

Challenges and Opportunities in Telephone Interpreting: A Study on The Perspectives of Interpreters

Telefonla Sözlü Çeviride Zorluklar ve Fırsatlar: Türkiye'deki Sözlü Çevirmenlerin Görüşleri

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ABSTRACT

Telephone interpreting (TI) has been a controversial topic in interpreting studies due to quality concerns that emerged due to the lack of visual information. This study focuses on the perceptions of interpreters about challenges in TI in Türkiye in which TI has been offered as a public service since 2011 and by private language service providers. With the objective of shedding light on the practices and problems experienced by telephone interpreters and their opinions on how to improve this practice, the study employed interview as the data collection method. The study recruited 12 telephone interpreters, whose opinions were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The participants highlighted that Turkish clients seem unaware of the interpreting process and aggravate TI problems. In addition, the participants proposed various measures for improving the quality of TI in Türkiye.

Keywords: Telephone interpreting, remote interpreting, working conditions, explicit coordination, personal pronoun use

ÖZ

Telefonla sözlü çeviri, sözlü çeviri çalışmalarında görsel veri eksikliği sebebiyle ortaya çıkan kalite endişeleri sebebiyle tartışmalı bir uygulama olmuştur. Bu çalışma telefonla sözlü çevirinin hem 2011 yılından beri kamu tarafından hem de özel dil hizmeti sağlayıcılar tarafından sunulduğu Türkiye'deki telefonla sözlü çeviri hizmeti sunan çevirmenlerin bu çeviri türündeki zorluklara dair düşüncelerine odaklanmıştır. Telefonla sözlü çeviri hizmeti sunan çevirmenlerin uygulamalarına ve karşılaştıkları sorunlara, buna ek olarak da bu çevirmenlerin kaliteyi arttırmak için sundukları önerilere ışık tutmayı amaçlayan çalışmada veri elde etme yöntemi olarak mülakat kullanılmıştır. Telefonla sözlü çeviri hizmeti sağlayan toplam on iki çevirmenle mülakat yapılmış ve çevirmenlerin görüşleri tematik analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Katılımcılar, Türkçe konuşan müşterilerin sözlü çeviri sürecini anlamadığını ve telefonla sözlü çeviri sürecini daha da zorlaştırdığını vurgulamıştır. Buna ek olarak, katılımcılar Türkiye'de telefonla sözlü çevirinin kalitesinin artırılması için pek çok öneri sunmuşlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Telefonla sözlü çeviri, uzaktan sözlü çeviri, çalışma koşulları, belirtik koordinasyon, şahıs zamiri tercihi

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1. Introduction

Telephone interpreting (TI) is defined as “the use of technology to give one or more participants access to an interpreter via a telephone or teleconference call” (Kelly & Pöchhacker, 2015: 412). As the earliest type of remote interpreting, Braun (2015: 346) described it as “the use of communication technology for gaining access to an interpreter who is in another room, building, city, or country, and who is linked to the primary participants by telephone or videoconference”. TI has been widely used in various countries starting from Australia in 1973 to the United States in 1981 and has gained ground in other countries (Kelly, 2008: 5). TI is typically conducted in consecutive mode in community interpreting settings to gain timely access to interpreters (Wang, 2017). However, it has remained a controversial form of interpreting mainly due to the lack of visual information and resultant quality problems such as issues in turn-taking and overlapping speech and low professional status (Cheng, 2015; Rosenberg, 2007; Mikkelsen, 2003).

Despite being widely used in professional settings (Wang, 2017; Mezcua, 2018: 11), TI remains underrepresented in interpreting studies. It is typically excluded from the curriculum of bachelor’s degree programs, and the extant literature on TI is limited (Ozolins, 2011). The majority of studies on TI are conducted in Australia, where it emerged, in addition to medical studies in the United States and a number of recent projects in European countries (De Boe, 2020: 34–47). In Türkiye, the number of studies on TI is also limited (Dayıoğlu, 2015: 79–85; Özkaya, 2017; Eraslan Kıncal; 2023: 54–56).

The current study focuses on TI in Türkiye and aims to elucidate the practices and problems experienced by telephone interpreters and their opinions on improving this practice. The study first presents critical issues that emerged from the TI literature to contextualize the research. Studies on TI can be categorized as discourse- and survey-based (Şahin Er, 2023). Nevertheless, both types of studies share critical issues related to TI, which can be listed as follows: lack of visual information, explicit coordination, personal pronoun use of interpreter, lack of preparation and briefing, and low professional status of TI.

The lack of visual information has been regarded as the most challenging aspect of TI. Numerous studies, from the first discourse-based studies (Oviatt & Cohen, 1992; Wadensjö, 1999; Rosenberg, 2007) to survey-based ones (Cheng, 2015; Wang, 2018a), have demonstrated its negative effects on interpreting quality. For instance, Wadensjö (1999) compared on-site interpreting and TI and found that the lack of visual information led to increased disfluency, inability of interpreters to understand the utterances of clients, and repetition by clients due to uncertainty. The lack of visual information impacts the capacity of telephone interpreters to understand and manage turn-taking, which in turn can be a stress factor (Andres & Falk, 2009: 22; Cheng, 2015: 14). Professional bodies, such as the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC, 1997) and National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT, 2009), have criticized the lack of visual information in TI. However, Kelly (2008: 83) has argued that this discrepancy can be compensated via acoustic information such as intonation, hesitation, pauses, and other prosodic elements.

The need of interpreters for explicit coordination initiatives can be considered a direct result of the lack of visual information in TI. Wadensjö (1998: 105–144) distinguished between translation and coordination tasks in interpreting and categorized the coordination initiatives of interpreters as implicit and explicit coordination. The first implies the initiatives of interpreters to manage triadic communication, which can include, but is not limited to, the following: requesting clarification, observing the turn-taking order, signaling the main speakers to start or stop speaking, informing speakers about interpreting problems, and demanding repetition (Wang, 2018b). In their discussion on specific skills required in TI, Torrez Diaz (2014) and Fernández Pérez (2015) regard the second as a fundamental skill.

Another related aspect is the personal pronoun use of interpreters during interpreting. Although interpreting using the first-person pronoun is the norm and a sign of professionalism (Rosenberg, 2007; Angermeyer, 2009), various findings revealed that interpreting using the third-person pronoun is common in TI. Interpreters typically preserve the first-person pronoun for self-reference to promote referential clarity in the lack of visual information (Oviatt & Cohen, 1992; Rosenberg, 2007; Lee, 2007; Cheng, 2015). However, recent studies conducted in Australia (Xu et al., 2020; Wang, 2018b) demonstrated that the majority of interpreters that participated in surveys or field observations consistently used first-person interpreting and switched to third-person interpreting only to solve communication problems.

Other critical issues in the TI literature include the lack of preparation and briefing. For instance, Gracia-Garcia (2002: 14), writing from the US perspective, stated that telephone interpreters “do not know what situation and terminology they are going to deal with,” which indicates that the lack of preparation involves situation and terminology. Various guidelines (NAJIT, 2009; AUSIT, n.d.) have underscored the importance of the advanced booking of interpreters and providing a briefing prior to interpreting sessions to give them adequate time to prepare for assignments. Nonetheless, the studies found that the interpreters remain unaware of the potential content of a call until the disclosure of clients (Kelly, 2008: 36; Fernández Pérez, 2018), and the majority of clients do not brief interpreters on the nature of the call

(Xu et al., 2020; Wang, 2018a). In turn, the unpredictability of the nature and duration of a call is a significant stress factor for interpreters (Cheng, 2015: 14).

