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Roberto A. Valdeón

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Perspectives on interpreting

Roberto A. Valdeón [a,b,c]

[a]South China Business College (SCBC), Guangzhou, People's Republic of China; [b]University of Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain; [c]Research Associate, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This article serves to introduce the papers in this special issue, devoted to interpreting studies. Over the past decades, interpreting has gained recognition as an academic field, typically as a branch of translation studies. The paper starts with a brief historical overview of this practice, with a focus on the early modern and the modern periods, and provides references to some of the research conducted in other fields as well. The next section offers a very brief survey of the modes and settings in which interpreting currently takes place, including simultaneous, consecutive and community interpreting. The article also serves to highlight the diversity of themes, languages, theoretical and methodological approaches, and geographical origin of the authors.

KEYWORDS

Interpreting studies; historical overview; publications on interpreting; modes; settings

In 2010 Franz Pöchhacker stated that the concept of interpreting refers 'to a particular form of translational activity and is therefore at once subsumed under the broader notion of translation and set apart by its unique features' (2010a, p. 151). Interpreting, which predates the invention of writing and, therefore, of written translation (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 9), is characterized by its immediacy vis-à-vis other forms of translation. Drawing on the work of the German scholar Otto Kade, Pöchhacker stresses that, on the one hand, the source text is provided only once and cannot be typically retrieved, and, on the other, the target language is normally produced under time pressure, which does not allow interpreters to correct or revise their output, as in other forms of (written) translation.

The definition provided by Pöchhacker (that is, interpreting as a form of translation) also points to the duality of interpreting as an academic field of enquiry. This is reflected in the fact that interpreting studies is a discipline whose object of study is interpreting which, in turn, is regarded as a subdiscipline within the larger academic discipline that we know as Translation Studies (Pöchhacker, 2010b, p. 158). Pöchhacker is responsable for the two general entries devoted to interpreting in the *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010-2013), namely 'Interpreting' and 'Interpreting Studies'. In addition, this collection includes chapters about 'Teaching interpreting/training interpreters', also authored by Pöchhacker, 'Court/legal interpreting' by Debra Russell, 'Quality in interpreting' by Silvia Kalina, 'Neurolinguistics and interpreting' by Barbra

CONTACT Roberto A. Valdeón valdeon@uniovi.es
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Ahrens, 'Remote interpreting' by Barbara Moser-Mercer, 'Status of interpreters' by Cecilia Wadensjö, 'Community interpreting' by Erik Hertog, 'Conference interpreting' by Robin Setton, 'Consecutive interpreting' by Helle V. Dam, 'Media interpreting' also by Franz Pöchhacker, 'Relay interpreting' by Miriam Shlesinger, 'Simultaneous interpreting' by Mariachiara Russo, and 'Simultaneous conference interpreting and technology' by Ebru Diriker. Interpreting also features prominently in many of the other entries in the collection. All of this underscores the importance of this practice both as a profession and as an academic discipline.

In addition to the above, the latest edition of *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* includes a sizeable number of chapters devoted to interpreting, while the publication of handbooks and monographs focusing on this practice has increased exponentially over the past two decades, as shown by the volumes by Pöchhacker and Shlesinger (2002), Pöchhacker (2004, 2015), and Mikkelson and Jourdenais (2015). Some of these publications have focused on specific topics and traditions, e.g. Setton, 2011 on interpreting and Chinese, which points to the consolidation of interpreting as a discipline in its own right. In fact, from its inception, interpreting has also occupied a central role in the prestigious Benjamins Translation Library, which includes volumes devoted to court interpreting (Edwards, 1995), interpreter training (Gile, 1995), conference interpreting (Gambier et al., 1997) and simultaneous interpreting (Setton, 1999) among others. Of particular interest is the programmatic collection edited by Gile et al. (2001), in which the contributors addressed young researchers starting their academic career and discussed topics, project planning, critical readings of existing literature, and affective factors such as stress. Other publishers specializing in translation studies have also published several major works by interpreting specialists, some of which will be mentioned in the next sections.

