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Should Interpreters Be Trained and Tested in Telephone and Video-Link Interpreting? Responses from Practitioners and Examiners

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Abstract

This article focuses on the use of telephone and video-link technology in interpreting, presenting data from current research as well as from surveys conducted with practicing interpreters and examiners. The surveys asked interpreters to report on their own experiences using such technologies and asked examiners for their impressions of the technologies' suitability as components of training and testing for certification. Technological advances in the means of audio and audiovisual communication are now being trialled in interpreted interactions, but most research reveals that an increased use of technology accompanies rather than forms a part of interlingual transfer. Responses from two groups of interpreters—practitioners and examiners—show widespread support for telephone and video-link interpreting to form components of training and certification testing, as these two communication channels become more popular with mediators (interpreting agencies) and end-users of interpreting services. The author synthesizes and presents these responses and recommends guidelines for training and testing.

Key Words: telephone interpreting, video-link interpreting, training, testing

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Should Interpreters Be Trained and Tested in Telephone and Video-Link Interpreting? Responses From Practitioners and Examiners

1. Introduction

In this article, I examine telephone and video-link interpreting in the context of contemporary practice, training, and testing from two perspectives. First, I give an overview of how contemporary technological innovations are now used in existing interpreting situations. These innovations have given rise to new means of audio and audiovisual communication between interlocutors and have led to the development of remote interpreting, namely telephone and video-link interpreting. Further, I share results of two surveys given in Australia, one to interpreter practitioners and the other to interpreter examiners who assess test candidates according to the standards of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), which form the benchmark for entry into the interpreting profession in Australia. The surveys were designed to elicit responses from practitioners in regard to current practice and the applicability of remote interpreting as a component of training and testing, and from interpreter examiners on existing testing protocols and experiences as practicing interpreters; examiners additionally provided responses on their attitudes toward the teaching and testing of remote interpreting as a component of certification. I synthesize the evidence from research studies with these survey responses to support findings that the author presents as points of consideration for trainers and testers in interpreter certification programs.

2. Role and Use of Technology in the Practice of Interpreting

Although some occupations can point to a particular innovation that led to their creation (e.g., the invention of the telephone and the creation of a job called *telephone operator*), interpreting is among those occupations that have evolved together with successive innovations over time. Evolution that has occurred with technological advances has usually been motivated by a desire for enhancement of productivity and a widening of service capability, with or without commensurate improvements in job satisfaction.

Recent decades have seen the emergence of computer-assisted translation. Contemporary technology now offers many possibilities for the ready interlingual transfer of items and texts. Laptops, notebooks, smartphones and handheld personal digital assistants (PDAs), together with voice recognition technology, now offer “instantly” translated text, sometimes even in spoken form. However, an equivalent of the notion of computer-assisted translation does not really exist for interpreting, at least not for the time being. As Donovan (2006), Veisbergs (2007), and Winteringham (2010) conclude, the immediate nature of interpreting makes recourse to textual sources impractical, if not impossible.

Reference to the use of technology in the practice of interpreting is relevant to a discussion on testing, because test design should conform to the requirement of *authenticity*, that is, the test design and content should reflect conditions and processes that interpreters encounter in their professional lives (cf. Clifford, 2005). The technology I discuss here is that used by professionals in the context of interpreting, not technological innovations that aid

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interpreters in their preparation for assignments and in general professional development (e.g., Internet searches to research content matter or already translated material, referral to databases or corpora for terminology, others' visual representation of signed interpreting, voice-recording devices for self-appraisal of verbal delivery, etc.). I provide an overview of current developments and practices in technology used in interpreting and gauge practitioners' and examiners' support for the adoption of telephone and video-link interpreting as skills that should be practiced in training programs and included as elements of testing regimes that aim to reflect current practice.

2.1. Telephone Interpreting

Telephone interpreting, used for the first time in Australia in 1973 (Kelly, 2008), now occupies a standard place in the provision of interpreting services not only in Australia, but also in most other Anglophone countries and in Western Europe and, increasingly, in other areas of the world. The market of large telephone interpreting companies such as Language Line is now global; this company now promotes its services to customers worldwide. Most telephone interpreting providers are private, although the world's second-largest, Australia's TIS, is still publicly funded.