Despite its prevalence and challenging aspects, TI is considered a low-status job among other types of interpreting. The low remuneration compared with that provided for on-site interpreting (Lee, 2007; Wang, 2018a), the causal employment (Cheng, 2015), and the employment strategies of global TI companies (Jiménez-Ivars, 2021) can be considered the major reasons for this status. To empirically elucidate the topic, Lee (2007) conducted a survey on 29 telephone interpreters in Australia on their reasons for considering quitting TI. The respondents most frequently cited low pay (44%), inconvenience (25%), ineffectiveness (13%), simple and repetitive work (6%), and irregularity (6%). In addition, Jiménez-Ivars (2021) analyzed the company profiles of global TI companies on job-searching Internet sites and created a corpus based on the comments of telephone interpreters. The comments pointed to unprofessional working practices, low pay, low levels of professionalism, and lack of training and quality assurance practices.

The critical issues that emerged from the extant literature paint a bleak picture of TI, especially for interpreters. Thus, the current study aims to contribute to the literature by presenting the practices and problems of telephone interpreters in Türkiye in the abovementioned issues.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the methodology used in the study. Section 3 highlights the findings. Lastly, Section 4 provides a discussion of the findings in line with those in the literature and imparts suggestions and conclusions based on the results.

2. Methodology

This section provides information on the research method of the present study and presents the research questions, data collection tool, sample and procedure, and data analysis method.

2.1. Research Questions

The study aims to investigate the following questions:

1. What are the client, equipment, and discourse-related challenges for telephone interpreters?
2. What are suggestions of telephone interpreters for improving TI quality?

2.2. Data Collection Tool

The study employed the interview method due to its in-depth nature and flexibility. The interview questions were prepared based on previous studies such as Wang (2017), Cheng (2015), and Lee (2007). In the current study, the interview consisted of three parts. The first focused on demographic information (Q1–Q5) followed by general information on TI in the second part (Q6–Q10) such as the settings, remuneration, and briefing given to interpreters; guidance provided interpreters to clients, and the effect of equipment on the process. The last part concentrated on the interpreting process (Q11–Q19) such as the lack of visual information, explicit coordination initiatives of interpreters, personal pronoun use, challenges in TI, and measures for improving the quality of TI. The Appendix presents the questions.

2.3. Sample and Procedure

The study recruited a total of 12 interpreters using the convenience and snowball sampling methods. Only two criteria were considered, namely, with TI experience and with Turkish as the A language.¹ After obtaining ethical approval from Sakarya University, the interviews were conducted via Google Meet or Skype between August and September 2023. The participants were briefed about the nature of the study prior to the interviews. All participants provided informed consent. The interviews were conducted in Turkish. The emerging audio data spanned 139 min and 11 s. The audio data were transcribed using an AI-powered transcription tool that supports Turkish language as input. The created corpus was then anonymized.

¹ It is the universal working language classification of the AIIC to express the active and passive languages of interpreters. A language is the mother tongue of interpreters, in which they can easily express themselves best. B language is one in which interpreters are fluent but is not the mother tongue. C language denotes the language that interpreters understand with perfect command but cannot interpret into C language. For more information, see <https://aiic.org/site/world/about/profession/abc>.

2.4. Data Analysis Method

The study used thematic analysis on the corpus. Thematic analysis is “a process of segmentation, categorization and relinking of aspects of the data prior to final interpretation” (Gbrich, 2007: 6, cited in Matthews & Ross, 2010: 373). The transcripts were uploaded to Maxqda 2020, which enables rapid text identification and analysis. In the first stage, the study created a framework for the analysis by identifying initial themes in line with the interview questions (ibid: 374). These initial themes were languages, settings, briefings given to interpreters, guidance provided by interpreters to clients, impact of equipment, remuneration, lack of visual information, turn-taking problems, personal pronoun use of interpreters, indirect/direct speech by main speakers, explicit coordination, stressful aspects of TI, challenges in TI, advantages of TI, and measures for improving the quality of TI. The data were then processed in line with the initial themes. After repeatedly reading the transcripts, the researchers determined recurring ideas and concepts and labeled *as categories* (ibid: 377). For instance, for the initial theme “measures for improving the quality of TI,” six participants expressed the concept of “educating clients” using different strategies. Table 1 presents the categorization of themes. In addition, by thoroughly reading the transcripts, the study found *subcategories*, thus, denoting a further subclassification of ideas. For example, under the initial theme “impact of equipment,” the participants stated that they used mobile phones. In addition, two participants mentioned mobile phone apps for TI. Therefore, “apps” were labeled as a “subcategory” under the “mobile phone” category. Table 1 also presents *frequencies* to indicate the number of participants that expressed the ideas covered by a category or subcategory. After data analysis, quotes derived from the interviews were translated into English in a literal way.

3. Findings

This section presents the findings of the thematic analysis on the created corpus, which were categorized under the initial themes, and illustrative quotes are given to elucidate the themes. Table 1 presents the initial themes, categories, and subcategories along with their frequencies in the corpus.

Table 1. Initial Themes and Categories and Their Frequencies

Initial Themes	Categories	Sub-Categories	Frequency
Languages	English		10
	Arabic		3
	Italian		1
	Persian		1
	German		3
Settings	Education		2
	Court		1
	Immigration Office		1
	Commercial		10
	Hospital		5
	Police		5
Clients Briefing Interpreter	briefing given, not enough		4
	briefing not given		1
	briefing given, enough		8
Interpreter Guiding Clients	Guide sometimes		2
	Guide always		3
	No guidance		8
Impact of Equipment	Headset		1
	Speakerphone		5
	Mobile phone		4
		Apps	2
		Internet	2
Remuneration	Remuneration enough		9
	Remuneration not enough		3
Lack of Visual Information			12
Turn-Taking Problems			16
Personal Pronoun Use of Interpreter	Third-person use		7
	First-person use		3
Indirect/Direct Speech By Main Speakers	Indirect speech		10
	Direct speech		6
Explicit Coordination	Additions		1
	Omitting		2
	Explaining cultural aspects		2

Table 1. Continued

	Improving the rhetoric of main speakers		1
	calming clients		1
	Pauses		1
	Interpreting long repeats with short chunks		1
	Demanding repeat		7
	Interruption		10
	Asking questions		2
	Rephrasing		1
Stressful Aspects of Telephone Interpreting	Comparison with F2F		12
			6
Challenges in Telephone Interpreting	clients unaware of interpreting process		1
	background noise		2
	problems between clients		1
	accents		1
	lack of visual cues		6
	overlapping speech		6
	turn-taking problems		5
	telephone line		10
Advantages of Telephone Interpreting	For clients		11
	For interpreters		11
Measures to Improve The Quality of Telephone Interpreting	educating clients		6
		avoiding overlapping speech	1
		planning and booking beforehand	1
		Positioning telephone	1
		briefing given to the interpreter	2
		respecting turn-taking	1
		Having a layout for the speech	1
		Short chunks	1
		Quiet setting	2
	regulating TI remuneration by state		1
	raising awareness/visibility of TI		1
	improving equipment and line quality		6