A brief historical overview

From a historical perspective, interpreting was a necessary activity in the expansion of empires. In her study of the role of language brokers in early imperial China, Rachel Lung illustrates the importance of interpreting in Asia, tracing the earliest references to the practice back to around 1000 BC, when interlanguage mediators were called *ji*, *xiang*, *Didi* and *yi* (2011, pp. 3–4). Of these four designations only *yi* has survived, Lung adds. Interpreters were necessary in China as a result of the many ethnic groups that lived along the Yellow River and beyond. Because these groups spoke different languages and dialects, and, although few historical records mention interpreters, we know that, for instance, in the ninth century BCE, the Zhou dynasty had official language mediators that had to be present at meetings with representatives of foreign nations (Hung & Pollard, 2009, p. 369). These individuals were referred to as *sheren*, meaning 'tongues-man', a metaphorical expression that would be used in other settings during the European conquest of the Americas. Mediators were employed in later dynasties as Chinese merchants ventured to do their business in neighbouring states. Interpreters were also used to disseminate the culture of Han China (Lung, 2006, p. 236), considered superior to that of other ethnic groups, thus acting as 'cultural ambassadors' (2006, p. 237).

Interpreters were also of paramount importance to the dissemination of Buddhism and other religions. The translation of sutras involved several individuals, many of

whom did not only translate the sacred texts but also interpreted them. In this context, Hung claims, the interpreter was the real translator (2005, p. 49). This links up with some of the debates about equivalence and faithfulness that characterized translation studies as a discipline in the twentieth century. Kelly (1979), for instance, discussed the concept of 'fidelity' with respect to 'fides interpres' or 'faithful interpreter'. Although this approach can be and has been conceptually challenged, other authors have discussed the connection between translation and interpreting as a part of the process of reverbalizing source texts. Hatim and Mason (1990, pp. 73–76), for example, stressed the difficulties encountered by trainee interpreters working at the European Parliament, using examples such as the translation of modality of the original French utterance 'un plan de restructuration qui *aurait* été préparé par les administrateurs judiciaires' to exemplify the challenges interpreters face.

Depictions of interpreters can be found in Egyptian hieroglyphs where they were represented mediating in military and trade expeditions (Galán, 2011), while it has been claimed that in Greece translation was regarded as a secondary activity because of the status of Greek as a lingua franca (Connolly & Bacopoulou-Halls, 2009, p. 419). However, as a result of its colonial expansion, Greece needed interpreters to communicate with those individuals considered barbarians. We find testimonies to that effect in the work of historian Herodotus, the author of *Historíai* (*The Histories*), which recorded that Egyptian children were taught Greek to be able to speak with the locals:

> To the Ionians and Carians who had lent him their assistance, Psammetichus assigned as abodes two places opposite to each other, one on either side of the Nile, which received the name of 'the Camps.' He also made good all the splendid promises by which he had gained their support; and further, he entrusted to their care certain Egyptian children, whom they were to teach the language of the Greeks. These children, thus instructed, became the parents of the entire class of interpreters in Egypt. (1996, p. 183)

Herodotus mentioned interpreters on several other occasions (pp. 41, 238, 563) although their names remained unknown to the readers. In the same vein, Xenophon mentioned the role of interpreters in the *Anabasis* (1859, p. 23, 77, 127, 155), written around 370 BC. Mediators were typically sent to meet foreign peoples in advance (1859, p. 269, 483), and, although most mediators remained anonymous, Xenophon mentioned Pigres by name.

These two references to the role of interpreters in ancient times take us to the interpreting practice in the early modern period. When the Europeans reached the Americas, young natives were kidnapped and taken to Europe, where they learned Spanish, French, English or other languages in order to assist the European conquerors in their dealings with native Americans. This type of situations was frequent across the continent, e.g. in Spanish America (Giambruno, 2008, p. 30), in the French territories (Hart, 2013), in the lands ruled by the Portuguese (Hart, 2013, p. 116) and also by the English (Bailey, 2004, p. 4). As in the case of the Chinese and the Greeks, European conquerors used interpreters not only to communicate with the natives but to gain their trust (for instance, the English took advantage of Manteo's language skills to attempt to communicate with new native groups, Oberg, 2013, pp. 75–77).

