crisis.

AUVIDUS has focused on the technical specifications (Braun, 2011; Braun, 2015) as do the recently adopted ISO standards for interpreting equipment (ISO 2603:2016; ISO 4043:2016; ISO 20109). But, how would the professional enforce these standards to protect the interest of the individual practitioners? Especially when the platforms may be multinational and their methods of recruitment and/or assignment of work is opaque?

It is important to remember that it took over half a decade of widespread practice of simultaneous interpreting before the AIIC Workload Study. It takes time and resources to obtain these data to background, support or refute professional best practices. Furthermore, assessing the impact of technology on interpreters will need well-designed multidisciplinary research. Results from such robust research will enhance positions and arguments of professional associations which are best to handle all professional issues that affect the way in which interpreters work and their performance, as succinctly summarised by Shlesinger (2009):

> Clearly, then, when it comes to the very topical and controversial topic of the interpreters' working conditions, in general, and the pros and cons of remote interpreting, in particular, academic investigation on its own will not do; the divide must be explored and crossed by ongoing dialogue between researchers, practitioners, trainers and institutions.

3.5 Technology: Is it Just a Question of Turf? Or a Question of Mode?

Baigorri-Jalón, in one of his UN Chronicle articles (Marzocchi, 2004), argued that a unifying theme with interpreters against change arose from "the automatic reaction against technological innovation, the fear of losing their monopoly and eventually perhaps their jobs, and … a loss of status".

Another aspect, Corpas (2016) hypothesised is that, as a cohort, interpreters are inherently more conservative in adopting new practices and technology in comparison to translators.

Lack of research in this area means that it is difficult to completely exclude turf protection or profound conservatism as a cause of resistance to change. I would argue that this is at least partly justified after interpreters have seen the detrimental effects of how automated translation has commoditised the art of translation and the work of translators.

More importantly, the so-called resistance may actually be due to the inherently experiential, interactional and immediate nature of interpreting encounters, where technology and new practices impersonalise interpreters, reduce visibility, generate distance and introduce further complexities. But, most importantly, Marzocchi (2004) reminds us of a very important question, "What for?", and I would add "Who for?" We must avoid adoption of technology purely for the sake of the more vocal leaders, especially in conference interpreting, who are increasingly unwilling or unable to travel, whilst wanting to work at home or at their

beach house in their *zapatillas*, to paraphrase Marzocchi (2004). There are hidden costs and consequences.

One such consequence is to the interpreting mode. The introduction of booths and RI equipment means persistence of simultaneous interpreting as the predominant mode. Just like the debate of whether court interpreting belongs to conference interpreting, with its training and status or it belongs to non-conference interpreting, with its inherent role and degree of intervention boils down to "who" should be bestowed the professional authority to interpret; direct consequences of RI also boils down to who should be interpreting, between what languages and at what level they are remunerated. As already outlined earlier, simultaneous interpreting has thus far meant a relatively small number of selected dominant languages available. This asymmetry involves a more fundamental question of human rights in increasingly multilingual societies. Is it fair to provide a highly qualified conference interpreting in some official languages, while there are no qualified simultaneous interpreters, let alone specialised experts in the mother tongue, of the witnesses or defendants in court, in the city, in the region, or even in the world. The challenges faced by court and judicial interpreters are immense with multiple stressors and considerable emotional effects, let alone the discrepancy between standards and praxis, between court users depending on their language and location (Dahlberg, 2017).

Consequently, there are a number of initiatives under the technological umbrella of 'remote interpreting' pooling interpreters from further afield to meet this demand. Whether these initiatives are adequate and acceptable remains unexplored. What is certain is that they are short-term responses to an acute crisis in certain language pairs across Germany (Kirst, 2015).

In the longer-term there may be unforeseen risks and implications. For example, whether the host society, government or government-funded agencies have the same expectation of these "virtual" practitioners as that of the local professional interpreters in other domains and in other language pairs remains to be explored. Also, it is important to bear in mind that the propagation of RI and other technologically-driven practices may have a wider consequence on norms and practices around the world. For example, I would argue that RI and the more specific video-remote interpreting (VRI) are likely to be based in a developed country, impose the ethical and social role norms of the dominant culture, thereby acting not dissimilarly to colonialism in the name of standardisation.

Finally, I would like to highlight that the outsourcing to remote/virtual interpreters means not only means outsourcing of risk, responsibilities and norms, but also a temporary relief of pressure on provision of services, thereby removing the incentive to investment in local human resources, the very common endpoint that practitioners, researchers, educators alike all agree societies need.