Telephone interpreting has been widely used in medical/health care situations since the 1980s (Hornberger, 1998; Kuo & Fagan, 1999; Lee, Batal, Maselli, & Kutner, 2002; Leman, 1997). In a study of his own and others' data, Rosenberg (2007) found that two thirds of the telephone interpreting assignments he investigated were health care related and one third was commercial. Cheshier, Slatyer, Doubine, Jaric, & Lazzari (2003) reported that among community interpreters in several countries, the proportion of telephone interpreting is comparable to that of face-to-face interpreting. Kelly's (2008) comprehensive description of logistic, ethical, and personal management issues that pertain to telephone interpreting relate not only to all community interpreting settings but also to a variety of other settings, such as business and tourism. Kelly's book has a strong didactic focus and seeks to educate trainees new to telephone interpreting on issues that will increasingly confront them as telephone interpreting becomes more commonplace and expands to additional fields.

Aside from investigating and recommending protocols, few studies have examined telephone interpreters' satisfaction with telephone interpreting. Lee (2007) reported on mixed and ambivalent attitudes held by interpreters who chiefly provide telephone interpreting services. Half of Lee's participants held a low opinion of the profession and high levels of dissatisfaction with remuneration, but responded neither positively nor negatively to the medium of a telephone as the means of communication, indicating that extraneous features, rather than the technology itself, were responsible for negative reactions. Some reported feeling that "faceless" communication is even advantageous and can aid performance by not containing visual distractions (Lee, 2007). Ko (2006) went further in questioning whether interpreters' negative reactions toward telephone interpreting represented a response to their lack of familiarity with it as new users. Ko argued that the problems of fatigue, stress, and reduced concentration can be overcome with superior equipment and that, over time, long-standing telephone interpreters do frequently report reasonably high levels of job satisfaction.

Ozolins (2011) reported on the world providers of telephone interpreting services (many of whom offer testing), such as U.S.-based Language Line and Cyacom and Netherlands-based Manpower Business Solutions The Netherlands, whose annual turnover is in the hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars. Ozolins stated that ethical concerns about confidentiality and the quality and reliability of telephone communications have meant that most interpreting occurs using fixed-line connections rather than via mobile connection. Some study results point to significant differences between the way speech acts are delivered on the basis of differences between telephone-facilitated communication and face-to-face communication (e.g., Oviatt & Cohen, 1992; Wadensjö, 1999). Rosenberg (2007) argued that such differences are relatively minor compared to the discontinuity that can occur when a telephone is passed between interlocutors who cannot hear the interpreter interpreting into both languages. He and Kelly (2008) suggested that the nature of telephone interpreting requires the development of specific protocols on training and performance. This implies that testing of interpreting should include knowledge of remote communication protocols and a demonstration of telephone interpreting performance.

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2.2. Video-Link Interpreting

A number of studies have examined the use of video-link interpreting. These studies have usually adopted one of two different perspectives: (a) that of users of new technology and the features that new technology can offer in interlingual exchanges, or (b) that of interpreters who use such technology and their reception and experiences of using it. Some studies from either perspective have provided information on others' (i.e., non-interpreters') experience of using video-link and remote interpreting technology; this will be discussed where relevant.

Although many studies use the terms *video-link* and *remote* interchangeably, Braun and Taylor (2011) distinguished between the two, defining video-link or "videoconference interpreting (VCI)" as interpreting that takes place for participants at two different locations, such as a court and a prison. Braun et al. (2011) defined remote interpreting as interpreting in which speakers of different languages are located in the same place and are connected via video to the interpreter located elsewhere. Other studies do not make this distinction. In the current study, *video link* is a hypernym that refers to any use of a video link as the means for interpreting to occur; *remote* is a hypernym that refers to both telephone and video-link interpreting.

A pilot study to elicit interpreters' experiences in the then-emerging area of video-link interpreting was prepared by the Working Party on New Technologies of the Interpretation Directorate (2002). Questionnaire responses from 33 E.U.-employed interpreters showed, perhaps unsurprisingly, a high level of skepticism and resistance to video-link interpreting; on average, informants gave negative responses. The strongest negative reactions related to a lack of feeling that interpreters were participants in the interaction, and low motivation and fatigue. Other negative reactions related to unsatisfactory ergonomics and a self-perception of lack of quality of performance.

A relatively small number of studies have also engaged in a technical evaluation of the equipment's usability (e.g., Paras, Leyva, Berthold, & Otake, 2002). Advocates and those seeking to cut the cost of face-to-face interpretation commonly argue that video-link technology presents itself to be an almost identical replacement for face-to-face interpretation by providing not only the auditory but also the visual presence of the interpreter.

Moser-Mercer (2003) undertook a large-scale study for the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) entitled "Remote Interpreting and an Assessment of Human Factors and Performance Parameters." Among the "human factors" are "job design, task analysis and mental workload"; performance parameters are "logistics and technical components, e.g., equipment and installation, connections and video coverage." In additional research, Moser-Mercer (2005) identified accelerated fatigue and a general feeling of "disengagement" among interpreters who were not provided with views of speakers or their situations.