Europeans and other empires used interpreters to achieve their own economic and political goals. Paradoxically, the debate about the function of interpreters has also been manipulated and used for ideological purposes in academia. One such case is

Doña Marina or Malinche, who served as a language mediator for the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés during the conquest of Mexico. For many, Malinche represented the violation of America by the Europeans, and has been considered a traitor to her people (Cypess, 1991, p. 7), often ignoring the fact she had been sold as a slave by her own people to chief Potonchan, who in turn gave her to Cortés as a present. The salience given to Malinche as a symbol of almost anything is shown in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*, as she is the only interpreter of the period (male or female) to deserve an entry (Karttunen, 2015), but Malinche was in fact one of the many women that served as interpreters, not only in Spanish America but also in North America, where English and French adventurers and colonists necessitated the services of local speakers to communicate with the natives. In fact, similar roles were performed by Pocahontas and Sacagawea (Jager, 2015), who, unlike Malinche, have entered the romantic imagination of the Unites States through comics, books and films (consider, for example, children's books such as *Who was Sacagawea* by Fradin and Bradin (2005), and the popular Disney movie *Pocahontas*).

After the colonial period, interpreters have been instrumental in two very distinct circumstances. On the one hand, they received much attention during dramatic communicative events such as the Paris and Nuremberg trials, the former at the end of World War I while some of the members of the Nazi regime were prosecuted at the latter. Baigorri-Jalón (2014) traces the beginning of conference interpreting to these two momentous events that marked the lives of Europeans in the twentieth century. The importance of conference interpreting is exemplified by conference interpreting. A complete course and trainer's guide, a training course authored by Setton and Dawrant (2016), two experience interpreters and trainers who provide a detailed presentation of the practice as well as numerous exercises for trainees.

Interestingly, Baigorri-Jalón (2015), a former interpreter at the United Nations and a professor at the University of Salamanca who specializes in the history of interpreting, has mentioned some of the reasons why interpreters may have received less attention than translators: historically their duties were not limited to interpreting, they were not paid and had no formal training. And yet, as we have seen, interpreters were of vital importance from antiquity until modern times. This meant that once authorities understood the importance of their job, translators and interpreters were incorporated into the civil, military and religious services. One of the best examples of the move towards the professionalization of the interpreting practice is the number of laws passed by the Spanish monarchy during the colonial period, which aimed at training translators and interpreters and at promoting ethical practices. This, as Baigorri-Jalón (2015) reminds us, was an antecedent of some of the norms that were introduced, several centuries later, by supranational institutions such as the European Union.

Indeed, together with the United Nations (Baigorri-Jalón, 2016), the European Union has been a driving force for the interpreting profession during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In fact, *Perspectives* has published a number of articles devoted to the intricacies, characteristics and challenges of translating for the European Union. In this special issue, Marta-Kajzer-Wietrny, Ilmari Ivaska and Adriano Ferraresi investigate one very specific feature of interpreting, namely the rendition of numbers in interpreted and translated texts. Using the European Parliament Translation and Interpreting

Corpus, they hypothesize that the two modes have a different impact on the results and argue that this has implications for the education of professionals in the future.

Although a number of authors, such as Baigorri-Jalón, have reflected on the importance of interpreting from a historical perspective, this is an avenue of research that certainly deserves greater attention. In fact, some of the publications on the topic have not been authored by translation or interpreting scholars but rather by academics working in disciplines such as history or literary studies. For instance, James H. Merrell (1999) has written about the crucial role played by interpreters in North America. With a history background, Merrell has meticulously described the fragile relationship between colonists and native Americans in Pennsylvania, sustained by what he describes as the shadowy figures of mediators. For her part, Sandra M. Cypess (1991) offers another example of an academic, in her case from literary studies, who studied the historical figure of an interpreter, i. e. Malinche, and provided a richer and more nuanced view of the interpreter than many of those available in translation/interpreting studies scholarship.