The findings are presented as the initial themes and quotes from the interviews to elucidate the different aspects of TI, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

3.1. Demographic Profile

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the interviewees.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Interviewees

Participant Id	Gender	Working Languages	Age	Experience in Interpreting (Year)	Experience in TI (Year)	Educational Background
I1	F	English / Arabic / Turkish	23	3	1	Translation and Interpreting (English)
I2	F	English / Turkish	22	2	1	Translation and Interpreting (English)
I3	M	English / Turkish	22	3	1	Translation and Interpreting (English)
I4	F	English / Italian / Turkish	24	3	3	Translation and Interpreting (English)
I5	M	English / Turkish	50	27	16	Mathematics
I6	F	English / Arabic / Turkish	22	4	2	Translation and Interpreting (English)
I7	F	English / Arabic / Turkish	24	4	4	Translation and Interpreting (English)
I8	F	English / Persian	24	5	1	Psychology
I9	F	English / Arabic / German / Turkish	27	5	5	German Language and Literature
I10	F	German / Turkish	34	3	2	Translation and Interpreting (German)
I11	M	English / German / Turkish	24	2	1	High-school graduate
I12	F	English / Turkish	22	5	1	Translation and Interpreting (English)

The interpreters were mainly composed of women (75%) and three men. The mean age of the participants was 26.5 (SD: 8.12) years. Eleven interpreters completed bachelor's degrees while one interpreter was a high school graduate. Among the interpreters with bachelor's degrees, nine completed translation or language-related courses. Regarding employment status, only one (I5) owned a translation agency and worked as an interpreter. The other interpreters were freelance. The B and C languages of interpreters were diverse. All of them cited Turkish as their A language, while 10 and 1 cited English and German, respectively, as their B language. For C language, the study observed diversity among the interpreters: Arabic (four), German (two), Italian (one), and Persian (one). The means of experience in interpreting and in TI were 5.5 years (SD: 6.85) and 3.16 years (SD: 4.26), respectively. The majority (50%) had only one year of experience in TI, which aligns with other studies. In other words, TI is the typical choice of inexperienced interpreters who intend to establish themselves in the market, while experienced interpreters quit TI for better options (Jiménez-Ivars, 2021; Lee, 2007).

3.2. Settings

The interpreters were asked about the content of TI assignments. The origin of the calls was diverse: commercial institutions (10), hospitals (5), police (5), educational settings (2), immigration offices (1), and courts (1):

“Mostly, settings such as police and hospitals, but sometimes there are calls from factories such as any agricultural or hydraulic industry machinery. Companies ask foreign customers various questions, such as what model do you want? How should we send it? It is not always the police or hospital, but it is mostly like this.” (Interpreter_1)

“I usually interpret for a company working in the machinery sector. This is a company that deals with CNC and laser machines. I ensure communication between them and their customer contacts abroad. I usually do telephone interpreting for clients like this.” (Interpreter_2)

3.3. Briefing By Clients

The interpreters were asked whether or not they were briefed before the call and whether or not they found the briefing sufficient. Despite not expressing the number of TI assignments they received, the participants could give an overall situation assessment regarding the briefing. Eight participants stated that clients briefed them and found the briefing sufficient. One interpreter was not briefed. Four participants stated that they were briefed about the content of the call but found it insufficient. Some of the quotes regarding briefing by clients are presented below:

“This kind of information is generally not given. They just call me and say, ‘There is a call. Could you be our interpreter?’ They expect me to interpret right away. It usually happens this way.” (Interpreter_4)

“This information is given for an incredibly short moment. For example, the clients are calling me. They say, ‘We had a customer on the line, sorry that we called right away. We could not agree on something.’ That is how they connect me to the call directly. The clients usually give a very short briefing. In general, it is not sufficient, and as soon as they give me information, they start speaking directly.” (Interpreter_6)

Briefing by clients is important for interpreters to determine the context and select the correct terminology. The lack of briefing contradicts professional guidelines in TI (NAJIT, 2009; AUSIT, n.d.). However, it is a reality shared with interpreters in other countries (Xu et al., 2020; Wang, 2018a).

3.4. Guidance Provided by Interpreters to Clients

The interpreters were asked whether or not they guide the clients by laying the ground rules for the interpreting process at the beginning of the call. Eight interpreters stated that they never guided clients. Two occasionally did, while three interpreters stated that they always established the general rules:

“I do not set rules, because I know that everyone will use their own style when talking. I mean, the customer will not speak in short sentences because I told them to do so. That is why I never brief them. At the moment of this conversation, I spontaneously try to do whatever is necessary.” (Interpreter_1)

“There is usually no direction at the beginning of the conversation. Because these conversations are spontaneous, there is usually little time for such things. As they are not fixed beforehand, the clients do not have time for a briefing by the interpreter. Furthermore, unfortunately, even though we give this kind of briefing, we still have problems with turn-taking.” (Interpreter_2)

“Since people are not well informed about the interpreting process, you have to guide them: After you talk, I will start interpreting. Or talk briefly. So that the other client can understand the conversation. Or I had to make directions such as ‘wait for your turn to speak’.” (Interpreter_7)

Although the participants considered guiding the clients at the beginning of the conversation important, eight stated similar reasons for not guiding the clients: lack of awareness for clients and time constraint for interpreters.

3.5. Impact of Equipment

The interview asked about the devices used by the interpreters and clients and the impact of equipment on the process. The majority of interpreters cited speakerphones as unfavorable due to background noise and echo, while they preferred mobile phones.

“When I talk on speakerphone mode, the sounds outside also greatly affect me. That’s why it’s bad, you know. There can be confusion in speech order.” (Interpreter_12)

“I think I’d rather it wasn’t on speakerphone. Because sometimes I hear my own voice. You know, putting the phone directly on the ear is more comfortable.” (Interpreter_6)

“I have more problems with the speakerphone because of the echo. That is the main problem. Yes, it echoes. This is why cell phones are used more often. I have fewer problems with my mobile phone.” (Interpreter_1)

In addition, interpreters in the study mentioned that they conducted TI via mobile apps, and problems related to Internet connection negatively affected the interpreting process:

“Interruption, disconnection, etc. It happens a lot on the Internet, of course, because these meetings are with people who live abroad.” (Interpreter_10)

“There are problems with the Internet or similar problems while interpreting. And these affect you in every way in terms of communication. It creates a problem for you.” (Interpreter_2)

“We do interpreting via WhatsApp. So it’s not a very professional environment. In those cases, sometimes my headset is not with me, and believe me, the environmental conditions affect the interpreting process so much. That’s why the headset is, of course, much more professional. A wind sound is coming from outside, or the client cannot hear you. When there is no headset or when someone else speaks, the other clients get disturbed, and everything affects the interpreting process. So, of course, the headset is the choice of every interpreter.” (Interpreter_7)

Notably, despite having an Internet-connected mobile phone, clients preferred TI instead of videoconference interpreting. This preference could be due to the aforementioned problems regarding connection quality.