Recognizing that video-conferencing with accompanying (simultaneous) interpreting services is now a frequent and even standard feature of many business, administrative, and diplomatic interactions, the AIIC sought to provide recommendations for its use. From its members, the AIIC received submissions that reported the following:

The message is stripped of its non-verbal content; the other participants' verbal and non-verbal reactions to the speaker and among themselves are not perceived; the screens glitter; there is no way of assessing how the interpreted message has been received; there is a sense of alienation; there is not daylight. (AIIC, 2000)

Video-link interpreting is now regularly used in prison and remand situations (see Section 2.2.2, below). In one of the few studies to address not only interpreters' but also others' (e.g., court clerks, defense advocates, prisoners) experiences, Fowler (2007) reported serious problems in acoustic and visual access to source speakers, leading to constant requests for repetition and instances of miscommunication. She cautioned against interpreters accepting such assignments unless they are confident that sound and visual access of a reliable standard can be provided. Fowler also recorded similar serious concerns from other parties involved.

Mouzourakis (2006) elicited qualitative responses from a large number of conference interpreters who were new to video-conferencing: His results were mixed; the only widely held view among informants was a feeling of "alienation" or removal from source speakers. Winteringham (2010), in her comparison of many studies, acknowledged these as widespread complaints among interpreter practitioners, but pointed to the inevitability of new technology and the need to adapt it to interpreters' needs, rather than vice versa. Donovan (2006) drew a

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parallel between the practitioners' initial mistrust of the development of simultaneous interpreting through interpreting booths and the recent development of remote interpreting. Berber (2009) also recognized this but stated frankly that practitioners' inability or reluctance to use information and communications technology (ICT) will be to their disadvantage.

To summarize, researchers have identified the following prerequisites for interpreters' optimal performance in telephone and video-link interpreting that distinguish remote from on-site interpreting: knowledge of minimum technical requirements; proficiency in protocols with technical staff and other participants in an interpreting interaction; awareness of seating and optimizing visual and audio input and output; knowledge of protocols to manage interactions where there is no visual input or output; and ability to troubleshoot and manage stress. These notable differences justify the need for specific training for interpreting via telephone and video link.

2.2.1 Video-Link Technology in Health Care Interpreting

Many studies focusing on telephone interpreting have examined health care interpreting as the field that is most highly represented within telephone interpreting. Fewer studies have examined video-link interpreting in this field. In one study that did, Jones, Gill, Harrison, Meakin, and Wallace (2003) focused on patient satisfaction and enablement and length of stay in hospital, with little reported difference in satisfaction levels according to type of interpreting services. Elsewhere, studies of the satisfaction levels of interpreters who regularly use video link-ups have been less positive: Azarmina and Wallace (2005) reported that interpreters prefer face-to-face interpreting to video-link interpreting, but prefer the latter to telephone interpreting. A relatively small number of studies also engaged in a technical evaluation of the equipment's usability, such as Paras et al. (2002), whereas Fagan, Diaz, Reinert, Scimanna, and Fagan (2003) focused only on the "extra time" that telephone interpreting requires of participants, as opposed to hospital- or patient-supplied interpreters. Although health care interpreting is now commonly performed via telephone, it is less often performed through video-link means, largely due to the initial costs associated with installation of new facilities. A study on the use of video-link interpreting in four Belgian hospitals identified the need for both health care interpreters and health care workers to be trained in using video-link technology, which was a further cost factor largely unforeseen before the trial phase commenced (Verrept, 2011). In contrast, video-link technology is used more widely as a means for interpretation in courts.

2.2.2 Video-Link Technology in Court Interpreting

As stated above, an initial study by Fowler (2007) on the use of video-link interpreting facilities in courts reported problems with visual access and quality of acoustic transfer. The expansion of video-link interpreting in Europe and in European courtrooms over the last decade precipitated interest in this medium and led to E.U. funding for the Assessment of Videoconference Reporting in the Criminal Justice Service (AVIDICUS) project, led by Sabine Braun, which aimed to evaluate the quality of video-mediated interpreting in criminal proceedings and its viability from an interpreting point of view. A number of research papers associated with the project have been published (Braun, 2006, 2007). The project sought to locate optimal logistic and technical attributes to provide practitioners, users, and technical staff with guidelines. In regard to signed language interpreting, Napier (2011) provided a comparative study on different types of scenarios of video-link interpreting linked to courtrooms where the interpreter is a signed language interpreter and the attribute of visibility to the deaf participant is vital. Napier qualitatively compared each scenario and listed features that positively or negatively influence communication to the signed language interpreter and interpretation to the deaf person according to their positions among other participants or separated from them.

