

“It keeps me on my toes”

Interpreters’ perceptions of challenges in telephone interpreting and their coping strategies

Jihong Wang

The University of Queensland

This article reports on the findings of a questionnaire survey of 465 telephone interpreters in Australia, focusing on what they liked and disliked about telephone interpreting, their perceptions of challenges in telephone interpreting, and their coping strategies. Just over half of the respondents liked working as telephone interpreters. Results also show that interpreters identified many favourable and unfavourable aspects of telephone interpreting. A key finding is that interpreters perceived many comprehension-related challenges (e.g., poor sound quality, a lack of non-verbal information), communication-related challenges (e.g., overlapping speech), and other challenges in telephone interpreting (e.g., low remuneration, casual employment, work-related stress). Importantly, interpreters adopted various coping strategies, including using high-quality headphones and requesting briefing or clarification to deal with comprehension-related challenges, explaining the interpreter’s role and intervening with clients as necessary to address communication-related challenges, and reducing working hours and exercising self-care to manage work-related stress.

Keywords: telephone interpreting, challenges, coping strategies, working conditions, professional status, client education

1. Introduction

Since its introduction in Australia in 1973, the use of telephone interpreting has rapidly grown in Australia and many other countries. Compared with on-site interpreting, telephone interpreting provides clients with greater and quicker access to professional interpreters. However, over the past two decades, there have been grave concerns among interpreters and scholars about the following issues: challenges for telephone interpreters, the quality of telephone interpreting, and

telephone interpreting being used merely as a cost-saving substitute for face-to-face interpreting (see Gracia-García 2002; Kelly 2008a; Mikkelson 2003; NAJIT 2009; Rosenberg 2007; Wadensjö 1999). As expressed in quote 1 below, many organisations in Australia are quickly switching from using on-site interpreting services to using telephone interpreting services:

- (1) The increasing number of organisations that are rapidly replacing on-site interpreting with phone interpreting is alarming.
(a professional Sinhalese/English interpreter,¹ untrained, 12 years of interpreting experience)

Despite the exponential growth of telephone interpreting services worldwide, telephone interpreting is a significant research gap in interpreting studies. The existing, small volume of literature on telephone interpreting mainly includes professional guidelines (e.g., Kelly 2008a, 2008b; NAJIT 2009), practitioner-researchers' views of and/or reflection on telephone interpreting practice (e.g., Gracia-García 2002; Mikkelson 2003; Ozolins 2011; Rosenberg 2007), as well as a small number of empirical studies such as case studies (e.g., Wadensjö 1999; Wang and Fang in press) and surveys in the form of questionnaires and/or interviews (e.g., Cheng 2015; Lee 2007; Wang 2018). To date, there has been little large-scale, empirical research on interpreters' perceptions of the challenges in telephone interpreting and how they cope with these.

2. Overview

This section presents an overview of the advantages of telephone interpreting, challenges in telephone interpreting, and survey studies on telephone interpreting.

2.1 Advantages of telephone interpreting

The merits of telephone interpreting include: convenience, ease of access to qualified interpreters, cost-effectiveness, privacy protection for patients in medical settings, and flexibility for interpreters (Cheng 2015; Gracia-García 2002; Kelly 2008a, 2008b; Lee 2007; Mikkelson 2003; Rosenberg 2007; Wadensjö 1999). According to Gracia-García (2002, 6), “a good interpreter at a distance is better than a bad one up close or none at all.” Telephone interpreting is a useful alterna-

1. All 13 respondents quoted in this article were different interpreters who completed the questionnaire in the present study.

tive to face-to-face interpreting in situations where on-site interpreters cannot be obtained promptly – especially in emergencies, remote regions and interactions involving languages of limited diffusion. Moreover, for users, telephone interpreting is generally more cost-effective than on-site interpreting, as telephone interpreters are only paid for the duration of the actual interpretation, eliminating the cost of transport and travel time that apply to on-site interpreters. Furthermore, telephone interpreters can work whenever and wherever they want (as long as it is a quiet place), so they can make the most of their spare time, choose flexible working hours and work from home (Gracia-García 2002; Mikkelsen 2003). Such flexibility means that telephone interpreting particularly caters for interpreters who have disabilities (e.g., blindness) or hefty family commitments.

