TECHNOLOGY

A major impact on the interpreting profession has always come from technological developments. As early as the mid-1920s, newly developed electro-acoustic transmission systems were employed in experiments with simultaneous interpreting. And, even though conference interpreters may have disliked the loss of status and visibility resulting from being moved from the rostrum to a booth in the back of the room, it is modern simultaneous interpreting equipment that has ensured the smooth and widespread incorporation of interpreters into conference proceedings.

Aside from interpreters' increasing online access to IT and telecommunications tools, the biggest technological revolution upon them is undoubtedly the spread of remote interpreting, that is, a situation in which the interpreter is not in the same location as the communicating parties. Rather than face-to-face, the interpreter interacts via some form of telecommunications technology, in audio or video modes. Most basically, this is implemented as (audio-only) telephone interpreting, which has been used for many years, particularly in community-based settings. With the advent of digital media and higher data transmission capacities, remote interpreting in web-based video mode has become increasingly feasible, for community-based as well as international communication scenarios.

The adoption of remote interpreting has been of particular significance in healthcare and judicial settings as well as in the domain of signed-language interpreting, where what is known as video remote interpreting (as distinct from 'video relay service', which links video access with a telephone call) is vastly expanding Deaf persons' access to interpreting services.

 No less fundamental is the impact of remote interpreting in international conference settings, where experiments using satellite-based transmission date back to the 1970s. Institutional employers of conference interpreters like the UN and the European Commission and Parliament have conducted several trials of videoconference interpreting and remote (simultaneous) interpreting. While the technical set-up has undergone significant improvement (including the use of large screens and multiple camera views), 'visual access' remains a problem and has been associated with increased eye strain and fatigue. Most critically, interpreters' lack of a sense of 'presence' poses the risk of alienation and reduced motivation.

Pöchhacker, Franz. "Issues in Interpreting Studies" The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies, Edited by Jeremy Munday, Routledge, London, 2009, pp. 128-140.

1. Which technological development in the mid-1920s impacted the interpreting profession?

A) Electro-acoustic transmission systems

B) Digital media tools

C) Satellite-based transmission

D) Video relay service

2. What has ensured the smooth incorporation of interpreters into conference proceedings?

A) Remote interpreting

B) Higher data transmission capacities

C) Simultaneous interpreting equipment

D) Video relay service

3. Which field has witnessed the most significant impact from remote interpreting?

A) Community-based settings

B) International conference settings

C) Healthcare and judicial settings

D) Signed-language interpreting

4. What is the main difference between video remote interpreting and video relay service?

A) Interaction with Deaf persons

B) Use of digital media tools

C) Transmission capacities

D) Access to interpreting services

5. Which institutions have conducted trials of videoconference interpreting and remote interpreting?

A) UN and the European Commission

B) Healthcare and judicial settings

C) Community-based settings

D) Conference interpreting organizations

Answer 1: A) Electro-acoustic transmission systems

Answer 2: C) Simultaneous interpreting equipment

Answer 3: C) Healthcare and judicial settings

Answer 4: D) Access to interpreting services

Answer 5: A) UN and the European Commission