3.6. Remuneration

The interpreters were asked about their opinion regarding the remuneration in TI. Nine interpreters stated that the remuneration was sufficient, while three found it insufficient:

“We allocate less time than on-site interpreting. You know, we travel for on-site interpreting. We wait for a certain time. However, in telephone interpreting, everything happens within a shorter period of time. This is why it is more affordable than on-site interpreting. But, we usually give a quote based on the on-site interpreting prices.” (Interpreter_6)

“If I speak for myself, I get paid less in phone calls. Less than on-site interpreting. Because there is no travel cost, I save time, it is more comfortable. That’s why I’m providing this service for more affordable prices.” (Interpreter_7)

“Its pricing is lower than on-site interpreting. I don’t think it’s enough. But, lots of things are happening right now. As it doesn’t require a certification, anyone can do it, unfortunately. As such, there is inevitably competition and, thus, lower prices. It should be higher than this, but unfortunately, it is low.” (Interpreter_5)

The interpreters in the corpus expressed differing opinions on remuneration, but they typically provide a quote based on on-site interpreting prices and lower the price accordingly. In addition, the study observed the lack of professionalism, as cited under the “Critical Issues in TI” section; the lack of certification and quality assurance measures points to a downward trend for remuneration. In other words, as Interpreter 5 sufficiently explains, anyone can do TI, which inevitably results in competition and, thus, lowers prices.

3.7. Lack of Visual Information

The interpreters were asked about the impact of the lack of visual information in TI on the interpreting process. Their responses are represented by the excerpts:

“It is hard, actually. Because let’s say the patient is sick. And she/he says, ‘Here it hurts.’ How should I know where it hurts? I mean, of course, it’s very difficult. That’s why most hospitals are switching to video interpreting. Certain things are missing in the telephone. That’s why you want an explanation. I mean, ‘Can you explain it a little more as a process?’ When you see the other person, you can understand from the visual cues that this person is lying. You get a feeling. I don’t understand anything on the phone.” (Interpreter_5)

“Yes, it is difficult. It is valid for all interpreting jobs. When we interpret a document, like reports in the hospital, we need to know the data or the results of the blood tests and their measurements. When you cannot see the documents, even if those people tell you the numbers, you cannot hear sometimes, or there is a disconnection in the line. So, of course, visual material always helps.” (Interpreter_4)

“Without visual information, interpreting is hard. Humans always want to see and get to know the other person. We want to look him in the eye. When we communicate, we don’t just communicate with our words. We also use our hands. We use our whole body. Isn’t that right? I’m even talking like this right now. So, of course, the lack of visuals affects people. Or, I don’t know, it causes distraction. But, if a person is physically there, interpreting is much easier. Even the slightest thing can distract you when you do telephone interpreting. But, there is also an advantage: You can participate in conversations more easily. For some people, this means more self-confidence. There are also such advantages.” (Interpreter_7)

The participants expressed disadvantages related to the lack of visual information in TI such as the inability to capture the body language of speakers, inability to conduct sight translation over the telephone, communicative uncertainty, and lack of understanding of deictic references.

3.8. Turn-Taking Problems

Turn-taking has been identified as one of the most problematic aspects of TI since the earliest studies (Oviatt & Cohen, 1992; Wadensjö, 1999). The participants were asked about their experiences in turn-taking in TI with the following narratives:

“Of course, there are problems with turn-taking. It gets mixed up again and again despite the warnings. They behave hastily. I do like this: When I am with the Turkish speaker, I request her/him to allow the other speaker because it gets harder to understand when they both speak. When I have to listen very carefully to understand, it is difficult to control both simultaneously if the Turkish speaker is saying something to my ear. That’s why I usually tell the Turkish speaker ‘I will finish the foreign speaker’s speech and then listen to him/her.’ That’s how we proceed.” (Interpreter_2)

“Honestly, I experienced many turn-taking problems when interpreting on the phone. I solved this in a very simple way by turning on the speaker of the phone while the phone was in my hand. Either I hold the phone quietly to my ear, and the other side usually continues to talk more. I solved it by turning on the speaker because he was unaware that the other party was talking. Although the person next to me could not understand the voice coming from the phone or the language, he/she was aware that someone was talking, and therefore, he/she was not trying to talk to me at that moment.” (Interpreter_3)

“Actually, it is mostly due to the Internet connection, because you know the network problems of some people on the Internet. When the other speaker’s voice comes late, I directly explain it to both sides.” (Interpreter_7)

“Turn-taking problems arise more in three-way telephone interpreting. Then, you need to intervene. There will be overlapping speech more.” (Interpreter_10)

The quotes demonstrate that turn-taking problems may arise from connectivity issues, the lack of client awareness of the interpreting process, and the constellation² of participants. Interpreters in the corpus also cited examples of their coping strategies for turn-taking problems such as explaining the process to the speakers and allowing them to hear each other.

3.9. Personal Pronoun Use of Interpreters

The interpreters were asked about their practices of first/third personal pronoun use in TI. Three interpreters stated that they always use first-person pronouns while interpreting; thus, they conduct direct interpreting. However, seven interpreters used the indirect interpreting style and preserve “I” for self-reference while using “he/she” for the party who is not currently speaking. The following quotes elucidate their reasons for indirect interpreting:

“If I talk to the business partners, I say, ‘The gentleman asked me to say it that way. He explained his ideas in this way.’ I have to use this kind of speech. Because I’m the third person in between. And I find that more accurate.” (Interpreter_12)

“When I use first-person pronoun, the clients get confused. This is why I use ‘she’ or ‘he’ to refer to other speaker.” (Interpreter_4)

“Yes, I mostly use ‘he/she.’ Because, after all, I prefer not to speak directly from that person’s mouth.” (Interpreter_6)

“Do you mean ‘He told me this’ kind of speech? Yes. I do that for telephone interpreting. When I do on-site interpreting, I use the first-person singular.” (Interpreter_8)

“Sometimes, I add things like ‘she/he added this, she/he says that she/he meant that’” (Interpreter_8).

The major reason for the use of the participants of third-person pronouns is to ensure referential clarity and accuracy, which is in line with other studies such as Oviatt and Cohen (1992).

3.10. Indirect/Direct Speech by Main Speakers

Although using first-person pronouns is a professional norm in interpreting, the clients may be a reason for breaching this norm, because they may not be accustomed to working with interpreters and using indirect speech. With awareness that the other speaker would not understand them, clients may resort to indirect speech by making interpreters an emissary for their interlocutor (Rosenberg, 2007), as demonstrated by the following quotes:

² The term pertains to the space distribution patterns of the participants during remotely-interpreted interactions. The main speakers may share the physical space, while the interpreter connects via telephone. Alternatively, the interpreter may share the physical space with one speaker, while the other speaker connects via telephone. In the last constellation, all participants may connect via telephone (Spinolo et al., 2018: 13–14).