Therefore, it is important to stress the idea of solidarity and shared professional commitment (Marzocchi, 2004). Thus far, concerted efforts have been made to rebrand a particular type of interpreting as a special case with inherent superior justifications, for example, rebranding court interpreting as outside of the "ad hoc" image of liaison interpreting (Gentile, 1996; Hale 2011). Instead, I would argue it ought to be imperative that the whole profession be supported by researchers to redefine the role and responsibilities of all interpreters, elevate the overall status, standard and professionalism of practitioners across all domains and in language pairs however obscure - as aptly summarised by Mizuno (2011):

> 社会学的な行為論の視座を援用した通訳役割論の研究を展開することも大変重 要であ
> るし、それと同時に、ターナーが重視している社会文化論、生物論、感情論、相互交
> 流 論、象徴論、地位論などと共にトータルな人間存在としての通訳者という視点で役

割論が展 開できれば、通訳コミュニケーションのあり方に対する深い考察も得られる
可能性が大いに出 てくるであろう。

[It is also vitally important to develop research on role theory for interpreters from the viewpoint of sociological behaviour theory. If at the same time an interpreter's role theory can be developed that embraces the total humanity of the interpreter, incorporating the multidisciplinary perspective emphasised by Turner, including insights from social cultural studies, biology, affect theory, social exchange theory, symbol theory, status theory and other fields, then that should also make it possible to arrive at an in-depth consideration of what the communicative nature of interpreting should be.] (Translated by P Tuffley)

3.6 Beyond Interpreting as We Know it

Yet, without doubt, technology presents interpreters with many new opportunities, most notably the increase need for multimodality (O'Sullivan, 2013; Perez-Gonzalez, 2014) and its expansion in newer domains like fansubbing, social media, public relations and journalism (Katan, 2001; Pöchhacker, 2011; Sandrelli, 2016). The rapid dissemination of information across media and across vast distances almost instantaneously means that global entities need to have access to the breaking news in key markets and not just in English. At the same time, these entities must be equipped with means to project their important messages from promotions to apologies and warnings in the shortest time possible, whilst remaining accurate and engaging. The same applies to news and intelligence. This will no longer be confined to the traditional boundary and scope of translators and interpreters, let alone finer sub-specialisation and discretisation. Rather, it calls for hybrid careers like 'trans-terpreters' (Liu, 2017a and Egorova, 2017) and 'trans-editors' (Liu, 2015) working across media, modalities and disciplines with their inherent ethical hybridity (Talebinejad, 2017).

Inter-disciplinary research has been previously advocated (Inghilleri, 2005; Vargas-Urpi, 2011) and ought to be encouraged. The trend towards multidisciplinarianism with increasing collaboration between other professionals and professional interpreters or trans-terpreters will no doubt pose more questions and challenge the boundaries of our role. Just like that of military interpreters, where the notion of a neutral facilitator of communication between cultures does not last long, nor should it elsewhere (Baker C., 2010a).

In this context, what will be the role of interpreters and societal expectations of interpreters in the ever more diverse human interactions across larger and larger distances in shorter and shorter timeframe, in a world of transidioma and sociolinguistic superdiversity (Jacquemet, 2015), with increasingly non-standard languages or even mixtures of languages and dialects, like that of asylum seekers? What are our obligations and strategies to provide and fund improved equal access for all? Similar challenges in intelligence gathering and analysis also call for hybrid and multidisciplinary approach and its own ethical principles and boundaries.

3.7 Technology as Tool for Training Future Interpreters

It is evident that the scope and demand of interpreting and of interpreters continue to rise, which has been suggested to be related to technology (DePalma, 2017). Often technology has been ascribed as a solution or even panacea to complex problems requiring extensive resources, like pooling of interpreters with a particular working language in time of (unexpected) high needs like Haitian Creole during the 2010 Haitian earthquake (Zetzsche, 2017). As discussed earlier in this paper, the reality and the actual cost-vs-benefit relationship are more nuanced and complex.

Can technology have a positive contribution towards training of future interpreters?

There is paucity of data, which would allow estimation of whether there is global or regional shortage of professional interpreters and in what language pairs and in which sub-specialties. There is, however, an increasing awareness and certainly an increasing need for interpreters with ever more diverse, previously termed exotic, language pairs.

How do we meet these demands? With ever reducing budgets in most universities around the world, providing 20 or 30 different language/dialect pairs, at a professional level would be prohibitive. Some of these needs can be met by "Tandem" methods as, described by Driesen (2011) and much work has been done by Moser-Mercer (2014) in the area of crisis interpreting. However, to fully meet all these needs, increasing collaboration and multi-centricity via virtual classroom technology bringing students and experts from around the world will be a must, especially recalling that rare or exotic languages in one locale may be the lingua franca in another part of the world (Liu, 2017b).

Multimodality, in addition to multi centricity, calls for new didactic methods like that of blended learning, which are necessarily technology-mediated, are increasingly being incorporated into the interpreting programmes (Gorjanc, 2016). Training and research institutions are more obliged to take steps to narrow the technological gap between that of the profession and that of academia. This is especially important as "students seem to be very interested in whether what they are taught is in line with the market reality" (Takeda, 2010).