The AVIDICUS project also developed modules for delivery to trainee interpreters, practicing legal interpreters, and legal practitioners. These modules were developed in direct response to the research findings of the project that located the need for preparation, instruction, and supervised practice with new technology among

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not only the interpreters but also others with whom they worked. Braun et al. (2011) also reported that clear majorities of both trainee as well as practicing interpreters strongly supported training specific to these means of interpreting. The implication of such a finding is that these should be strongly considered as a component of pretest training or of the interpreter test itself.

Another comprehensive study (Carlson, 2011) on remote interpreting services in the courtroom was undertaken for language interpreting services used in Minnesota courts. Carlson investigated the incidence of and feedback on the following: conference or speaker phone facilities via telephone; digital audio platforms (a slightly more advanced version of speakerphone with better audio and volume enhancement); specialized telephonic equipment (offering both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation) through built-in microphone and headset systems or through mobile carts/consols that can be moved from courtroom to courtroom; videoconferencing and webcams (including interactive teleconferencing or ITV); and voice-over Internet protocol (VoIP). Carlson found that, from a statistical perspective, across a large number of U.S. states, (audio-only) speakerphone is the most common form of remote interpreting, followed by interactive teleconferencing, whereas enhanced audio equipment and web cameras are used less (Carlson, 2011).

Carlson (2011) elicited responses from both courtroom staff and remote court interpreters. Courtroom staff members reported greatest ease of use with interactive teleconferencing, followed by enhanced audio, which was perceived to be easier than speakerphone (Carlson, 2011). Interpreters reported very low levels of satisfaction with both speakerphone and enhanced audio. In particular, interpreters complained of the lack of visual cues, other “inherent” difficulties, and the unreliability of advanced technology as reasons for their dissatisfaction (Carlson, 2011). However, as Carlson observed, enhanced audio equipment (sometimes known as the BIAMP audio flex product) is being installed in many courtrooms across many U.S. states. In general, Carlson advised against using remote interpreting in courtroom situations where it can be avoided and in support of restricting its use to short hearings where its use is unavoidable. Further, she recommended that remote interpreting should include visual coverage of proceedings for interpreters and not audio only. She identified training for all participants and maintenance checks of equipment as key attributes for the efficient use of interpreting services.

3. Recent Technological Innovations and Interpreter Pedagogy: Online and Video-Link Training and Testing

Chen and Ko (2010; Ko & Chen, 2011) reported on trialling online tests with interpreter trainees at the end of a period of online study. Their studies, based on the same data sample of online tests of dialogue interpreting, sight translation, consecutive interpreting, and ethical questions, documented the online delivery of all parts of the NAATI professional interpreter exam. The technical specifications of the testing circumstances were specific to the training that preceded testing. A Web-based Collaborative Cyber Community (3C) was used for testing purposes. The 3C learning platform was developed at the National Sun Yat-sen University in Taiwan, and its server “has the capacity to support up to 500 online asynchronous users and 200 online synchronous users simultaneously” (Chen & Ko, 2010, p. 155).

Chen and Ko used the synchronous cyber classroom component of 3C with its face-to-face visual feature, including audio and video windows, a control panel, text chat box, a whiteboard, and subvideo windows (of which up to 18 can be shown simultaneously). “All participants in the synchronous cyber classroom can hear and see one another. Instant text communication and audio and video recording of all activities are also possible” (Chen & Ko, 2010, p. 155).

A full description of all technical and logistic details associated with Chen & Ko’s (2010) test sample goes beyond the bounds of this article. However, key attributes of the test sample can be summarized here. First, test candidates used their own computers and entered “booths” that had been specified to them according to the organization of the cyber classroom. Test components, such as the dialogue-interpreting component, were provided by the examiner to the test candidates, who then opened it electronically; the test candidates accessed

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and managed the dialogue themselves and were able to elect when to start recording. Candidates were relatively independent; they were able to work at their own speed, repeat segments when needed, and signal through text message to the examiner when they had finished. The examiner could randomly visit candidates' booths to hear their performance. All candidates' interpreting output, both audio and video, was recorded. For sight translation, the source text was provided on whiteboard. Candidates were not able to mark it (electronically) in any way and had to make notes on a separate piece of paper. Their sight translations were recorded in the same way by the candidates, controlling the start of their interpreted rendition.

The consecutive interpreting component was centrally controlled by the examiner, who provided the source speech, and no repeats were permitted from the candidates. Ethical questions were similar to the dialogue-interpreting component, with candidates listening to the questions and able to provide multiple responses (e.g., further elaboration or repetition) while controlling the recording function.