“Those who exaggerate that there is an interpreter between the speakers will say, ‘Say that, say this.’ But some speak directly on their own behalf. I have met both of them, but I think speaking on their behalf is right.” (Interpreter_1)

“Turkish speaker usually requires me to ‘tell them to do that.’ She/he does not directly speak to the foreign speaker. But, a foreign speaker directly expresses herself/himself. But, the Turkish speaker usually speaks indirectly, like ‘tell them, say this.’” (Interpreter_2)

“I have heard that speakers use first-person very, very rarely. Speakers usually use expressions such as ‘tell them to do this’ or ‘say this.’” (Interpreter_3)

“There is a company for which I regularly interpret. For instance, they are very used to working with interpreters. They don’t use ‘tell them’ kind of expressions. They talk in the first person singular, but everyone else, especially my Turkish customers, usually use ‘tell them to do’ and ‘say this.’ I don’t want this. ‘Tell him this in a suitable way.’ They express themselves indirectly.” (Interpreter_4)

“I mean, people who have become professionals in this business and have worked a lot with interpreters. Of course, they speak directly to their interlocutor. But, some too many people have not had interpreting done. ‘Ms. Interpreter, could you say this? Could you say that?’ They use expressions like these.” (Interpreter_7)

The participants expressed that clients could use direct and indirect speech. Ten participants stated that clients, especially Turkish speakers, opted for indirect speech. Although the non-Turkish clients appeared more aware of direct speech in interpreting, the Turkish speakers required ground rules, which were explained by the interpreters. However, as the quotes from the theme “guidance provided by interpreters for clients” clearly revealed, clients speak directly without allowing interpreters to explain the rules.

3.11. Explicit Coordination Initiatives

The interpreters were asked about their initiatives intended to manage and facilitate triadic communication. Figure 1 displays the most frequently cited initiatives.

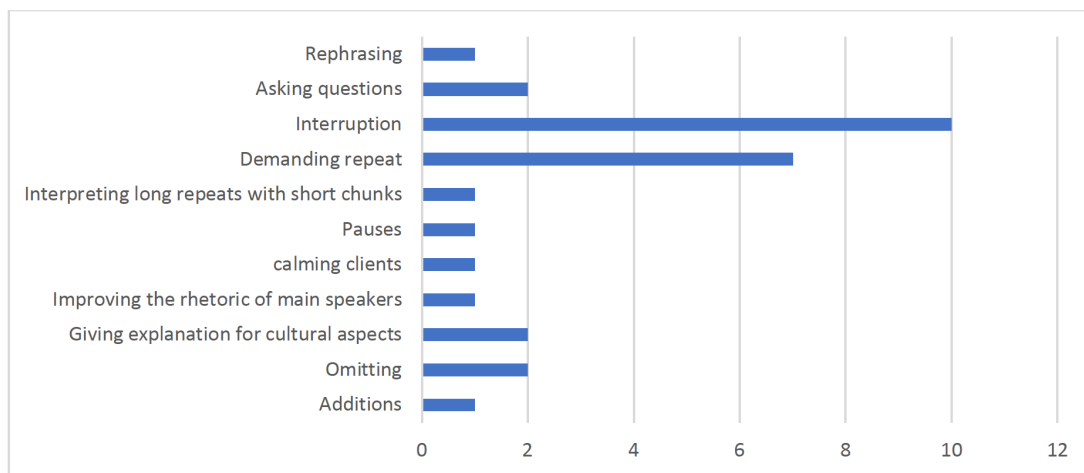


Figure 1. Explicit Coordination Initiatives of Interpreters

Figure 1 depicts that the most frequently used initiatives were interrupting speakers (n = 10), demanding repetition (n = 7), asking questions (n = 2), and omitting certain contents from the source speech (n = 2). The study presents a few of the quotes that shed light on the explicit coordination initiatives of interpreters.

Quotes on interruption:

“Sometimes, I just intervene. Sometimes, when they speak too long, I say I need you to take a break. I say, ‘Let’s continue’ after I interpret that part. Except when they speak too long, I don’t intervene. You know, I actually adapt to how they talk.” (Interpreter_10)

“Because as I said, there is a connection problem or a sizzling problem caused by the phone, so of course, in an hour of conversation, this can happen once or twice. It’s not right to stop too often, but sometimes I do it once or twice, because I can’t understand the speaker. Especially about terms, you know, if I hear the terminology for the first time, there is a problem with those kinds of issues. Then, I ask him to stop once or twice and repeat.” (Interpreter_2)

Quotes on asking questions:

“In some parts, there will be confusion. I interpret at a certain point. After that, I’m going back. ‘What do you mean? Or should I translate this in this way? Or would you say it again?’ I ask these questions to clarify. After that, I transfer the information to the other speaker.” (Interpreter_9)

“If the speaker explained a subject in a long, detailed and complex way, I could not interpret it before I totally understood that point. I ask certain questions, and then I interpret that point. I fully understand it and then move on to the interpreting process. I ask questions and establish a dialogue with one of the parties.” (Interpreter_6)

Quotes on calming clients:

“However, in these types of meetings, which I call attorney interviews, sometimes the parties can be very angry. For instance, one of the parties can be very angry as their child is detained, or the child may experience a problem. Or if the lawyer did not get paid, so these kinds of highly-charged interviews. In these cases, I say, ‘Please calm down. I need to understand you so that I can interpret better. So you and the other person can understand each other.’” (Interpreter_7)

Quotes on explaining cultural aspects:

“Now, there is a German patient or customer. I ask detailed questions, and I understand what she/he means because I know their culture. So there, for example, she/he asks questions, but the Turkish side, who demands the interpreting in the first place, cannot understand what the German person means. After that, I explain it by adding my own interpretation a little more. Such things may be needed. Because of a cultural difference, the speakers may not understand each other. And when there’s a phone on top of it, it gets even worse. This situation can become difficult.” (Interpreter_10)

The quotes demonstrate that the interpreters manage triadic communication in various ways such as interrupting speakers, demanding a repetition, explaining cultural aspects, and calming clients. The interpreters assume the role of an active agent in parallel with various studies (Oviatt & Cohen, 1992; Lee, 2007).

3.12. Stressful Aspects of TI

The interpreters were asked about the stressful aspects they experience in TI. They were asked to compare telephone and on-site interpreting to answer this question. A number of quotes are presented below:

“I think it’s definitely a stressful job. I don’t know if it is because of the interpreting or the telephone. However, I also experience stress during on-site jobs. But, for telephone interpreting, something is different. Because when you do telephone interpreting, there is a communication wall there, which is very difficult to overcome. Especially during the calls abroad, there will definitely be a problem. Of course, on-site interpreting is different. You can see the gestures and body language of the person before you. Or you can hear the speaker’s voice better. In other words, on-site interpreting provides better advantages. There are things that can contribute to your interpreting during on-site jobs. But none of these exist in telephone interpreting. Therefore, I can say that telephone interpreting is a more stressful job than on-site interpreting. There are disadvantages to telephone interpreting.” (Interpreter_2)

“Interpreting is already a difficult and stressful job. This is for sure; everyone accepts it. Besides, there are differences between telephone interpreting and on-site interpreting. As I said at the beginning of the interview, there are visual cues, such as body language. When we, as interpreters, cannot understand these cues, we have various difficulties processing them in our minds. There are also technical difficulties that can interfere with the interpretation. That is why telephone interpreting is harder than on-site interpreting.” (Interpreter_3)

Comparing between on-site and telephone interpreting, six highlighted the lack of visual information, inability to intervene with clients, and technical problems as the main disadvantages of TI, which render TI more stressful and harder than on-site interpreting.