In line with this, the publications delving into the history of interpreting have highlighted that interpreters have played various roles, including language mediators, diplomats, spies, and informants, and not only during the early colonial period. Sawyer (2016), for instance, has underscored the relationship between interpreting and diplomacy in the US context; Lan (2016) has reported on the execution of Taiwanese individuals who were recruited as interpreters during World War II and were subsequently executed as traitors, and Takeda (2016) illustrates the difficulties faced by Japanese interpreters, who were considered war criminals or testified against their superiors during the US occupation of Japan. In this special issue, Huan Zhao reveals the challenges that Xu Zhimo had to face during Rabindranath Tagore's 1924 visit to China. Drawing on Edward Said's travelling theory, Zhao contends that Zhimo received much opposition when the interpreter attempted to mediate between Tagore and his Chinese audiences. Zhimo, a poet himself, attempted to defend Tagore's literary approach in the face of official criticism: at that time the Indian poet was considered, Zhao claims, reactionary and ideologically unacceptable. Despite this and partly due to Zhimo's relentless efforts, Tagore has continued to exert a great influence on Chinese literary circles. Zhao's article also serves to underline the importance of conducting research into the history of interpreting in order to understand its impact on the social, cultural and literary milieus of specific regions.

Interpreting modes and settings

Typically, interpreting is classified according to two different factors: modes, i. e. the form required to mediate between two or more parts, and setting, that is, the environment in which the interpreting practice occurs.

As regards the former, simultaneous and consecutive interpreting are the most common practices. Although simultaneous interpreting had been used before the Nuremberg trials, it was during this momentous event that it received worldwide attention, as audiences could see images of the accused wearing earphones to understand prosecutors and judges. The Hollywood movie *Judgement at Nuremberg* further publicized the importance of interpreting as, during the trials, movie goers could see Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Judy Garland and Maximilian Schell wearing earphones to follow what

speakers of other languages were saying. As a professional activity, simultaneous interpreting had been previously used at other multilingual gatherings such as the International Labour Organization's Assembly of 1927. As Seeber (2015a) points out, simultaneous interpreting is to some extent surrounded by mystery: interpreters may give the impression that they interpret effortlessly. However, the mystery and, to some extent, glamour that seem to characterize the practice tends to overlook the serious toll it takes on the practitioners, who, according to Monacelli (2009), often see survival as the main objective of their difficult profession.

The specificities of simultaneous interpreting are the basis of much of the research into the cognitive processes involved in interpreting, as it requires not only the ability to communicate between speakers of different languages but also good general knowledge, excellent familiarity with two or more foreign languages, and the ability to coordinate listening and speaking at the same time (Russo, 2010, p. 333). Interest in the cognitive processes involved can be traced back to the 1990s, (e.g. Gile, 1995 drew on cognitive psychology to propose a model that distinguished between automatic and non-automatic mental operations, emphasizing the role of the latter), but it is in the twenty-first century that most of the work has been published. Recent research has looked at working memory (Mellinger & Hanson, 2019), the correlation between explicitation and increased load (Gumul, 2021), the mental effort required to perform a simultaneous interpreting task (Seeber, 2015b), and the effects of delivery rate on quality (Ruiz Rosendo et al., 2021).

As regards the settings in which interpreting can occur, Pöchhacker (2004, pp. 13–14) stresses that the social context of interaction is crucial for the activity. The social context can include business interpreting, which Pöchhacker regards as a type of 'primeval' interpreting practice, since it was required to conduct economic exchanges (as those mentioned by Lung in early imperial China); diplomatic and military interpreting (as during the periods of European expansion in the Americas and beyond); court interpreting (which can be further classified into legal, judicial and courtroom: see, for example, the volume edited by Shlensinger & Pöchhacker, 2010, previously published as a special issue of *Interpreting*); and educational interpreting. Much of the work published over the past decade focuses specifically on one of those settings, e.g. court interpreting in the United States (e.g. Killman, 2021) or, given the increasing importance of China in academia, politics, diplomacy and world finances, it is not unusual to have monographs exclusively dedicated to translation and interpreting in that context, as shown by Hlavac and Xu's recent monograph devoted to *Chinese-Interpreting and Intercultural Communication* (2020), which analyzes interpreting in a variety of settings including diplomatic, business and healthcare contexts, as well as the only special issue of *Interpreting* devoted to a specific geographical region (Setton, 2009).

