TRAINING VIDEO INTERPRETERS FOR REFUGEE LANGUAGES IN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING DACH COUNTRIES: THE SAVD INITIATIVE / FORMACIÓN DE INTÉRPRETES POR VIDEOCONFERENCIA PARA LAS LENGUAS DE LOS REFUGIADOS EN LOS PAÍSES DE HABLA ALEMANA DE LA *DACH:* LA INICIATIVA SAVD

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Abstract: Thanks to the availability of appropriate technical solutions as well as growing experience with remote interpreting in various countries, video interpreting has made its way into community interpreting, predominantly in the healthcare sector. It is thought to combine advantages of face-to-face interpreting (e.g. visibility, eye contact, non-verbal communication, visual information and certain trust-building features) with advantages of distance interpreting (e.g. saving travel time and expenses) in facilitating correct diagnosis and obtaining informed consent, compliance, treatment success and patient safety. This article describes a video-interpreting initiative undertaken in the German-speaking DACH area (Germany, Austria, German-speaking part of Switzerland) following the 2015 refugee crisis. It highlights the training measures introduced to address the needs of patients speaking languages for which interpreters are not usually available in Germany and Austria, and the subsequent expansion of the initiative into Switzerland. It also reports on the views of the course participants on the basis of a questionnaire survey conducted after training.

Keywords: Community interpreting; Video interpreting; Training measures; Technological requirements.

Resumen: La interpretación a distancia por videoconferencia se ha abierto camino en la interpretación comunitaria, predominantemente en el ámbito sanitario, gracias a la disponibilidad de soluciones técnicas apropiadas así como a la creciente experiencia en la interpretación a distancia en diferentes países. La idea es combinar las ventajas de la interpretación en persona (por ejemplo, la perceptibilidad, el contacto visual, la comunicación no verbal, la información visual y aspectos de creación de confianza) con las ventajas de la interpretación a distancia (como, por ejemplo, el ahorro de costos y gastos de trayectos) y, de esta manera, facilitar un diagnóstico correcto y obtener el consentimiento informado, la conformidad, los tratamientos exitosos y la seguridad del paciente. El presente artículo describe las propuestas llevadas a cabo para la interpretación por videoconferencia en los países de habla alemana (Alemania, Austria y la parte germanohablante de Suiza) a raíz de la crisis de refugiados. Se pone especial énfasis en las actividades de formación introducidas con el fin de satisfacer las necesidades de los pacientes que hablan lenguas para cuya interpretación no suele haber intérpretes en Alemania y Austria, así como su introducción subsiguiente en Suiza. Además, se presenta la opinión de los participantes de los cursos en base a una encuesta llevada a cabo después de las actividades de formación.

Palabras clave: Interpretación en los servicios públicos; Interpretación por videoconferencia; Actividades de formación; Requisitos tecnológicos.

1. Introduction

This article describes a video-interpreting initiative undertaken in the German-speaking DACH area (D for Germany, A for Austria and CH for Switzerland, and "Dach" meaning "roof" in German), which gained momentum after the 2015 refugee crisis. At that time, SAVD GmbH, now market leader in video public-service interpreting within the DACH area and based in Vienna, introduced a training programme for video interpreters focusing on refugee languages, in cooperation with the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ) and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). This article outlines the initiative's development over the past 4 years, describing the applied training measures and reporting on a small-scale survey administered to the training participants to investigate their attitudes towards video interpreting. The initiative started out in Austria, before spreading into Germany, with a pilot project now being carried out in (German-speaking) Switzerland.