3.13. Challenges in TI

The interpreters were asked their opinions about the most important challenges in TI. Figure 2 illustrates the categorization of their responses.

The most frequently cited challenges were related to telephone lines (10 participants), lack of visual cues (6), overlapping speech (6), and turn-taking problems (5), as demonstrated by the following quotes.

Quotes on telephone lines:

“The problem with the telephone line is that there are sometimes disconnections, and I cannot understand the speaker. I don’t know if it relates to the phone or the speaker mode. But sometimes, I cannot understand what the person on the line is saying. Or if there is a background noise. It is very bad.” (Interpreter_10)

“Definitely, the connection, that is, the phone connection, is constantly weakening. Or disconnects in some way. The sound is not stable. I think that’s the most challenging part. Because the most important thing in interpreting is listening and understanding the speaker in a very careful way. But sometimes, this is not possible in interpreting on the phone. Like I said, the sound comes and goes. The line disconnects. I think that’s the most challenging part.” (Interpreter_2)

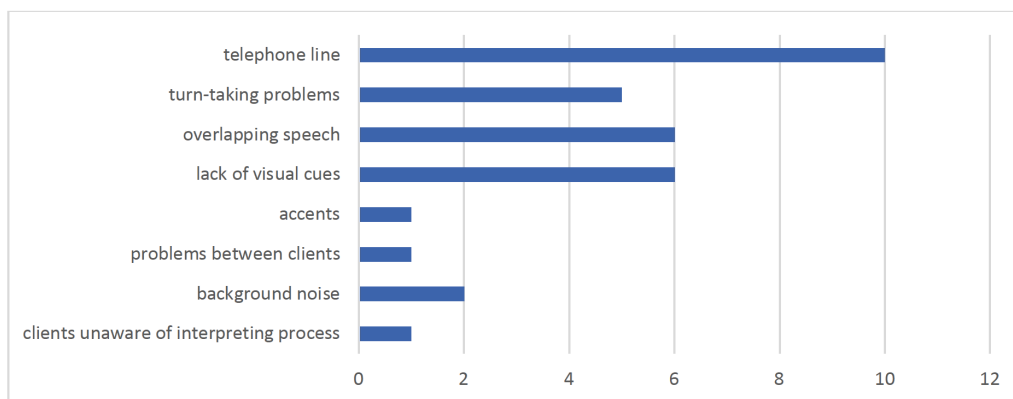


Figure 2. Challenges in Telephone Interpreting

Quotes on turn-taking problems and overlapping speech:

“Turn-taking can be problematic. The speaker wants to speak at once. But at the same time, the Turkish speaker with me also wants to speak. This time, things get mixed up. It has difficulties in this sense.” (Interpreter_2)

“It is very difficult for me that the person on the other side of the line doesn’t understand that this is not a two-party interaction; it is an interaction that concerns three people. Managing the answer–question part. Deciding whose turn it is. Sometimes, two people say something at the same time. Whichever one I want to translate first, the meaning will change because the other person will say something in response to what I interpret. So it’s hard to manage turn-taking.” (Interpreter_4)

Quotes on visual cues:

“As I said at the beginning of the interview, there are visual cues, such as body language. When we, as interpreters, cannot understand these cues, we have various difficulties processing them in our minds.” (Interpreter_3)

“There are no visual cues. Maybe the guy on the other side is joking? I don’t even understand that sometimes.” (Interpreter_3)

Quotes on background noise:

“Sometimes, I cannot understand what the person on the line is saying. Or if there is a background noise. It is very bad. A noise in the background.” (Interpreter_10)

“The wind sound comes from the phone. The child’s voice intervenes.” (interpreter_7)

Quote on problems between clients:

“It usually happens when one of the speakers gets bored at some point. The speakers both want to draw the speech to their desired point. In addition, the rates of disagreement are higher on the telephone. When both of them want to draw the conversation to the point they desire, you are left in between.” (Interpreter_6)

Quote on accents:

“I really do not understand if a person is talking with an accent or a vernacular, and if there is also a disconnection.” (Interpreter_3)

These quotes shed light on the challenges of TI: both client and equipment-related problems make TI challenging and stressful for interpreters. In the lack of visual information, the turn-taking and overlapping speech become problematic for interpreters. In addition, the connectivity issues and the background noise exacerbate the problems in the interpreting process.

3.14. Advantages of TI

The literature frequently cites the advantages of TI (Lee, 2007; Cheng, 2015; inter alia). The current study also asked the interpreters about the advantages of TI for interpreters and clients. Their answers are presented below.

Interpreters:

“When I translate any document, my client is calling, I do my interpreting. It is a good job. I take my money. And it ends. It is as simple as that.” (Interpreter_7)

“Like I said before, for me, it is the invisible nature of telephone interpreting, and to feel more comfortable in this way.” (Interpreter_1)

“Not having to travel is also a convenience for interpreters.” (Interpreter_3)

“They can reach me when they want to. I can work whenever I want, right? I can get jobs from different places. Sometimes, the job is from abroad. It can also be from different places in Turkey. It is fast, and there is no cost of transportation. After that, the attire becomes insignificant. Sometimes, it is different in the hospital. You may need to dress differently in a notary setting. In serious jobs, you need different attire. But in remote interpreting, the dress becomes insignificant.” (interpreter_4)

“Interpreters can also make use of their free time. People are not always able to get out. I see that interpreter colleagues who are pregnant or new moms prefer remote interpreting. Or, for example, an academician. She/he has another full-time job and cannot attend on-site jobs. Because she/he has to give classes. Or master students. Or PhD students. So, an interpreter may have another job. But in the evening, she/he can accept three or four hours of interpreting jobs. Some kind of stand-by position. On-site jobs aren't usually in the evenings. They happen during the day. Who will call the conferences in the evening? There are various examples: very successful interpreters, but they have some other responsibilities. They are very successful but need additional income. This income is very important for interpreters who also continue their education life. I have a friend whose mom is confined to bed. She needs to take care of her mother, so she needs to work from home. She has been doing telephone interpreting for years because she can't leave her house. Her mother has a special situation.” (Interpreter_5)

The participants cited flexible working hours, working from home, invisibility, and no commute as the most important advantages of TI.

For clients:

“I would say it is more affordable for customers.” (interpreter_1)

“You can answer instant questions immediately on the phone, especially in the health sector. For instance, a patient has troubles and cannot attend the appointment. These kinds of last-minute troubles are solved via telephone interpreting. People don't have to make an appointment or go somewhere to solve this problem. The biggest advantage is that telephone interpreting is faster. And it definitely saves money as there is no travel.” (Interpreter_10)

“Well, it's fast. Definitely, interpreting by phone is a fast tool in this sense. For both sides, you don't have to travel. You can communicate and get their work done easily and continue their lives. The best part is saving time and space, of course. For example, I met someone online who lives in Kuwait yesterday. We were in İstanbul, very comfortable. I was at home; my client was in my office. None of us had to go anywhere. We did all our trading without traveling. We finished our interpreting. And then we put down the phone. And all this happened in just an hour. If we wanted to meet and do interpreting in face-to-face mode, it would cost a lot for both sides and the interpreter, also. And we would need to spend lots of time.” (Interpreter_7)

According to the interpreters, the most important advantages for clients are instant access to interpreters and affordable prices for TI.