2.2 Challenges in telephone interpreting

In spite of the abovementioned attractions, interpreters encounter numerous challenges in telephone interpreting, including poor sound quality, clients' use of inappropriate equipment, a lack of non-verbal information, diverse topics, new terminology, a lack of briefing from clients, telephone interpreting being used in situations for which it is inappropriate, interpreters' choice between first person pronoun and third person pronoun, clients' lack of familiarity with the interpreter's role, managing the three-party communication over the phone, low remuneration for telephone interpreting, work-related stress, and isolation (Cheng 2015; Gracia-García 2002; Kelly 2008a, 2008b; Lee 2007; Mikkelsen 2003; NAJIT 2009; Rosenberg 2007; Wadensjö 1999; Wang 2018).

First and foremost, poor sound quality inevitably impinges on interpreters' abilities to interpret speakers' utterances accurately. Poor sound quality in telephone interpreting results from background noise, interpreters' and/or clients' use of inappropriate equipment (e.g., speaker phone, loudspeaker, phone passing), poor phone connectivity, unreliable connection, sudden disconnection, and overlapping speech (Gracia-García 2002; NAJIT 2009; Rosenberg 2007; Wang 2018).

In addition, the lack of non-verbal cues impacts upon telephone interpreters' understanding of speakers' utterances, judgment of when to intervene with them so as to manage turn-taking, and capacity to interpret information accurately (Cheng 2015; Oviatt and Cohen 1992; Wadensjö 1999). According to a professional interpreter in Wang's (2018, 8) survey study² on telephone interpreting, "to not see who you are talking to increases stress, anxiety and anger; and it takes much more focus to understand what is being said." When relying solely on auditory input,

2. Wang's (2018) study and the current study belong to a bigger research project on telephone interpreting and thus have the same methodology but report on different findings.

telephone interpreters need to concentrate on speakers' tone of voice, breathing patterns, hesitations, inflection, pitch and voice volume in order to understand both the discourse and the situation (Kelly 2008a, 2008b). To achieve this, telephone interpreters need to receive special training to acquire these attentive listening skills. Clients, if well trained, know how to feed telephone interpreters with crucial non-verbal information, including their own physical actions and objects that they themselves referred to (Gracia-García 2002; Wadensjö 1999). Both poor sound quality and the lack of non-verbal cues result in telephone interpreters having to check phone line connection, request repetition or clarification when needed, and ask clients to pause, speak slowly or keep answers to the point (Lee 2007; Oviatt and Cohen 1992).

Moreover, telephone interpreting is stressful work. In addition to the stressors noted above, telephone interpreters also experience stress relating to the following aspects: clients' narrative of traumatic experiences, a lack of briefing and debriefing from clients, working in isolation, irregular work, unstable income due to casual employment, as well as the need to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Cheng 2015; Gracia-García 2002; Wadensjö 1999). Exemplification of this comes from regular in-house court interpreters who had been trained to interpret brief legal proceedings over the phone reporting that telephone interpreting was “more stressful and draining than on-site work” (Lee and Newman 1997, 33; see Mikkelsen 2003). Unsurprisingly, interpreters who have worked both on-site and over the phone generally prefer to work with clients face-to-face (Mikkelsen 2003; Wadensjö 1999).