The fact that video interpreting has made its way onto the public service interpreting market above and beyond the SAVD campaign is clearly demonstrated by the deliberations that have commenced in the DIN standardization committee responsible for consecutive remote interpreting: A kick-off meeting was held in January 2018 in Berlin, triggering a process of further deliberation aiming to level the playing field internationally and ensuring a sound footing based on mutual agreement. The points under discussion are a number of important aspects related to technology, quality, roles, tasks and financing that have to be looked into when implementing video interpreting in community-interpreting settings. The many facets involved in establishing video interpreting in a systematic and sustainable fashion were also spelt out for the Swiss pilot project in an internal document (Müller, 2017). It set out technical requirements for the smooth functioning of the system and uninterrupted transmission, as well as addressing usability aspects and handling by customers, service providers and interpreters. Another major technical aspect is data security. In terms of quality, the differences between video and face-to-face interpreting, interpreters' and users' preparation, including briefings and instructional guidelines, the physical working environment (room layout, seating arrangement, etc.) and support measures for interpreters (e.g. debriefing, psychological support) are all potential causes for concern. Issues pertaining to roles and tasks comprise organization, recruiting, training, quality assurance and feedback management as well as the ethics of video-interpreting. Financial considerations relate to installation and support costs, personnel costs and payment, and rate structure. The following pinpoints training, taken from this comprehensive (although non-exhaustive) list of requirements, and hones in on training as part of the SAVD initiative in the DACH area.

2. SAVD Video Interpreting in the DACH Area

For the sake of clarity, the term "video interpreting" was chosen over "remote interpreting", which is often used as a blanket term to refer to both "video-conference-based" and "telephone-based interpreting" (see Braun, 2015), whereas "video relay services interpreting" is used in the context of signed language interpreting (Bower 2015). "Video interpreting" or rather its German equivalent, "Videodolmetschen", is also the term featured in the company name: "SAVD Videodolmetschen GmbH" (SAVD 2017). SAVD was founded in 2014 within

the framework of the Austrian pilot project "Quality assurance in the medical care of non-German-speaking patients: Video interpreting in the healthcare system" (October 2013 to March 2014), which was an initiative developed by the Platform for Patient Safety in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health, the Institute for Ethics and Law in Medicine and the Centre for Translation Studies of the University of Vienna. The project was initially tested within the healthcare system exclusively and was subsequently applied to the asylum system and public services field.

As early as the year 2015, the project was rolled out to the market in Germany. At the end of 2015, SAVD Videodolmetschen GmbH won a national bid for tender (BBG) of approximately EUR 30 million in Austria, committing to guarantee high-quality video-interpreting services for all public institutions for a 5-year period. At the beginning of 2016 SAVD introduced weekend, bank-holiday, and nightly service, thus ensuring video interpreting around the clock. In 2017, the service was extended to German-speaking Switzerland. More specifically, SAVD Videodolmetschen GmbH works as technical partner within the framework of a pilot project led by INTERPRET, the Swiss association of intercultural interpretation and mediation, ensuring efficiency of data transfer and accessibility of data security solutions to Swiss project partners, clients and service providers alike. SAVD's solutions rely on SaaS software technology, i.e. a highly compatible and adaptable "software as a service" device, easily updateable through standardized interfaces.

Interpreting services are provided via video using Jabber software, developed by Cisco and partners upon SAVD's request and tailored to the specific requirements of video interpreting. Interpreters work either from home (in Germany or Austria) or from SAVD's office. According to the SAVD guidelines, interpreters working from home are required to have an isolated study or working space, a headset, webcam and a reliable LAN Internet connection. Clients also require a stable, preferably cable Internet connection, and an end device – PC or laptop, a tablet if need be – to see and hear the interpreter. The end device has to be positioned in such a way that the interpreter can see and hear both the specialist and the client.

In the years since its foundation, SAVD has grown significantly and, as of the end of 2017, it served around 500 customers in more than 10 industries (in Austria particularly at the communal level, prisons, asylum institutions, job market services, pension funds, assessments, clinics, and in Germany in administration—social services, youth, healthcare, order—, the asylum working group, health advisory services, foreign citizens' authorities, ambulance services, children's clinics, young offender institutions) with several hundred freelance and employed interpreters in Germany and Austria (Wächter/Vanheiden, 2015). Customers pay a specific amount for their license depending on the number of languages they require and the overall duration of interpreting services provided. Interpreters who work during the day are paid per minute with a minimum time-based fee set at 15 minutes (healthcare assignments rarely last longer than 12 minutes). Customers book a language package. Interpreters of Arabic, Bosnian, Bulgarian, English, French, Croatian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian, Czech, Turkish, Hungarian and Austrian sign language are available within 120 seconds from request submission. Interpreting from/into other languages (Albanian, Amharic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Bengali, Chinese, Dari, Edo/Bini, Farsi, Georgian, Greek, Hindi, Igbo, Italian, Kurdish, Mongolian, Pashto, Filipino, Portuguese, Punjabi, Slovenian, Spanish, Somali, Thai, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese) are provided within 15 to 60 minutes or by appointment (SAVD, 2017).