3.15. Measures for Improving the Quality of TI

The study posed a question on how the quality of telephone interpreting in Türkiye can be improved.

The most frequently proposed measures were educating clients (6 participants) and improving equipment and line quality (6). For client education, clients that brief interpreters and ensure quiet settings were suggested twice by interpreters, while clients using short chunks, preparing a speech layout, respecting turn-taking, correctly positioning the telephone, avoiding overlapping speech, and prior planning and booking were proposed once. The following narratives illustrate these and other measures.

Quotes on educating clients:

“Clients communicate with their clients very easily. But, as they don't demand on-site interpreting, they don't want to pay for telephone interpreting. They say: ‘So sorry to call you but we needed your help.’ Then they make you busy for one hour and don't want to pay for it. In fact, people need to be more conscious about this. In the end, they received a service. They need to be conscious and think accordingly. This kind of interpreting is needed very much but is not valued as much as it is needed.” (Interpreter_6)

“People need to be a little more aware of interpreting problems on the telephone. How should they behave? How can they be more efficient during the interpreting? How can they get efficiency? These kinds of things need to be taught to the clients. If it is a company, we may send a writing beforehand, or like I do, we may warn them in advance. It is necessary to raise awareness in that way. Other than that, it is not a very visible job. So, maybe increasing its visibility is the solution. I mean, we may need to educate people about telephone interpreting. There exists something like this. And its content and working is like this. Even the students may not know this for the most part. Maybe this

kind of awareness raising will be better.” (Interpreter_4)

“Having prior knowledge facilitates the interpreting process, both on-site and telephone interpreting. However, since the interpreter is not present with the other speakers, the lack of prior knowledge worsens the interpreter on the telephone. That is why it is so important to provide preliminary information.” (Interpreter_3)

Quotes on improving equipment:

“I think that only the Internet connection should be good. I say this because I always do telephone interpreting via the Internet. But, the interpreter should be given the necessary equipment if it is a meeting or a more important interview. The necessary types of equipment may be few. If the clients want a better conversation, they need to provide a better Internet connection, and they need to provide a headset.” (Interpreter_10)

“There are very small, portable, but good-quality microphones. In the past, the microphones were large; you needed to put them on the table, but now, there are very small collar microphones. There are standards in the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany regarding equipment usage in interpreting. They have certified features for community interpreting, hospital environments, etc. These kinds of microphones cancel background noise. You can raise the voices of speakers. Raising the voice is very important in the hospital. Because the patient has some problems and she/he cannot speak properly. If you get close to the normal phone, you can't hear her/his voice. You need these kinds of microphones to amplify the voice.” (Interpreter_5)

“The first thing that came to my mind was voice. It was not good in my experience. If possible, keeping the sound quality to a certain standard will make the interpreter's job easier and, therefore, greatly improve the quality of the interpretation.” (Interpreter_3).

The proposed measures focus on client education and improving equipment quality. Although technological development is rapid, telephone and Internet connections continue to be problematic. In addition, client-related problems are seemingly prevalent in Türkiye due to the lack of protocols regarding TI. A national protocol, such as those proposed by NAJIT (2009) for the United States in terms of TI in legal settings and by AUSIT (n.d.) for Australia, could lay the ground rules for TI to render the process easy for interpreters.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study focused on the experiences and problems encountered by 12 telephone interpreters in Türkiye. Despite the limited number of participants, the results corroborate those of previous studies and add new perspectives to the literature.

The diverse settings quoted by the interpreters align with those of many studies. In addition to its wide use in community interpreting settings (Wang, 2017), such as hospitals, police stations, and educational and immigration settings, TI is also commonly used in commercial settings for fast access to interpreters. However, the diversity of settings and lack of briefing by clients may create challenges for telephone interpreters (Kelly, 2008; 36).

Five interviewees highlighted the lack of briefing by clients, who found the briefing given by the clients insufficient. The lack of briefing and preparation are two factors that emerged from the literature review (Kelly, 2008: 36; Xu et al., 2020; Wang, 2018a). However, the interpreters in the corpus did not mention the lack of briefing or preparation time as challenges.

Clients fail to brief the participants, while the participants fail to provide guidance, which result in a complex interpreting process. The interpreters stated that the reasons for not guiding clients at the beginning of the assignment are the unwillingness of clients to follow rules or the lack of time. These findings are in line with those of previous studies (Wang, 2017; Cheng, 2015); in other words, clients are unaware of the challenges related to the interpreting process or view interpreters as machines.

The interpreters were also asked about the effect of the equipment used by interpreters and clients. Speakerphones were deemed unsuitable due to audio problems; instead, they preferred mobile phones. The telephone interpreters do not follow landlines norm in the TI literature (Kelly, 2008: 97; Ozolins, 2011) by global TI companies, because they directly work with clients instead of intermediary companies. Cheng (2015) obtained a similar finding among telephone interpreters in New Zealand (46). Another important finding was the use of VOIP technology; despite using an Internet-connected mobile phone, clients preferred TI over videoconference interpreting. Although an expected change in TI literature occurred toward videoconference interpreting (Kelly, 2008: 32), notably, a preference is observed toward TI despite current developments in the Internet connection capability of mobile phones.

The remuneration and resultant lack of motivation were among the most critical issues in TI. Survey-based studies in various countries, such as Australia (Wang, 2018a; 2018b), New Zealand (Cheng, 2015) and the United States (Gracia-Garcia, 2002; Mikkelsen, 2003; Jiménez-Ivars, 2021), considered remuneration as a demotivation factor and one of the leading reasons for why interpreters quit TI. Nine interpreters in the current study cited that remuneration was

sufficient and mentioned lower quotes than those for on-site interpreting. In addition, one of the interpreters highlighted the lack of certification and, thus, higher competition in the TI market. This finding aligns with those of many previous studies conducted in the abovementioned countries and indicates the need for national protocols for TI.

The current participants were asked about the problems related to the interpreting process, which is in agreement with the previous literature. The most critical issue in TI is the lack of visual information and its effect on the interpreting process. The participants also highlighted the numerous disadvantages of the lack of visual information in TI such as missing body language, communicative uncertainty, and lack of understanding of deictic references. These findings are in line with discourse- (Wadensjö, 1999; Wang & Fang, 2019) and survey-based studies (Cheng, 2015; Wang, 2018b). Thus, turn-taking problems are more frequent in TI than on-site interpreting due to the lack of visual information (Oviatt & Cohen, 1992; Fernández Pérez, 2017). The telephone interpreters also frequently mentioned turn-taking problems. To address these concerns, the interpreters developed coping strategies such as intervening when necessary and allowing speakers to hear each other.