In addition to the above, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed the movement of millions of people from developing countries to the wealthier West, where interpreting was necessary in any attempts to integrate immigrants into the host societies. This type of interpreting, whose origin can be traced back to the 1960s (Pöchhacker, 1999), has been generally called community interpreting, or public service interpreting in the UK and cultural interpreting in Canada (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 15). Community interpreting may be necessary in settings such as medical centres, hospitals and other public contexts. Some of these research avenues have been explored in collections and

articles. For instance, Ji et al. (2019) have recently edited a collection on health interpreting which includes contributions that look at specific geographical areas such as the United States and Seattle (Creeze & Gordon, 2019) and Canada (Russell, 2019), or that consider the challenges of interpreters dealing with highly complex health issues such as mental health (Bot, 2019). On the other hand, the contributors to the volume edited by Valero Garcés and Martin (2008) deal with issues such as the norms governing community interpreting, the relations of power between the agents involved in the activity, and the role this practice plays in the West.

A more recent interest among interpreting and translation scholars is the use of these two practices in the media. Research has considered, among other aspects, non-professional interpreting (Antonini & Bucaria, 2016), interpreting in rendering news texts (Zhen & Ren, 2018), and the role of interpreting in English elite football (Baines, 2018). Pöchhacker (2018) has recently proposed a typology of media interpreting for the study of reception-oriented studies, a trend that is gradually gaining interest among scholars, particularly of audiovisual material. Pöchhacker identifies two main lines of enquiry, namely research on the expectations of media users and assessment of interpreted audiovisual content on the one hand, and studies on media accessibility for deaf viewers through signed language interpreting on the other.

Interpreting research

As a consolidated subfield, interpreting has its own well-established academic journal, *Interpreting: International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting*, edited by Pöchhacker and Minhua Liu, currently publishing its twenty-third issue. In the editorial to the first issue of 2021, which in fact marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the journal, Pöchhacker and Liu (2021) underscore both the quality of the articles published in their journal and the diversity of topics and approaches. Pöchhacker and Liu graphically describe the processes involved in the submission, refereeing, revision and publication of articles, similar in most respects to those of all the other major translation studies journals. *Interpreting* has indeed become the journal *par excellence* of the field and, therefore, congratulations on its anniversary are in order.

However, research into interpreting is also available in general translation studies periodicals such as *Meta*, *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, *Target* and *Perspectives*, as the pressure to publish or perish has increased over the past two decades (Valdeón, 2019; Pöchhacker & Liu, 2021). This special issue of *Perspectives* gathers in fact a series of papers that were submitted, refereed, revised and accepted for publication over the past two years, and which serve to showcase the varied interests of researchers and practitioners in interpreting. The authors of these articles have drawn on a variegated number of theoretical approaches and applied a variety of methodologies to delve into the complexity of the interpreting practice. I have already mentioned some of the articles in the preceding sections, so this section will introduce the rest, many of which are interdisciplinary in nature. Let us start with the more linguistic approaches.

In her work, Daria Dayter compares the occurrence of non-fluencies such as self-repairs, silent pauses and fillers in interpreted and spontaneous speech. Biber et al. (1999) first provided a detailed description of these features of conversational English, which had been largely neglected by traditional and pedagogical grammars. Researchers

have gradually incorporated these elements in the teaching of languages as well as the study of translation of, for example, audiovisual texts. Although interpreted speech is not characterized by the spontaneity of everyday language, it shares with the latter some of its features, including the fact that it occurs in real time and that it is subject to the limitations of working memory (Biber et al., 1999, p. 1066). In addition, interpreters, unlike translators, may be able to reformulate a sentence and may need time to aptly render the original words into the target language. Dayter, who works with the pair Russian-English, studies a parallel bidirectional corpus and shows that while interpreters have recourse to some of the features of spontaneous English mentioned above, the number of reformulations and fillers tends to be much smaller than in the case of everyday English.