In 2014, a framework agreement with the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators BDÜ e.V. was signed, regulating minimum requirements to be adhered to in terms of qualification and pay: interpreters need to have a recognized university degree or equivalent state certification. Only BDÜ members and interpreters who fulfil the BDÜ

admission criteria are appointed. Other candidates are appointed only if no BDÜ members are available. Pay is a minimum of EUR 1 per minute and no less than EUR 15 if the assignment lasts less than 15 minutes.

In 2015, migration flows within the DACH area resulted in a demand increase for languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Pashtu etc., for which qualified interpreters are rarely available. At the time BDÜ could count on very few Arabic interpreters and no members for further refugee languages who could work for SAVD. Further investigations showed that many of the accredited legal interpreters in the BDÜ database did not meet quality criteria set for video interpreting. BDÜ was therefore asked to consider developing a "certification course" for lay interpreters with high-level German skills to provide SAVD with certified personnel.

BDÜ discussed potential training approaches with representatives of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW, CH), the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz (DE), and the Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck (AU). In February 2016 a meeting was held among the 3 institutions' future trainers to establish guidelines for the course's content. The resulting training courses were named as follows: "Raising of basic awareness of (video) interpreting in the healthcare system and public administration". They were administrated by the BDÜ Weiterbildungs- und Fachverlagsgesellschaft GmbH and financed by SAVD GmbH.

3. Video-Interpreting Training Courses

The DACH countries involved in the training of new interpreters had very diverse target populations. As a result, training in Germany and Austria was offered mainly to lay interpreters, whereas courses in Switzerland were attended mostly by trained community interpreters. The course structures were tailored to the respective participants' needs.

3.1 Training Courses in Germany and Austria

Training courses in Germany and Austria aimed at recruiting and training lay interpreters offering language combinations not available among professional BDÜ interpreters, who could satisfy the following admission criteria:

- Proficiency in 1 or more "refugee languages" (Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, etc.).
- Successful completion of an oral entrance test (on site or via Skype) as proof of C1-level German skills (listening and speech comprehension) conducted by an employee of SAVD.

In 2016, 2 training courses were carried out in Germany and 1 in Austria. Participants were lay interpreters selected by SAVD in accordance with the above-mentioned admission criteria. SAVD covered participants' fees and travel expenses. All participants had their residence in Germany or Austria. The first course in Germany focused on interpreting in healthcare and community settings while the following 2 (1 in Germany and 1 in Austria) addressed requirements set by the Austrian Federal Employment Agency, with whom SAVD has an exclusive contract for the provision of interpreters on the pay-roll for various refugee languages.

There were approximately 15 participants per course, most of whom had very good command of the German language and a school diploma and/or university degree, though some titles were not recognized within the EU. A significant number of trainees had already

worked as lay interpreters. Surprisingly, however, almost 25% of participants did not pass their final test. Those who were unsuccessful had either comprehension difficulties in their mother tongue or German, a lack of general knowledge —concerning history, political and social structures, or geography— or insufficient self-reflection skills, failing to identify their own limitations, for instance.

By way of illustration, the first course is described in the following paragraphs. The training course started in March 2016 with 16 participants. The course content was based on the long-standing experience of interpreter trainers from the above-mentioned universities in the areas of community, court and medical interpreting as well as interpreting in the asylum system. Methods developed at the respective universities were applied.

Training was administered for a total of 4 days spread over 2 weekends (32 exercise units), followed by 1 examination day, and resulted in a BDÜ- and SAVD-approved completion certificate. In between the 2 weekends, participants had to undergo obligatory self-study sessions. In more detail, the course structure reads as follows:

On the first 2 days, an introduction to the professional profile and areas of activity of interpreters was provided (including potential areas of employment and the types of interpreting) and interpreting techniques and strategies (including note-taking basics) were presented, along with corresponding exercises and social sector role plays. The third day dealt with professional ethics and behaviour in a practice-oriented manner (with reference to the relevant codes of conduct and ethics), assignment preparation, follow-up and research (including terminology work) along with healthcare role plays. Over the course of the weeks between instruction days II and III, participants took part in a series of mandatory webinars on healthcare, social services and asylum system topics created by SAVD Videodolmetschen.