3.8 Cloud Confidentiality?

Technology has a definite impact and has wider social implications, positive and negative, in the multilingual, multicultural and the projected superdiverse societies. This paper has covered how wider gamut technology has played and will play in the interpreting profession, its impact on interpreters and the communications we mediate.

Before I conclude, I would like to highlight one more intersection between technology and interpreting that has been conspicuous in its absence in the research literature: confidentiality, specifically with reference to remote interpreting and 'the cloud'. Much research and debate have taken place outside of RI, especially in the area of healthcare and medicine, where vulnerable individuals with sensitive information are often combined (Crotty, 2014). Could we be in violation of our professional Code of Ethics if we chose to work in an environment, be it physical or technical, where confidential conversations are stored and, in the increasingly outsourced and deregulated digital platforms, the sound files could well end up as training corpora for Machine Interpreting (MI) or worse? Despite the highly regulated storage and use of digital medical information, breaches are not infrequent. Could we be in breach of our obligation to confidentiality, even though we are not the leaker? (Liu, 2017b)

Does technology extend opportunities? And, thereby, extending our roles, responsibilities and ethical boundaries too? From professionals with very important quotidian communicative responsibilities to wider responsibilities to our organisations, societies and international order? (c.f. Bahadir, 2017). If it is our role to advocate for the communicative rights of our clients, should we be confined to their linguistic rights? Increasingly, interpreters are not working for government or institutional agents but for outsourced commercial service providers with different capacity and dedication to data security. Is it ethical for us as interpreters to work in an environment where the privacy of our clients, often the most vulnerable in societies, could be compromised or even exploited? Now there is a more compelling reason why we, as interpreters, should get out of bed, get into our car or board that plane to our assignment.

4. Concluding Remarks

This paper provides an overview, both academic and professional, of the evolving roles and responsibilities of interpreters. Superimposed within the context of technological advances in our profession, it is clear that technology will not only lead to new opportunities, it will also pose new challenges (c.f. Rudvin, 2006). The roles and the expectations of what interpreters do will continue to be defined both intrinsically by the profession and interpreting studies scholars and extrinsically by those who need our services.

Dam (2010) surmised that "across the diversity of interpreting, the recurrent theme is the concept of profession". Our role and our professional ethics are one of the pillars of this very profession. This concept is essentially a shorthand for trust, demonstrated throughout history and since time eternal (D'Amore, 2016; Rosendo, 2016; Pym, 2017). As Takeda (2009) so eloquently put it:

> In the socio-political context, when a party in power has to rely on interpreters who do not have shared interest or affiliation, the party may set up a system to regulate and control the interpreters out of concerns over their trustworthiness.

Takeda (2009) concludes that "trustworthiness of the interpreter overrides the quality of interpreting". This led to the shared belief in the interpreter's commitment to neutrality as surrogate marker of trust (Snellman, 2016) and, by inference, a surrogate marker for quality.

But, even in the environment less technologically-mediated, norm-based approach to secure trust is debatable and problematic. This is especially so when Marzocchi (2005) argued that to "characterise all interpreting under all circumstances implies making the notion of norms a blunt conceptual tool" and, therefore, without much added value. This is precisely what distinguishes us from machine at a time when there is most urgent need to assert our contribution to human understanding and development as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly A/RES/71/288 (UNGA ,2017).

This is all the more important that in the increasingly impersonal platform-based workspace, both researchers and profession should take active steps to move away from conceptualising interpreters as machine or conduits (Bahadir, 2001; Bontempo, 2012). Amongst the myriad of options and solutions are:

(1) Defining the boundary of practice via "case law" instead of deontological approach, as proposed by Tate and Turner 1997/2002.
(2) Synergistic approach between norm and habitus (Tiselius, 2010).
(3) Rebranding impartiality and neutrality to "objectivity" (Ciordia, 2017).

All of these form a common strategy in line with Diriker's call for action to finally acknowledge and capitalise on the real strengths and accountability of our profession, which "entails not only revisiting role definitions of interpreting, but also revisiting professional and individual ethics" (Diriker, 2011).

Technology, carefully valued and professionally mediated, can focus on enhancing the professional status and role of interpreters in society, especially in the field of trust, user experience and added value. Only then would such technology be more likely to have the practitioners' acceptance as well as wider societal uptake and recognition.

For when machine interpreting does become a reality, however imperfect, I would argue we owe it to our future colleagues to shift from norm dependent to contextual and expectation dependent perspective. "But the change in perspective from a prescriptive to a de-

scriptive approach was slow in coming" (Rudvin, 2014). Will technology help or hinder this change?

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