Another related discourse-level problem is the personal pronoun use of interpreters to solve referential problems due to the lack of visual information. They were aware of the first-person interpreting norm; however, seven interpreters used “she/he” to refer to the party not speaking. Early discourse-based studies (Oviatt & Cohen, 1992; Wadensjö, 1999; Lee, 2007; *inter alia*) frequently mentioned this deviation from the norm. Interpreters using third-person pronouns frequently indicated confusion between clients as a reason for deviating from the norm. Another related aspect is the indirect/direct speech by clients. The interpreters stated that the Turkish speakers preferred indirect speech and considers interpreters as an “emissary” between clients and foreign interlocutors (Rosenberg, 2007). This problem may be solved if the clients will allow the interpreters to brief and guide them at the beginning of the conversation (NAJIT, 2009; AUSIT, n.d.); thus, client education gains importance in this manner.

Explicit coordination initiatives in TI are well-documented in the extant literature (Wadensjö, 1999; Wang, 2018b; Lee, 2007). The current results also corroborate those of previous studies. The most frequently used initiatives by the interpreters were interrupting speakers (10 participants), demanding a repetition (7), asking questions (2) and omitting certain contents from the source speech (2). In addition, rephrasing, interpreting lengthy utterances using brief summaries, strategically using pauses, calming clients, improving the rhetoric of main speakers, and additions were examples of explicit coordination initiatives.

The interpreters were also asked about the stressful aspects of TI compared with on-site interpreting. Six interpreters listed lack of visual information, inability to intervene with clients, and technical problems as the main disadvantages. These results are in line with those of other survey-based studies, such as Lee (2007), Wang (2018a; 2018b), and Cheng (2015). Wang (2018a) found that technical problems, poor sound quality, background noise, overlapping speech, rapid speech, referential confusion, content of calls, and difficulty in managing triadic communication were the major challenges for telephone interpreters in Australia. Similarly, in the current study, the telephone interpreters were asked about the challenges of TI. In hindsight, the question on the stressful aspects of TI compared with on-site interpreting and challenges related to TI could be merged into one question. However, the different responses given to challenges related to TI and the stressful aspects of TI compared with on-site interpreting rendered the second question as important as the first one. The most important challenges are telephone lines (10 participants), lack of visual cues (6), overlapping speech (6), and turn-taking problems (5). In addition, unknown accents, problems between clients, and the lack of awareness of clients about the interpreting process were quoted once as challenging aspects of TI. Background knowledge was quoted twice. These findings are in line with those of by Cheng (2015), Wang (2018a), and De Boe (2020), who cited technical problems (e.g., poor sound quality, background noise, and disconnection).

The advantages of TI are varied and well-documented in the literature (Kelly & Pöchhacker, 2015: 413; Gracia-Garcia, 2002; Rosenberg, 2007; Wang, 2018a; Lee, 2007). The responses of the interpreters in the current study align with those of these studies. According to the current participants, rapid access, no travel, and affordable prices were the major advantages of clients of interpreting services. The most important advantages for the interpreters are flexible working hours, working from home, invisibility, and the lack of need to commute.

The interpreters were also asked about their opinions on improving the quality of TI in Türkiye. The most frequently proposed measures were educating clients (6 participants) and improving equipment and line quality (6). In terms of client education, clients that brief interpreters and ensure quiet settings were proposed twice. Clients using short chunks, preparing a speech layout, respecting turn-taking, correctly positioning the telephone, avoiding overlapping speech, and prior planning and booking were proposed once. In addition, increasing awareness or the visibility of TI and regulating TI remuneration by state were also proposed as measures. The interpreters also frequently proposed client education and better connection quality as measures for improving the quality of TI (Wang, 2018a; Cheng, 2015). However,

despite the post-pandemic awareness regarding remote interpreting methods and their rapid adaptation (Pielmeier, 2020: 31–39; Hickey, 2021), clients continue to need specific guidelines on working with telephone interpreters.

Although various studies have been undertaken in multicultural countries, such as Australia (Wang, 2018a; 2018b), New Zealand (Cheng, 2015), the United States (Gracia-Garcia, 2002), and Belgium (De Boe, 2020), the current study contributes to the literature by presenting the experiences of telephone interpreters in Türkiye in which TI service as a public service dates back to 2011 for tourists and the increasing number of Syrian refugees (Dayıoğlu, 2015: 79–85). However, many private language service providers have also offered TI mainly to commercial institutions. Thus, the current study infers that commercial clients and public institutions will continue to require telephone and videoconference interpreting. Commercial institutions need TI to communicate with speakers worldwide for commercial interests, while public institutions use TI to serve and communicate with minorities in Türkiye such as refugees from diverse origin countries.

While many of the findings under these themes corroborate those of previous studies, notably, the differences between Turkish and foreign clients in terms of indirect/direct speech, equipment, personal pronoun use of interpreters, turn-taking problems, and the measures proposed by interpreters to improve the quality of TI themes. The Turkish clients appear unaware of the interpreting process via telephone and, thus, use indirect speech. In addition, they become confused when interpreters use first-person pronouns. Thus, client education that focuses on effectively working with telephone interpreters would be an important factor in facilitating the TI process and eliminating various challenges faced by telephone interpreters.

The limitations of the current study should be acknowledged. First, the findings may not be generalizable due to the small number of participants. Thus, future studies may consider a survey design that can reach more telephone interpreters. In addition, experience is an important aspect in the TI literature, which indicates that more experienced telephone interpreters use different strategies (Wang, 2018a; Iglesias Fernández & Ouellet, 2018). However, the study was unable to focus on the effect of experience in coping strategies due to the limited sample size; thus, future survey-based studies may investigate the differences between experienced and inexperienced telephone interpreters. In addition, further studies are required to compare discourse-based problems related to authentic interpreter-mediated telephone conversations to understand the specific challenges of TI.

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5. Appendix – Interview Questions

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Your age?
2. Where did you graduate from?
3. How long have you been interpreting?
4. How long have you been doing telephone interpreting?
5. What are your working languages?

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON TELEPHONE INTERPRETING

1. What is the content of telephone interpreting assignments in general?
2. Are you given briefing regarding the nature of the assignment? If so, what is the nature of the briefing? Is it enough for you?
3. Do you direct speakers with statements such as "speak briefly, obey the turn-taking" at the beginning of the interpreting session?
4. Does the type of phone used affect you? Like a cell phone or a speaker phone? Which one do you have more problems with?
5. Is the pricing for telephone interpreting the same as on-site interpreting? Do you find remuneration sufficient?

INTERPRETING PROCESS IN TELEPHONE INTERPRETING

1. Do you find it difficult to interpret without visual information? What kind of challenges are there in telephone interpreting?
2. Is turn-taking problematic in telephone interpreting? How do you solve it?
3. When you refer to the non-speaking person at that moment, do you use the first or third-person singular?
4. Do the speakers address each other directly or talk to you with expressions such as "say this, tell them to do that"?
5. Do you coordinate and facilitate the conversation?
6. Is it a stressful job? What are the differences compared to on-site interpreting?
7. What do you think is the most challenging part of telephone interpreting?
8. What are the advantages of telephone interpreting? For interpreters? For clients?
9. What are your opinions on increasing the quality of telephone interpreting in Türkiye?