Yijun Guo is also interested in language issues, albeit from a pragmatic perspective. Similarly to Dayter, Guo focuses on the translation of political texts, in this case of the Chinese premiers' press conferences, and studies the translation of the Chinese polite formula 'xiexie', as used by both the politicians and the journalists present at the press conferences. Guo finds that the omission of this expression can lead to the construction of different images of the participants in this type of highly ritualized institutional events. The article highlights the importance of studying the translation of (im)politeness strategies across languages, an area of research that has gradually attracted the attention of scholars worldwide. Istvan Kecskes (2014), for instance, has used the term 'intercultural pragmatics' to refer to the study of interculturality as an emergent and co-constructed phenomenon (2014, p. 15). Kecskes, a Hungarian professor based at a US university, is indeed in an excellent position to understand the importance of studying the challenges faced by speakers of different languages, including interpreters.

Jieun Lee and Seoyeon Hong also scrutinize the problems of interpreting conversational exchanges, using a case study to that effect. Lee and Hong's language pair also includes Russian but, instead of English, Korean is the language of the country where the participants are based. As interpreting is crucial in a case such as this one, which involves a criminal investigation into a murder charge, Lee and Hong show that the interpreter's lack of competence might have a serious impact on the fate of the accused. Similar challenges are described by Mohammed Y. Abu-Risha and Paramaswari Jaganathan. In their article, they discuss some of the problems caused by the Jordanian court system, which does not have detailed professional standards for court interpreters. This, they claim, allows interpreters to render their services using their discretion, giving way to misunderstandings and, consequently, complaints by the litigants. For this reason, they stress that it is necessary to develop a code of conduct that would ensure the quality of the interpreting process, particularly through accreditation and certification.

The working conditions of interpreters are examined in Paweł Korpal's contribution. Unlike the Jordanian case, Poland has an accreditation system, and the Polish Ministry of Justice regulates the services and rates of court interpreters. However, this level of professionalization does not seem to be reflected in the views expressed by the interpreters in relation to their job satisfaction. Using an online questionnaire, Korpal aimed to describe the problems faced by Polish court interpreters by enquiring about features such as stressors and medical symptoms. Among his findings, Korpal reports on the existence of physical issues (e.g. back pain, fatigue and eye irritation), dissatisfaction

with their salaries and difficulties to have access to material that could help interpreters during the interpreting process.

Interpreter training is another major area of research, as shown by Jim Hlavan and Claire Harrison's article. These authors report on interprofessional education, a teaching and learning technique used in healthcare training. This involves situation-based training with two or more groups of professionals belonging to two different fields, medicine and interpreting in their case study. This pedagogical approach is clearly interdisciplinary, which, in Hlavan and Harrison's view, contributes to increased awareness of the skills of the other group. This in turn serves to improve the quality of the interpreting service, for example when cultural-based issues are at stake. In their study, both groups acknowledged the value of this teaching/learning strategy for their respective training. Interdisciplinary collaboration is also reflected in the professional background of the authors: Jim Hlavac is a certified interpreter and interpreter trainer, while Claire Harrison is a medical doctor.