The last day of training saw the introduction of video interpreting and its consequences for professional practice with a brief presentation of the portal and user interface. Participants were informed of the comprehensive introduction offered by SAVD in the event of collaboration. This was followed by video interpreting exercises for which the interpreters went to a separate room. The remaining participants had the opportunity to receive video interpreting from the client's side and provide their peers with feedback.

Examination day commenced with a multiple-choice test for all participants testing the content of the SAVD webinars. The oral examination was split into video interpreting target language $\Leftrightarrow$ mother tongue and a reflection discussion in which participants were asked to evaluate their performance (total approx. 30 min.). Exams were supervised by both trainers as well as an examiner for the participants' respective mother tongues. The latter external examiners were also interpreters, who worked for SAVD and joined exam proceedings via Jabber. Interpreting performance was evaluated by the BDÜ examiners, while the theory part was evaluated by SAVD. Upon passing all 3 exam components, the participants received a certificate confirming their successful completion of the training course. In the event of failure, no employment opportunities were offered by SAVD.

3.2 Courses in Switzerland

In 2017, 3 training courses were held in Switzerland. The Swiss National Telephone Interpreting Service had taken interest in the possibility of video interpreting; a reason was that telephone interpreting had been met with less enthusiasm than had been hoped for. The decision was made to start a pilot project with SAVD, in the event of the successful conclusion of which the prerequisite technology was to be bought from SAVD in the form of a license, while interpreting was to build on the established system of certified community interpreters offering the requested languages. In Switzerland, INTERPRET has a federal government mandate to enact a qualification system on 2 levels: the INTERPRET certificate

and the national diploma "Eidgenössischer Fachausweis", the former being a basic qualification, the latter a vocational qualification on the tertiary level (INTERPRET 2017). In its capacity as a national competence centre, INTERPRET is responsible for public relations, conceptual and developmental matters as well as for initiating and overseeing pilot projects. The operative structure of intercultural interpreting itself is a network of regional service providers, which entertain contracts with interpreters. In addition to any related administrative work, their tasks include quality assurance (customer training, feedback systems, the professional development of interpreters, supervisions etc.) and the administration of links with customers (e.g. hospitals, schools, social services).

Initiated by INTERPRET, an agreement was reached with ZHAW for the organization of the training of future video interpreters in the use of the technology, with ZHAW being responsible for the desired behaviour when working on screen and SAVD for the purely technical aspects. Courses were limited to the German-speaking part of Switzerland in this initial phase. As they targeted professional community interpreters with knowledge not only of interpreting techniques, but also of national social and healthcare systems, courses were limited to a 1-day programme concentrating on the video interpreting component.

In December 2017, 3 1-day courses took place in Zurich, Bern and St Gallen. Participants had been working for the cantonal service providers for quite some time. In approximately 80% of cases, their German skills were very good (C1 to C2).

After the requirements of an interpreter's workplace and their environment (a separate room, neutral backdrop, LAN connection) had been presented, firstly, the differences between interpreting with and without eye contact were rendered more tangible by means of exercises and group work. Secondly, the different stages of interpreting via video were presented, from taking a call to concluding the session. Particular emphasis was placed on the different interpreting and intervention strategies based on the lack of non-verbal communication and intervention opportunities. Finally, a realistic scenario was simulated in the form of a discussion between a specialist and a non-German-speaking client with the interpreter located in a separate room. Principles of professional ethics and potential technical issues were also demonstrated in this constellation.

