

Book Review

Interpreting Technologies – Current and Future Trends

edited by Gloria Corpas Pastor and Bart Defrancq, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2023, 335 pp., ISBN: 9027249458 [IVITRA Research in Linguistics and Literature, 37]

Reviewed by Ran YI*

The development of interpreting technologies has accelerated in recent years thanks to technical advancement. On the one hand, such development has broadened access to interpreting services for some users and reduced the cost of travel time and other pre-meeting arrangements (e.g., hotels) for providers. On the other hand, it creates inequalities (Krussel et al. 2000) for other users who cannot afford technological tools or community interpreters whose working conditions and compensation are primarily determined by local authorities or the market.

Controversies exist concerning the quality of technology-supported interpreting and the need to ensure shared understanding and expectations between service users and providers in these settings. In other words, knowing how technology works and what tools and resources are available is crucial for ensuring the standards of service and needs are met. To bridge the gap of knowledge, this volume first provides a systematic overview of tools-based research, introducing digital pen technologies (see Marc Orlando's chapter 1), tablets used in interpreting (Joshua Goldsmith's chapter 2), computer-assisted interpreting (CAI) tools (Claudio Fantinuoli's chapter 3), and video remote interpreting (VRI) (Diana Singureanu, Graham Hieke, Joanna Gough, and Sabine Braun's chapter 4). Then, this volume focuses on two specific thematic issues in the adoption of technologies in the profession of interpreting: public service interpreting technologies (Hélène Stengers, Raquel Lázaro Gutiérrez, and Koen Kerremans's chapter 5) and those applied in the Global South (Elizabeth Deysel's chapter 6).

Having discussed the tools, service providers, and users in certain contexts, the volume then focuses on several pressing issues in technology-mediated remote interpreting. These issues include video quality and the required bandwidth to ensure access to optimal visual input and optimal synchronization with the audio (Mouzourakis 2006; Staelens et al. 2012; Seeber et

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(Received 21 October 2023; accepted 15 June 2024)

al. 2019), stress, cognitive load, fatigue, and other performance-related issues (Moser-Mercer 2005; Roziner and Shlesinger 2010), such as multimodality, in CAI (see Xiaojun Zhang, Gloria Corpas Pastor, and Jing Zhang’s chapter 7 and Christopher D. Mellinger’s chapter 8). In addition, an increasingly popular option favored in some geographies—live captioning with machine translation—is also examined (see Thomas Jayes’s chapter 9 from an institutional perspective and Will Lewis and Jan Niehues’s chapter 10 in classroom teaching settings).

To conclude the volume, the information and potential for integrating technology-facilitated interpreting services to respond to the needs of human interpreting service users and providers are highlighted in light of their implications for economic forces and organizational performance (see Jonathan Downie’s chapter 11) as well as for educational practices (see Bart Defrancq’s chapter 12).

Overall, the volume has three main contributions. Firstly, the concerted voice from contributors to this volume is that technology did and will not spell the end of translation and interpreting (2023, 19), as each contributor presented their findings and observations and analyzed the supporting evidence. Secondly, the increasing recognition of the “situatedness orientation” (Buzungu and Hansen 2020, 60) and cross-sectorial collaboration (2023, 295) in the use of technological means in translation and interpreting activities. Thirdly, the importance of scaffolding training practice (Babych et al. 2012), particularly the university-level pedagogies designed for students’ awareness and application of general-purpose and specialized platforms for remote interpreting.

Last but not least, technology-supported interpreting activities are never simply a matter of language policy or access strategies. In many cases, the impact of quality technology-mediated interpreting services goes far beyond serving the needs of individuals from linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse communities (Yi 2023a, 2023b, 2024). These include (1) the civil, political, and human rights to a fair representation in court, (2) the reputation and credibility of multilingual public services authorities, and (3) social inclusion for migrants and linguistic minorities in their host societies. Echoing many interpreting scholars, the author envisions that technology will not replace humans’ role in society and the interconnected world. However, there is a pressing need for professional interpreters to embrace the technological shift and evolve with emerging technological trends and applications. Because of these points above, the author believes many readers will find this volume informative and interesting.

On a more personal note, in the rapidly evolving landscape of technology-enabled, interpreter-mediated communication, an in-depth understanding of both theory and practice is crucial (see Yi 2023c, 2023e). For future interpreters, it is important to understand foundational theories underpinning interpreter training in judicial settings, policies, and practical insights

into the pragmatic accuracy of non-content manner-related features in diverse public service contexts (see Yi 2023d, 2023f). Comprehending the significance of technology-empowered public service interpreting is crucial for equity and access to justice for all, regardless of language barriers.

About the Reviewer

Ran is a licensed practitioner and a dedicated researcher at UNSW Sydney, specializing in technology-assisted interpreting within public service settings. With a profound interest in cross-lingual and intercultural communication, Ran’s work aims to bridge linguistic gaps in multicultural communities through innovative technological solutions. Her research focuses on enhancing the efficacy of interpreting services by integrating advanced technological tools, making public services more accessible to non-native speakers. Inspired by her family serving in the judiciary as legal professionals, Ran welcomes collaborative projects that explore new frontiers in interpreting technology for public service users, particularly those that address the unique challenges faced in diverse linguistic landscapes. Their expertise and commitment to fostering inclusive communication highlight the importance of intercultural understanding in today’s globalized world. By collaborating with researchers and practitioners worldwide, Ran strives to develop practical solutions that support equitable access to public services for all individuals, regardless of language barriers.

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