Overall, the technology used in Chen & Ko's (2010) test was able to accomplish the requirements of the NAATI spoken interpreting test (i.e., dialogue and speech interpreting, sight translation, knowledge of ethics) in regard to test delivery and recording of candidate performance for all components of the test. Other features of the testing situation were noted, such as the difficulty of monitoring each candidate's actions throughout the test and ensuring that candidates were not accessing online dictionaries or receiving assistance from other sources. Candidates themselves reported that good familiarity with the technical equipment was important not only to ensure required recording procedures but also to allay nervousness that can occur when technical problems arise. Chen and Ko (2010; Ko & Chen, 2011) advocated further development and trialling of online testing and said they were likely to continue in this direction themselves. The implication of their study is that video-link testing through computers is a realistic development that should be considered very strongly as part of efforts to allow the use of computers for translation testing.

4. Practitioners' and Examiners' Use of and Attitudes Toward Telephone and Video-Link Interpreting: Survey Results

To further investigate practitioners' and examiners' relationships with telephone and video-link interpreting, I conducted a survey. I recruited participants by contacting approximately 40 practitioners and examiners who were at the time or had previously been associated with the Translation and Interpreting programs at Monash University or RMIT University and supplied with an explanatory statement of the research's intentions. Approval to survey potential informants for this research was granted by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. Concurrent approval from other participating institutions in the working party for the development of a conceptual overview of a new model for NAATI standards, testing, and assessment was also granted.

Fifteen interpreter practitioners and 11 examiners responded. The sample is too small to be considered representative of the experiences and attitudes of the large number of over 5,000 interpreter practitioners, but it does have some measure of representativity of the smaller group of approximately 150 examiners in Australia. The responses gained from the surveys provide only a small range of possible experiences and attitudes. However, research studies in Interpreting Studies are often based on small sample sizes of 20 or fewer informants (e.g., Moser-Mercer, 2003; Mouzourakis, 2006; Hale, 2007), and the authors of these studies recognize limitations to their representativity.

Below I present a selection of both quantitative (percentage responses) and qualitative (comments and examples from informants) data from the surveys where relevant. Numbers in parentheses after comments refer to the number of informants who provided similar comments.

4.1. Survey Results From Interpreter Practitioners

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The survey for interpreter practitioners contained eight questions constructed to capture informants' responses in regard to technology used for on-site interpreting and experience in telephone or video-link interpreting. Further, attitudinal responses were sought in regard to components of the current interpreting test and the role of technology.

Q1. Do you have experience in telephone or video-link interpreting?

Yes. Telephone only	Yes. Both telephone and video-link	No
13	27	60

Comments on the use of telephone interpreting:

- *Mostly medical interpreting.*

Comments on the use of video-link interpreting:

- *Migrant Review Tribunal, school enrollments. Auslan interpreting, hospitals, Legal Aid.*
- *Mental health consultations (psychiatrist and patient both in remote region, interpreter in city location).*
- *Legal interpreting (in court: defendant in remote region, linked to court in city.)*

Q2. Do you use electronic devices when working as an interpreter (e.g., use a laptop in court to access online legal dictionaries)? If yes, please give details.

Yes	No	No response
27	67	6

Comments:

- *Yes. For telephone interpreting I use online dictionaries.*
- *I do bring my laptop, iPhone (with Internet access) and electronic dictionary with me just in case I need to look something up. However, on the job, I have never had the time to use them.*

Q3. Do you think that in your work as an interpreter there are areas in which technology could be used, in the future?

Yes	No; only telephone interpreting	No
80	7	13

Comments:

- *Certainly with video-link technology. (2)*
- *Laptops and electronic dictionaries (2)*
- *Video relay services for deaf people so that they can access information. (2)*

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- *Clients might be concerned that there are other parties that could somehow gain access to a video link of an interpreted situation.*
- *I think Skype and other video-link and remote interpreting would be a possible mode of interpreting that could become more popular as it would decrease the cost of hiring an interpreter. However, at least in business situations, I also find that many clients want the physical presence of the interpreter with them as reassurance.*
- *I think it is inevitable. Already jobs are offered and accepted/declined by SMS by most agencies and interpreters. On-site use of technology (such as laptops and online dictionaries) in the community domain is seen as unprofessional at the moment as it slows down communication and reveals apparent lack of interpreter competence.*

Q4. Do you believe that certification testing should include demonstrated interpreting performance using a telephone and/or through a video-link?