The abovementioned challenges indicate that telephone interpreting is not appropriate for all situations, or all clients. Previous research (e.g., Mikkelsen 2003) suggests that telephone interpreting services are ideal for circumstances where the main purpose of communication is to collect simple facts, exchange raw data or provide specific information. Previous studies (Gracia-García 2002; Mikkelsen 2003; Wang 2018) and professional guidelines (Kelly 2008b; NAJIT 2009) indicate that telephone interpreting services, however, are inappropriate for certain circumstances and clients such as legal settings (especially lengthy trials), mental health consultations, group meetings, conversations with high emotional content, conversations about life or death, highly complex situations such as interviews, scenarios requiring interpreting of read-out documents and/or sight translation of texts, situations with poor sound quality or inappropriate equipment, communication involving substantial visual information, children, hard-of-hearing clients, elderly clients, clients with mental illness, clients with heavy accents in English and/or languages other than English (LOTE), clients with low levels of understanding, aggressive or rude clients, and clients in danger of self-harm. Nonetheless, recent survey studies conducted by Wang (2018) and Cheng (2015)

reveal that in Australia and New Zealand telephone interpreting services are actually being used for some of these inappropriate situations and clients, including legal settings (e.g., tribunals, courts and prisons), police interviews, elderly clients, emotional clients, and clients who are intoxicated.

2.3 Survey studies on telephone interpreting

This section describes the methodology and main findings of two survey studies on telephone interpreting (Cheng 2015; Lee 2007) that are highly relevant to the research design of the present study.

Lee (2007) interviewed 20 Korean/English telephone interpreters in Australia over the phone. She asked them questions about their professional profile (accreditation, gender, age, years of interpreting experience, and employment type), their telephone interpreting work (frequency of telephone interpreting, proportion of telephone interpreting out of their overall interpreting work, interpreter employers, clients, settings, attractions of telephone interpreting, the most challenging aspect of telephone interpreting, remuneration, their perceptions of telephone interpreting as a profession, and whether they considered ceasing to provide telephone interpreting services), and their perceptions of the telephone interpreter's role (their choice of personal pronouns, their level of explicitly coordinating the three-party interaction over the phone, their perceptions of clients' understanding of the telephone interpreter's role, and clients' use of personal pronouns). Lee, however, did not ask how the interpreters dealt with difficulties in telephone interpreting. These interpreters reported the following main attractions of telephone interpreting: (i) the convenience of working from home and not having to travel, (ii) good use of their spare time and flexible working hours, (iii) no face-to-face communication making it easier for them to remain neutral and concentrate on interpreting, and (iv) serving the community by helping people with language barriers. In addition, these interpreters complained about the following major challenges in telephone interpreting: (i) a lack of non-verbal information, (ii) technical problems such as poor sound quality and the use of inappropriate equipment, (iii) inconvenience relating to the unpredictability and irregularity of telephone interpreting work, (iv) physical discomfort, and (v) telephone interpreting being simple and tedious work. In summary, from the interpreters' perspective, the disadvantages of telephone interpreting outnumbered the advantages of telephone interpreting. Another interesting finding of Lee's study is that half of these respondents thought about ceasing to provide telephone interpreting services due to low remuneration, inconvenience, ineffectiveness, simple and tedious work, irregularity and other personal reasons.

More recently, Cheng (2015) used an online questionnaire to survey interpreters in New Zealand about their perceptions of challenges in their telephone interpreting work, and then interviewed nine of 21 respondents to the questionnaire in order to elicit further information about these challenges and potential solutions. The questionnaire contained questions about the interpreters' demographic profile (age), telephone interpreting work (years of telephone interpreting experience, employment type, venues where they accept telephone interpreting assignments, settings of telephone interpreting, whether they were provided with preparation materials, how often they experienced difficulties in telephone interpreting due to not having visual information, how often they experienced difficulties in managing turn-taking over the phone, whether they intervened with primary speakers, how often they needed to confirm information with the primary interlocutors, whether they used the third person pronoun for telephone interpreting, how often they felt stressed as a telephone interpreter, how often they felt lonely as a telephone interpreter, and whether they had received interpreting training). The majority of interpreters who completed the questionnaire responded that they did not have any preparation materials for telephone interpreting assignments, experienced difficulties in telephone interpreting due to a lack of visual cues, found it difficult to control turn-taking over the phone, and felt stressed when working as a telephone interpreter. Other challenges identified by some respondents included: (i) the need to obtain factual information from clients accurately, (ii) managing telephone interpreting and other work such as translation, (iii) having to repeatedly provide or request the same information, (iv) clients' lack of familiarity with the interpreter's role, (v) some clients speaking very fast, and (vi) interpreting for emotional clients over the phone. In terms of coping strategies, most of the respondents to the questionnaire replied that they would interrupt the primary speakers if they did not hear or understand what had been said; and all respondents replied that they needed to confirm information with the primary speakers. Some of Cheng's findings from the questionnaire corroborate her results from the interview data.