4. Video-Interpreting Trainees' Views as Expressed in Questionnaires

Questionnaire data was gathered for the first course conducted in Germany and the 3 courses conducted in Switzerland (Zurich, St Gallen, Bern). Due to restrictions from the organizers, it was not possible to conduct the survey in courses 2 and 3 in Germany or Austria. As mentioned before, the German course was directed to lay interpreters, the Swiss course to professional community interpreters. The German course was, therefore, a full course, comprising 2 full weekends, obligatory webinars over the 3 weeks in between these 2 sessions and an examination day relating not only to the video-interpreting component, but also to basic interpreting skills. The Swiss courses, by contrast, were targeted at trained community interpreters and only lasted for 1 day, addressing the video-interpreting component exclusively. In Switzerland it was for reasons of time constraints, that alongside the bio data collected, it was only possible to put an additional 3 questions to the Swiss course participants. These regarded the advantages and disadvantages of video interpreting as well as personal attitudes towards this mode of interpreting. The questions posed to the participants of the first course held in Germany were more detailed. Along with bio-data questions and those relating to feedback on the training course, the following questions were asked:

1. Do you prefer video or face-to-face interpreting?
2. What are the advantages of video-interpreting over face-to-face interpreting?
3. What are the disadvantages of video-interpreting in comparison with face-to-face interpreting?
4. What difficulties do you encounter when interpreting via video?
5. What difficulties do you encounter when interpreting face to face?
6. Do you feel more stress when video-interpreting?
7. Do you feel more stress when interpreting face to face?
8. How can you tell if your interpretation was successful?
9. How do you feel about interaction with the official in interpreting assignments?
10. How do you feel about interaction with the client in interpreting assignments?

The following presentation of the results deals only with questions 1 to 7, because they tie in with the 3 questions asked in the Swiss survey. Of these 7 questions, questions 1 to 5 were open-comment questions, whereas questions 6 and 7 were asked in a yes/no reply format. As a result of outlined differences between the 2 course types and between the questionnaires, the 2 (German and Swiss) "cohorts" are not comparable, as interesting as it would be to look into the attitudes of lay vs professional interpreters. Thus, the following gives only tentative insights into how course participants felt about the 2 interpreting modes (video vs face-to-face) after completion of the courses.

4.1 Questionnaire Results from Course 1 in Germany

Of the 16 course participants, 14 filled in the questionnaire, 10 female and 4 male. Most of them had A-levels or a university degree and, in accordance with SAVD admission criteria, at least a C1 level German. According to the trainers, the command of German of some participants was well above C1 level due to the fact that they had been living in Austria or Germany for 1 to 5 (2), 5 to 15 (1), 15 to 30 (6) or more than 30 years (2). 2 persons were born in either Austria or Germany, and 1 did not reply to this question. Their mother tongues were indicated as being German (4), Arabic (4), Persian/Farsi (3), Dari (1), Hungarian (1) and Slovakian (1). 4 had no interpreting experience whatsoever. Of the 11 who did have some such experience, 5 had done not only non-professional face-to-face, but also some video interpreting before. Of the whole group of 16 participants, 3 failed the exam because of problems with either of their languages, lack of general knowledge or domain-specific knowledge (see above). Those who passed the exam started working for SAVD, either as employees or freelancers.

The questionnaires filled in by 14 participants (P1– P14) yielded the following answers: Some 11 respondents saw *advantages* linked to video interpreting (3 no replies), explicitly mentioning the following benefits:

- Flexibility (P3).
- Working from home (P3, P5, P11).
- Working at night to fit around childcare (P3).
- No direct confrontation (P4, P9); more distance in difficult situations (P7, P12).
- Time-saving (P9, P11, P12), no travel involved (P8, P11, P12).
- No travel expenses (P8, P9, P12).
- Cost reduction (P14).
- Availability (P10).
- Making good use of waiting time (P12).

- Working quietly (P9).
- Recognition for help in emergency situations (P12).
- Development of intelligent systems (P13).

When asked about the *disadvantages* associated with video interpreting, 10 respondents gave the following answers, with 1 seeing no disadvantages at all and 3 no replies:

- Narrower range of possible applications (P3).
- Loneliness (P7) / no contact (P14).
- Lack of body language (P8, P14).
- Difficulty preparing oneself and anticipating what to expect (P9).
- Impersonal atmosphere (P10, P14).
- Acoustic and visual problems (P11).
- Technology-related problems (P8, P11, P12).
- Eye contact not always possible (P12).
- Difficulty to read documents (P14).
- Shorter working hours (P5).
- Need to stay home on stand-by (P4).