Yes. Telephone only	Yes. Both telephone and video-link	No	No answer
39	27	27	7

Comments:

- *Yes. Telephone interpreting is already popular amongst some healthcare providers.*
- *Yes. In remote areas of Australia, the need for telephone interpreters is great and we need to have skilled interpreters doing this.*
- *No. On-site interpreting is still the most popular type of interpreting and the one that most prefer.*

Q5. Do you see the idea of certification testing only through remote means (e.g., video link) as a good idea or not?

Yes	Maybe	No	No answer
20	27	47	6

Comments:

- *Maybe. Remote interpreting is okay for practice but not for testing. (2)*
- *No. There are security problems, like cheating and identity fraud.*

Q6 (i) What are the good points / advantages / logistic requirements?

Comments:

- *No travel costs. (6)*
- *Greater access for candidates. (5)*
- *Software requirements, test instruments, hardware required.*
- *I can't see any good point or advantage in being assessed remotely. I do believe that face-to-face assessments are fairer. When an assessor has the candidate in front of him/her, [he/she] can tell more about the personality of the candidate, which should be something to be assessed if you consider the candidate as a potential professional.*
 - *Potential for live testing using same participants/actors from one location, reducing variation that might occur in live testing scenarios acted out by different participants in different locations.*
 - *Provide realistic environment as remote interpreting will be common in the future.*

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Q6 (ii) What are the bad points/disadvantages/logistical difficulties?

Comments:

- *Quality of transmission. (3)*
- *Where the candidate is visible, this may lead to a conflict of interest if the candidate is well known to the examiner. (2)*
- *Could take longer.*
- *Would require training for testees and others.*
- *No physical presence (so important in interpreting). Hard to evaluate a few candidates one after the other. It would take longer. Cannot discuss afterwards with the other examiners.*
- *The authenticity of the situation is questionable (while it is a step up from the current test using audio recordings).*
- *Broadband speed/technological issues; visibility of signers' hands and facial expression; angle of camera/size of screen/seating; capacity to connect with the discourse environment and to manage aspects of the discourse if and when required (e.g., turn taking) if located remotely.*

As stated, this sample of interpreter practitioners (15) is small, and the responses presented above are indicative of a randomly elicited group.

In general, 60% of the practitioner informants had had no contact with telephone or video-link interpreting. The remaining 40% had experience in telephone interpreting, most of them also with video-link interpreting. Apart from one informant who reported using online dictionaries when telephone interpreting, none of the informants reported any other uses of contemporary technology in the performance of interpreting. Laptops and hand-held devices were used for preparation and to liaison with clients/agencies but not for verbal or signed interlingual transfer. Responses to Question 3 reveal that 80% of informants believed that in the future, there will be further technological innovations that will be used in interpreting interactions. For most of those who believed this, their belief related largely to the use of video-link technology, with which a majority of informants had not yet had contact. In other words, informants saw the means through which communication between participants in an interpreting interaction takes place as amenable to technological change, but not the activity of interlingual transfer as such. There was some skepticism that technological innovations will be able to do much more than prepare practitioners for assignments and as an aid for some forms of telephone interpreting where recourse to online sources is considered logistically possible.

These responses are in line with Ozolins' (2011) description of the relatively high, but not universal, popularity of telephone interpreting, and their comments are congruent with Rosenberg's (2007) assertion that telephone interpreting is employed most in the health care sector. Practitioner informants' comments above are also in line with Fowler's (2007) and Carlson's (2011) studies, which located the legal sector as the most prominent sector in which interpreters use video-link technology. Less expected is the finding that 27% of practitioner informants reported using electronic devices *when working* as an interpreter, for example, online dictionary use for telephone interpreting and electronic glossaries via laptop. This contrasts with Donovan's (2006) and Winteringham's (2010) findings that indicated that the immediate nature of interpreting and its logistical features render recourse to electronic resources unworkable.

Over half of the informants believed that telephone interpreting should be a component of testing, whereas only 20% believed that video-link interpreting need also be a testing component. Practitioners were less certain about the prospect of video-link as the only means through which the test is conducted: only 20% believed that this would be a good idea, whereas nearly half were against and the remainder expressed mixed feelings or did not respond. Advantages of remote testing nominated by informants include predictable ones: lower travel costs, greater access to candidates in remote areas. One informant suggested that remote interpreting will be commonplace and therefore testing should itself reflect this practice. Some disadvantages of remote testing listed are also familiar: uneven transmission quality, the lack of set requirements to train examiners, and the need for pretest training for candidates. Others also mentioned the difficulty that candidates could have in connecting to the

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(test) discourse environment and that physical presence is required in most interpreting interactions, which are on-site.