In summary, despite the virtues of telephone interpreting, challenges in telephone interpreting prevent interpreters from interpreting to the best of their ability. The review above shows a dearth of empirical studies of telephone interpreting. A critical gap in previous studies is how to address the various challenges in telephone interpreting. Thus the present empirical study exploring interpreters' perceptions of challenges in telephone interpreting and their coping strategies is timely.

3. The study

This section describes the research method of the present survey study. It details the research aims, the questionnaire instrument, as well as the procedure for data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Aims

The aims of this study were to explore (i) what interpreters liked and disliked about telephone interpreting, (ii) what challenges they encountered in telephone interpreting, and (iii) how they coped with the challenges.

3.2 The questionnaire

The English questionnaire (see Appendix) was developed on the basis of previous survey studies (e.g., Cheng 2015; Lee 2007), and was released online using SurveyMonkey software. It consisted of four parts: (i) interpreters' demographic information (Q1–9), (ii) their telephone interpreting experience (Q10–21), (iii) their opinions about issues related to the interpreter's role (Q22–25), and (iv) their views on the quality of telephone interpreting (Q26–29). The questionnaire comprised four open-ended questions and 25 closed-ended questions, with 15 closed-ended questions having an "Other (please specify)" option for interpreters to provide open-ended comments. The selection of answer options for the closed-ended questions was based on the findings of previous studies (e.g., Cheng 2015; Gracia-García 2002; Lee 2007; Mikkelsen 2003; Rosenberg 2007) and the researcher's real-life telephone interpreting experience. The reason for using mainly closed-ended questions rather than open-ended ones was that the questionnaire was estimated to take 25 minutes to complete, quite a long time for voluntary participants who were not financially remunerated. Given the large dataset, only results from questions regarding the aforementioned research aims (Q1–8, Q15–19) are reported in this article, with other findings from the questionnaire reported elsewhere (Wang, in press).

3.3 Procedure

To recruit participants, a flyer was disseminated through supporting organisations³ to interpreters in their databases. Interpreters could access the questionnaire (open from May 16 to June 21, 2016) by clicking a website link on the flyer. The quantitative data from the answer options of the closed-ended questions was analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square test for independence (cross-tabulation). The qualitative data from respondents' open comments was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying the recurring themes of textual data, coding and classifying the data according to the themes, and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by looking for commonalities, relations and overarching patterns.

4. Results and discussion

This section first describes respondents' demographic profile, then presents findings regarding what they liked and disliked about telephone interpreting, what challenges they perceived in telephone interpreting, and how they dealt with the challenges. Given that some previous survey studies (e.g., Hale and Napier 2016; Lee 2007) revealed remarkable differences between professional interpreters and paraprofessional interpreters in perceptions of various aspects of interpreting, the current study also compared these two groups in terms of views on many issues in telephone interpreting. It is worth noting that the cross-tabulation of all quantitative data in this article did not show any significant differences between trained interpreters and untrained interpreters in terms of perceptions and coping strategies. This finding might be attributable to the fact that formal interpreting training programs in Australia before 2018 hardly included modules on telephone interpreting training.