When asked about their *subjective attitudes and personal preferences*, 6 (as opposed to 5 for face-to-face interpreting) preferred video interpreting for reasons of flexibility, because there is no extra travel time and because the remote aspect introduces a certain distance in emotional terms, as there is no direct customer contact. Working in a familiar environment enables interpreters to concentrate on their work, and it is seen as "less complicated". The reasons why 5 respondents preferred face-to-face interpreting were the direct or personal contact with people, thus being able to gain a better understanding, there being no technology-related problems and an increased sense of trust. 3 respondents expressed no preference.

When asked about *difficulties* related to the 2 interpreting formats, 5 saw difficulties linked with video interpreting (while 4 saw no difficulties at all and 5 did not reply). The difficulties noted were the following: technology-related problems and resulting communication problems; missing breaks in the case of longer exchanges; time pressure and acoustic problems. Interestingly, more respondents, namely 8, mentioned difficulties linked with face-to-face interpreting and only 3 saw none (3 no replies). The difficulties mentioned were the following: emerging conflicts; remaining quiet; lack of emotional distance; threats from clients (after police interviews); dialect; long passages; remaining neutral; triggering one's own bad memories; getting interrupted and comprehension problems. The inclination towards video interpreting was rendered even clearer by the question as to whether participants associated greater strain with video or face-to-face interpreting. The question was asked in a "yes/no" reply format for both modes. When asked whether video interpreting was more strenuous, 8 participants responded it was not, while 2 responded it was. When asked whether face-to-face interpreting was more strenuous, 2 participants responded it was not, while 8 responded it was. Greater strain was clearly linked to face-to-face interpreting. It may well be that, due to more extensive experience with face-to-face interpreting, difficulties and strain-related aspects were fresher in the minds of participants when thinking about this mode. On the whole, however, a tendency of replies leaning more favourably towards video interpreting could not be ignored.

Participants in the courses in Zurich, St Gallen and Bern were recruited on the basis of their fulfilling the following conditions: holder of INTERPRET certificate or Swiss diploma "Eidgenössischer Fachausweis" (see above); conclusion of further education module on telephone interpreting; proof of German C1 proficiency level; proof of sufficient knowledge of L1 via INTERPRET telephone language test; preference for languages such as Tigrinya, Turkish and Arabic. The participants were, thus, INTERPRET-certified telephone interpreters.

The Zurich and Bern courses had 10 participants each while the St. Gallen course had 15 participants. Of the total of 35 participants, 27 filled in the questionnaire, 21 of whom were female and 6 were male. Participants covered quite an array of A-languages, namely Albanian (2), Arabic (2), Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (2), German (4), Kurdish (1), Portuguese (2), Spanish (2), Tamil (4), Tigrinya (1) and Turkish (3); 4 participants did not reply. Of the 27, 23 had had regular interpreting assignments for up to a year (1), 1 to 5 years (7), 6 to 10 years (8), 11 to 15 years (1), 16 to 20 years (7) and 21 to 25 years (1); only 3 worked on an irregular basis (1 no reply). Half of the group, namely 14 interpreters also worked in other professions. With an average regular work experience of 9.8 years, it can be said that the interpreters are not only trained and certified, but also rather experienced professional community interpreters.

When asked about possible *advantages* of video interpreting, all but 1 of the 27 respondents mentioned at least 1 advantage (multiple answers possible, number of mentions in brackets). The following advantages were expressed:

- Time-saving (6).
- Less travelling for work (6).
- Efficient time management (2).
- Comfort of working from home (7).
- Physical distance from client (2).
- Supporting impartiality (1).
- Progress, leap into the future (2).
- Fast customer service, especially in emergencies (2).
- Flexibility (1).
- Independence of specific locations (1).
- Cost reduction on travel expenses (2).
- More time for assignments (1).
- Practicality aspects (1).
- Environmental friendliness (1).

When it came to the *disadvantages* associated with video interpreting, 15 respondents mentioned at least 1 disadvantage, 8 did not mention any, while 4 said they lacked experience of working with the tool and therefore could not comment on possible disadvantages. The following disadvantages were made explicit:

- Lack of body language, restricted non-verbal communication (5).
- Technical problems, dependence on technology (5).
- Impersonal atmosphere, distance, lack of presence (4).
- Lack of availability in or applicability to all sectors (2).
- Incompatibility with face-to-face interpreting (1).
- Acoustic restrictions (1).