Overall, although a majority of practitioners did not report experience with telephone or video-link interpreting, there was a widespread consensus that these means of interpretation will become more common and widespread. In general, responses to the idea of video-link testing were mixed—although many informants could see merit in it through a widening of access to testing for previously disenfranchised groups, others had concerns about the quality and feasibility of video-link testing as a fair and reliable means of testing. These responses are line with Verrept's (2011) recommendations about the logistical and technological requirements and preparation needed for video-link testing to work successfully. Interpreter practitioners indicated that if video-link testing is to be considered, it should be as a test that would require pretest training, to familiarize the test candidate not only with the technical equipment that he or she would use in the test, but also with the altered discourse and personal protocols that remote communication bears in comparison to face-to-face testing.

4.2. Survey Results From Interpreter Examiners

The survey for interpreter examiners also contained eight questions. Eleven examiners filled out this survey. The questions were constructed to capture informants' responses in regard to current test-development protocols and the use of technology in test development, general experience in using telephone or video-link interpreting, and opinions on the use of technology and the possibility of remote testing. In addition, attitudinal responses were sought in regard to components of the current interpreting test and the role of technology.

Q1. Do you use technology in the construction of the test? For example, are source speeches (oral or signed) and any other texts recorded?

Yes	No	No answer / Not applicable
46	18	36

Responses:

- *Yes. Video recorded signed and spoken texts are pre-recorded.*
- *Yes. We use a video lab if filming the test here - otherwise we divide the test creation up among the panel - some members develop the test, others film it, etc.*

Q2. Do you record all or parts of the examination?

Yes. Audio only	Yes. Video and audio	No	No answer
36	46	9	9

- *The current testing situation means that many nonverbal clues surrounding the interpreter performance are lost in the audio-only situation. Improved use of technology would give candidates a better opportunity to showcase not just their linguistic capabilities but also things such as demeanor and interpersonal skills necessary in establishing real-life dynamics.*

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Q3. Do you have experience in telephone interpreting and/or video-link interpreting?

	Yes. As a practitioner	Yes. Informally, not professionally	No
Telephone	55	9	36
Video-link	27	27	46

Q4. If yes to either above, was your experience of telephone and/or video-link interpreting positive or negative?

Positive	Neutral	Negative	No answer
27	27	27	19

Responses:

- *Positive. I have had several good experiences where the technology was perfect and enabled a very satisfactory exchange.*
- *Neutral. There are specifications regarding bandwidth, etc., and how to set up things to ensure minimum impact on the candidate. They should not be responsible for the technology so they can concentrate on the content of the test.*
- *Negative. There are many potential technical issues and the exam conditions already put enough pressure on candidates. If there are technical glitches it will be even more stressful for them. Plus for Auslan, remote testing would require high bandwidths for video content—if not high enough the transmission slows down and makes the signing impossible to follow.*
- *Negative. Poor quality link-up which caused frustration and ultimately the cancellation of the interview. Generally, it can be more stressful than face-to-face interviews.*

Q5. Do you believe that certification testing should include demonstrated interpreting performance using a telephone and/or through a video-link?

Yes. Telephone only	Yes. Both telephone and video-link	No
36	45	19

Comments:

- *Yes. The popularity of telephone interpreting is likely to rise further in the coming years. We need to have tests that cover this as well.*
- *Yes. Video-link interpreting is important with the establishment of the new broadband network.*

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- *No. The tests as they are structured now are able to test the candidates for all aspects of interpreting, including telephone interpreting.*

Q6. Do you believe that certification testing could be performed solely through a video-link?

Yes	Maybe	No	No answer
18	27	46	9

Q7. Which protocols and logistic requirements would be required for a test candidate to undertake an accreditation test remotely?

Responses:

- *Good video conferencing facilities. (3)*
- *Training made available to the test taker so that they are fully familiar with the test situation. (3)*
- *Better broadband/more reliable links across Australia; greater awareness of specific requirements for testing a visual language modality (screen size, seating, camera angles etc); etc.*
- *Certify their identity.*

This sample of interpreter examiners (11) is small, and the responses presented above are indicative of a randomly elicited group only. The responses show that although many examiners had so far not had the chance to design a test, those that had followed NAATI protocols had used audio-recording technology for spoken languages and video-recording for Auslan (sign) interpreting, which mirror the conventions for recording test candidates' performance in spoken languages and Auslan. Over half of the informants had experience with video-recording interpreter testees' performance. In addition, over half of the examiners had experience using both telephone and video-link interpreting. Just over half of the informants had had personal experience using video-link technology; opinions expressed toward it were equally positive, neutral, and negative. Neutral and negative responses cautioned against video-link technology as a communication means for testing. These responses listed unfamiliar technology as a possible distraction for test candidates, stress and lower performance in the event of technical problems, and doubts that variable bandwidth could ensure good video reception for both candidate and examiner. These concerns with the technical reliability of video-link technology are similar to those reported by Mouzourakis's (2006) and Fowler's (2007) informants.