4.1 Demographic profile

A total of 465 telephone interpreters throughout Australia completed the questionnaire. The total number of practising telephone interpreters in Australia was not readily available at the time of this study. Nor was it clear how many interpreters had received the aforementioned participant recruitment flyer. Among 585

3. They include Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National), All Graduates Interpreting and Translation Services, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), and Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters Inc.

people who visited the website link of the questionnaire, 117 people only answered the initial question about whether they agreed or disagreed to complete the questionnaire, and 3 interpreters answered some or all of the first 11 questions in the questionnaire before exiting it. Given that these 120 people's responses provided little or no information about telephone interpreting (their reasons for exiting the questionnaire were unclear), they were excluded from the data analysis. The final 465 respondents accounted for 80% of the 585 people who visited the website.

This section details the sample's demographic profile (mainly from Q1–8). As interpreters skipped some questions, the number of respondents to individual questions varied (see the entire Section 4). There were more women (300, 66%) than men (155, 34%) among the 455 respondents to the question about gender. Regarding age, 31 (7%) of 465 respondents were in their twenties, 117 (25%) in their thirties, 95 (20%) in their forties, 104 (22%) in their fifties, 87 (19%) in their sixties, and 31 (7%) in their seventies.

As can be seen from Table 1, 261 (57%) of the 460 respondents had completed some form of formal interpreting training (note that five participants did not answer this question), with 69 (15% of 460) interpreters holding postgraduate degrees in interpreting and 19 (4%) interpreters having university undergraduate degrees in interpreting. Of the 460 respondents, 199 (43%) did not have any formal interpreting qualifications, thus indicating that the threshold for working as telephone interpreters in Australia is low.

Table 1. Respondents' formal interpreting training

Types of formal interpreting training	No. of interpreters with training	Percentage of 460 respondents (%)
Master degree or postgraduate diploma of interpreting	69	15
University undergraduate degree in interpreting	19	4
Advanced Diploma of Interpreting	61	13
Diploma of Interpreting	79	17
Interpreting qualifications lower than diploma	27	6
Unclear interpreting qualifications in terms of level	6	1
Total	261	57

Before 2018, NAATI had four accreditation levels regarding interpreting: (i) Conference Interpreter (Senior), (ii) Conference Interpreter, (iii) Profes-

sional Interpreter, and (iv) Paraprofessional Interpreter. Table 2 shows the 464 respondents' NAATI accreditation levels (note that one participant did not answer this question). Only one (0.2%) of the 464 respondents was a senior conference interpreter; two (0.4%) were conference interpreters; 204 (44%) were professional interpreters; and 224 (48%) were paraprofessional interpreters. Another 17 (4%) respondents held NAATI Recognition, which acknowledges the interpreting competence of bilinguals who use less common languages in which NAATI testing is unavailable. The remaining 16 interpreters did not have NAATI accreditation.

Table 2. Respondents' NAATI accreditation levels

NAATI accreditation level	No. of interpreters	Percentage of 464 respondents (%)
Conference Interpreter (Senior)	1	0.2
Conference Interpreter	2	0.4
Professional Interpreter	204	44
Paraprofessional Interpreter	224	48
Recognised Interpreter	17	4
None	16	3
Total	464	100

Additionally, the 465 interpreters in this study came from 65 language pairs, with the top three language combinations being Mandarin/English (68), Arabic/English (45) and Persian/English (31).

As Table 3 shows, 232 (52%) of the 449 respondents (note that 16 participants did not answer this question) had no more than five years of telephone interpreting experience and 93 (21%) had six to 10 years of telephone interpreting experience. Results in Table 3 indicate that telephone interpreting generally appeals to novice interpreters rather than experienced interpreters.

4.2 What interpreters liked and disliked about telephone interpreting

This section presents findings about respondents' overall views of telephone interpreting, aspects of telephone interpreting that they liked, and facets of telephone interpreting that they did not like. Significant differences between professional interpreters and paraprofessional interpreters in terms of perceptions of relevant issues in telephone interpreting were reported to bring an added perspective to the findings of the relevant literature (e.g., Hale and Napier 2016; Lee 2007).

