Video Conference Interpreting Research in China

With the world’s globalized process, interpreting has played an increasingly important role in assisting business negotiations, exhibitions, trade fairs, factory tours, training sessions, etc. It is within this social context that language service providers in China strive to become more efficient and sustainable by eliminating delays in bilingual business communications, reducing traveling time and cost, overcoming local shortage of qualified interpreters, etc.

As a Remote Interpreting (RI) mode, videoconference interpreting (VCI) means that an interpreter is involved in a communicative situation in which the primary participants are at two or more different locations that are linked via videoconference. Videoconference technology is used in connection with both spoken-language and sign-language interpreting and across different fields of interpreting including business, conference and public service or community interpreting.

Video conferencing has been used since the early nineties (see Azarmina, 2005; Böcker & Anderson, 1993; Braun, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2011; Connell, 2006; Fowler, 2007; Jones & Gill & Harrison, 2003; Moser-Mercer, 2005; Mouzourakis, 1996, 2006; Wadensjö, 1999), but research has shown that it is challenging for all participants: interpreters can feel alienated, their interpreting performance suffers and empathy with the client is harder to achieve (Braun, 2006, 2007, 2011; Moser-Mercer, 2005; Mouzourakis, 2006). The viability of VCI and RI has been the subject of much debate. While some see these forms of interpreting as ways of speeding up communication processes and providing timely access to qualified interpreters, others are concerned that they will have adverse effects on the interpreters' working conditions and the quality of interpreting. Indeed, very little is currently known about the viability and quality of VCI and RI. Moreover, Chinese voice is rarely heard RI research (Xiao& Yu 2009; Yao, 2011; Zhan, 2012) and all of them have been focusing on Telephone Interpreting. It is therefore my research aim to propose the use of VCI technologies as a potential solution of having cost-efficient and timely-access to qualified interpreters, as well as in the teaching of business interpreting in China.

Such new and emerging forms of bilingual or multilingual communication in which interpreting takes place under the conditions of technological mediation may only represent a relatively small share of the interpreting market but they are perceived as difficult because of the interpreter's (partial) separation from the primary participants and because of a current lack of guidance and training. Theoretically, my study will help to gain a better understanding of the potential difficulties and will therefore help to develop viable solutions for VCI. Practically, the introduction of VCI mode in
training interpreters in mainland China can help to enrich the current business interpreting training programs and changing the landscape of traditional interpreting.

Key words: Video Conference Interpreting (VCI), Remote Interpreting (RI), Interpreter Training

References (selected)