Finally, the third question addressed participants' positive or negative stance towards video interpreting. Of the 27 respondents, 23 expressed a positive view, while 4 were undecided. Astonishingly, there was no negative positioning at all. The reasons given for interpreters' positive stance were:

- Broadening horizons and gaining new experiences.
- Opening up of a new interpreting world.
- A step into modernity.
- A welcome change to canonical face-to-face interpreting.
- Practicality aspects / practical solution for both interpreters and specialists/clients.
- More time for assignments rather than travel.
- New opportunities for more assignments in distant locations and sectors.

In sum, it can be concluded that the professionals shared an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards video interpreting, stressing advantages over disadvantages and demonstrating openness to this mode. As a caveat, it needs to be said that these interpreters have ample experience with on-site interpreting, but not with video interpreting. At the same time, being trained telephone interpreters, they do have a remote interpreting background.

5. Conclusions

Recent technological advances and the ensuing usability improvements have made video interpreting more popular among paying customers. Assets include:

- The degree of maturation and sophistication of the technological applications.
- Reductions in travel time and costs.
- The modularity of the software solutions (customers can choose between video interpreting only or extended systems comprising digital shift rotas, automatic customer invoicing, comprehensive statistics, etc.).
- The development of comprehensive solutions including the booking/recruitment of any type of interpreter, be it telephone, video or face-to-face.
- The development of joint service provision platforms for several service providers (e.g. in Switzerland).
- Mobility aspects (i.e. the SaaS runs on any Internet-enabled end device, is ideal for mobile use on the go, enabling medical personnel to move around between different patient rooms and wards).

The study presented here suggests that not only customers, but also interpreters themselves may be increasingly accepting of video interpreting. As outlined above, the interpreters undergoing video interpreting training in the SAVD-BDÜ-ZHAW programme introduced in the DACH countries seem to be developing a rather positive attitude towards video interpreting. In both the German and the Swiss cohorts, a clear majority of respondents saw more advantages than disadvantages. In addition, the lay interpreters on the German course had a slight preference for video interpreting over face-to-face interpreting (6:5), and only 5 saw difficulties linked to video interpreting as opposed to 8 with face-to-face interpreting. The most striking result in this group was that 8 (out of 14) participants felt face-to-face interpreting caused them greater strain, while only 2 found video interpreting to be more strenuous (4 no replies). This seems to contradict evidence of fatigue and stress from

studies on remote conference interpreting (Moser-Mercer, 2005). It must be borne in mind, however, that respondents expressed their views following a video-interpreting training course and would first have to gain experience in the field before being able to make an informed decision on stress-related and other aspects. Nonetheless, the more advanced telephone interpreters in the Swiss cohort expressed similarly positive views: All but 1 of the 27 respondents mentioned at least 1 advantage they associated with video interpreting, while only 15 mentioned at least 1 disadvantage. Asked about their personal attitude towards video interpreting, results were even clearer. Not a single negative view was expressed; 23 took a positive stance, 4 were undecided.

While this seems to suggest that the general preference for face-to-face interpreting over telephone interpreting, as found by Azarmina and Wallace (2005) and Locatis et al. (2010), may not necessarily hold true for face-to-face over video interpreting, the circumstances under which this positive feedback was gathered must be taken into account. Thus, the successful training course and presentation of the numerous factors involved in video interpreting prior to data collection are likely to have had an impact. Respondents seemed to be aware of multiple facets. Most advantages mentioned related to the benefits of working from home and saving on travel time and expenses and most disadvantages referred to technology-related issues (e.g. Internet connection outages, sound transmission, handling). However, participants also expressed nuanced views of the welcome distance from clients in difficult situations, for instance, contrasting with the impersonal quality of video interpreting and potential loneliness and also with the benefits of direct and personal contact with people in face-to-face interpreting. Thus, while, on the whole, the study gives only impressionistic insights into lay and professional community interpreters' views of video interpreting, the responses seem sufficiently differentiated to serve as a basis for future in-depth studies on this newly spreading interpreting format in community interpreting.

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