In regard to tests containing telephone and video-link interpreting as components of the test, over 80% believed that telephone interpreting should be a component, whereas nearly half favored video-link interpreting as well. For interpreter testing to be offered remotely, as the sole means of testing, informants noted the importance of user-friendly facilities, high bandwidth, and the chance for test candidates to familiarize themselves with the video-link technology and the altered dynamics that this technology requires, in turn-taking signals, seating, and camera angles.

These examiners were more likely than was the sample of practitioners to have engaged in video-link interpreting. Examiners share with practitioners the belief that these technologically enabled means of interpreting are likely to become more frequent and that testing through these means is possible. Chen and Ko's (2010; Ko & Chen, 2011) descriptions of their own initial attempts to test candidates sitting for interpreter examinations through remote means were, indeed, studies of an innovative and pioneering experiment. Nearly half of the interpreter examiners surveyed also believed that testing through remote means is possible and workable. At the same time, responses also indicated that examiners believed that for remote testing to happen, reliable

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infrastructure must first be in place and test candidates must be trained in using the technology before they attempt the test.

5. Conclusion: Recommendations for Interpreter Training

Telephone interpreting is now a commonplace and increasingly frequent means of communication for interpreted interactions. Telephone interpreting requires particular protocols, relies on different oral/aural input and output from the interpreter in the absence of visual information, requires extra checks from all participants in terms of confidentiality, and has different interpersonal and stress management dynamics to manage both source speech (for spoken languages and for situations in which a sign language interpreter is situated with a sign language user, communicating with a spoken language user via telephone) and technical features.

The main features that sufficiently distinguish telephone interpreting from on-site interpreting for the former to justify distinct aspects of training and testing include the following:

- Role relationship protocols (e.g., introduction, questions on prior experience in working with interpreters, explanation of interpreter's role, terms of address, directions on length of turn, etc.) can be established in verbal form only (for spoken languages).
- Confidentiality and privacy protocols must be overtly conveyed where visual information on others present or within earshot is lacking.
- Identity and role establishment in multiparty interactions.
- Higher frequency of interlocutors using third person as the other interlocutor remains unseen.
- Higher number of permissible requests for clarification and repetition due to clarity of telephone connection and/or interlocutors' use of telephone equipment.
- Strategies to deal with overlapping speech.

In addition, although advances in remote communication continue to occur, the research studies in interpreting and translation discussed above in Section 2 and the responses from both translation and interpreting practitioners and examiners suggest that video-link interpreting is currently infrequently used. However, video-link and other remote forms of asynchronous communication are likely to become more frequent in the near future, as reported by most informants. (The establishment of high-speed broadband in many countries is likely to accelerate the popularity of video-link interpreting if interpreters are able to perform from their homes, using appropriate software.) Interpreter protocols suggested above for telephone interpreting also apply to the situation of video-link interpreting. However, in regard to video-link interpreting, there are features of the situation that trainee interpreters must consider before interpreting commences. The following are pre-interaction protocols that interpreters should establish:

- Technical controls available to participants to regulate their appearance and reception, for example, volume production and reception, zoom functions for visual reception of other participant, seating and microphone protocols, establishment of protocols in the event of technical problems.
- Camera coverage of candidate's location with regard to the presence of others in their near proximity.
- Identity verification and explanation of how the interpreted interaction will be conducted.
- Quality of audio and video reception between all interlocutors.
- Extraneous influences such as the millisecond delays between receipt of picture and receipt of the accompanying sound and negotiation protocols to avoid "speaking over" the person whose voice continues to be heard for a millisecond or so after speaking has finished from the video image. Echo can also be a feature of some video-link interactions.

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The above pre-interaction attributes and interactional protocols are identified on the basis of the findings of research studies and as logistical and interactional features that are recommended for interpreter training and testing. Interpreter training programs are only now addressing these needs and exploring technological capabilities for remote interpreting, whereas remote interpreter testing has so far been implemented by agencies that themselves specialize in remote interpreting, (e.g., Language Line, Cyacom). The increased popularity and frequency of remote communication, the speed and availability of broadband Internet, and increasing familiarity with audiovisual technology are likely to accelerate provision and demand for remote interpreting. Those training and testing entities that wish to claim that their standards are reflective and representative of interpreting practice are urged to consider inclusion of remote interpreting as a performance component of their benchmark standards.

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