Cooperation and interdisciplinarity are also at the basis of Ana Rojo, Ana I. Foulquié-Rubio, Laura Espín and Francisco Martínez's contribution. Combining the insights of translation studies and psychology, and similarly to Korpal, Rojo and her colleagues are interested in how stress affects interpreters. In contrast to Korpal's article though, their approach explores the impact of stress and anxiety on academic scores, heart rate and speech rhythm. To assess anxiety in a simulated situation, Rojo and her colleagues used the Spanish version of the State Anxiety Inventory, and found that, despite the limitation of the study, there is strong evidence linking the relationship between rhythm, anxiety and stress on the one hand and student grades on the other. Coaching students to change their attitudes towards stress, the authors also add, can contribute to releasing pre-task tension, and prevent some of the more negative effects on the results of the interpreting service. This in fact falls in line with recent work pointing to the need to change our attitude towards stress in general, and not only in this specific professional practice. Stanford health psychologist Kelly McGonigal (2015), for example, has underscored the importance of changing attitudes to stress, which could prove to be advantageous rather detrimental in situations of tension.

Researchers into the interpreting practice have gradually become micro-specialized as they turn their attention to concrete contexts and professional environments. The final articles provide fine examples of this. Han Xu, based in Australia, a country with a numerous Chinese community, studies the interrelationship between lawyers and interpreters, and stresses the varying degree of qualifications expected of these two types of professionals, which often results in dissatisfaction with the status quo of interpreters working within the Australian legal system (Hale, 2011; Hale & Napier, 2016). Xu's findings highlight the need to promote the use of better qualified interpreters and to improve their professional status. For her part, Jihong Wang, who is also based in Australia, focuses on telephone interpreting. Telephone conversations, including institutionalized conversations such as doctor-patient interactions, were first analyzed by conversation analysts in the 1950s and 1960s. Although Wang does not draw on their work, her article does survey the use of pragmatic formulae such as forms of address. Both Han Xu and Jihong Wang used questionnaires to obtain the information needed to analyze the interpreting practice in these professional environments.

Finally, I would like to emphasize once again the variety of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches used by the contributors. The last article of this special issue highlights the challenges that authors face when conducting research into the interpreting practice. In their paper, Annelies Baekelandt and Bark Defrancq propose a method to study interpreting with lower levels of input control which, they argue, tends to be problematic in experiments in which researchers use pre-recorded speeches. Their study analyzes the response to written cues in a PowerPoint presentation with varying constituent orders and varying ratios of explicit verbal input, with particular reference to the subject-object-verb order within the context of Dutch speakers. Their work exemplifies an interdisciplinary approach combining cognitive and linguistic approaches. Similarly to other authors in this issue, Baekelandt and Defrancq indicate a number of limitations to their study and warn the readers to take the results with some caution. But together with the rest of the contributions, their work highlights the vitality and diversity of interpreting scholarship. Interpreting scholars work in a variety of environments, and many of them also work or have worked as interpreters, thus they have insider's knowledge of the intricacies and complexities of the profession. All of them exemplify the cultural and linguistic diversity of the field, as the language pairs examined include two of the following: Arabic, Dutch, English Chinese, Korean, Polish, Russian and Spanish.

This introductory article has attempted to provide a brief overview of interpreting scholarship, focusing on the historical evolution, the modes and the settings in which interpreting occurs in order to present the articles selected for the special issue. Other equally relevant topics and features such as the so-called constellations of interaction (Pöchhacker, 2004, pp. 16–17), intersemiotic types of interpreting such as sign language (whose importance is reflected in the collection edited by Roy & Napier, 2015), and ethical issues have not been presented here, as they are not the focus of the contributions. We have no space to discuss the interdisciplinary approaches that have burgeoned in the twenty-first century (e.g. drawing on disciplines such as sociology, e.g. the collection edited by Angelelli, 2014), the collections devoted to research methodologies (e.g. Nicodemus & Swabey, 2011), and quality issues (Zwischenberger & Behr, 2015) among many other topics. However, the number of submissions being currently processed is indeed promising, so we are likely to publish articles on these topics in the future.

I would like to conclude by expressing my gratitude to the interpreting scholars who generously share their time and expertise with the journal to ensure the quality of the papers finally accepted for publication.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Roberto A. Valdeón is the editor-in-chief of *Perspectives* and the general editor of the Benjamins Translation Library. He originally trained as an interpreter at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Nicholas G. Round, to whom this article is dedicated.

ORCID

Roberto A. Valdeón http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1948-0473

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