Table 3. Respondents' telephone interpreting experience

Telephone interpreting experience	No. of interpreters	Percentage of 449 respondents (%)
0–5 years	232	52
6–10 years	93	21
11–15 years	37	8
16–20 years	32	7
21–25 years	19	4
26–30 years	17	4
31–35 years	8	2
36–40 years	9	2
41–45 years	2	0
Total	449	100

4.2.1 Overall opinions

A total of 459 interpreters answered the question (Q15): “Overall, do you enjoy working as a telephone interpreter?” The majority of respondents – 259 (56% of 459) – stated “Yes”, 49 (11%) “No”, and 151 (33%) “Neutral”. This finding indicates that interpreters have mixed feelings about telephone interpreting, as detailed below.

4.2.2 What interpreters liked about telephone interpreting

Table 4 shows the aspects of telephone interpreting that the 465 respondents liked. Note that in regard to Q16 (see Appendix) they could select as many as relevant from four answer options and provide open comments. Interestingly, the majority of 465 respondents liked telephone interpreting for (i) convenience (374, 81% of 465 interpreters), (ii) flexible working hours (341, 73%), and (iii) good use of their spare time (255, 55%). According to 75 interpreters' written comments, other favourable aspects of telephone interpreting included: (i) self-satisfaction from helping people with language barriers, (ii) access to dictionaries and online resources during interpreting, (iii) flexible work environment, (iv) diverse topics, (v) opportunity for doing more interpreting work, (vi) cost-effectiveness, and (vii) telephone interpreting being suitable for certain interpreters. These findings are consistent with previous research (Cheng 2015; Gracia-García 2002; Kelly 2008a, 2008b; Lee 2007; Mikkelsen 2003; Rosenberg 2007).

Some of the above merits of telephone interpreting are illustrated in quote 2:

- (2) Interpreting over the phone means that I get more work than if I do on-site interpreting only. There is incredible variety in the type of calls and their topics; that’s what I like. Never boring. I can access my online dictionary while being on the phone. I can work evenings as well as daytime. I can also start [work] early and finish early.
 (a paraprofessional Spanish/English interpreter with Certificate II in Interpreting and 24 years of interpreting experience)

Table 4. Aspects of telephone interpreting that respondents liked

Aspects of telephone interpreting that respondents liked	No. of interpreters	Percentage of 465 respondents (%)
Answer options (465 interpreters)		
1. Convenience (no travel)	374	81
2. Flexible working hours	341	73
3. Enabling interpreters to make the most of their spare time	255	55
4. No face-to-face contact with clients	71	15
Written comments (75 interpreters)		
1. Self-satisfaction from helping people to communicate	19	4
2. Access to dictionaries and online resources to check new terminology	7	2
3. Being able to work from home or anywhere appropriate	7	2
4. Novelty due to diverse topics	6	1
5. Getting more interpreting work	5	1
6. Cost-effectiveness	4	0.9
7. Being suitable for particular interpreters (e.g., those in remote areas)	3	0.7

As can be seen in Table 4, 19 (4% of 465) interpreters commented on gaining great self-satisfaction by serving their communities, helping other people, and providing communication support. This confirms the finding of previous research (e.g., Cheng 2015; Hale 2011; Lee 2007) that some interpreters remain in the community interpreting profession for intrinsic motivational reasons, despite low remuneration and poor working conditions.

In contrast to the positive comments above, quotes 3 and 4 warn of the disadvantages of telephone interpreting:

- (3) The convenience of not having to travel is offset by all the disadvantages of telephone interpreting.
(a paraprofessional Croatian/English interpreter, untrained, 24 years of interpreting experience)
- (4) It [telephone interpreting] keeps me on my toes. No room for complacency.
(a professional Spanish/English interpreter with postgraduate level interpreting training and 24 years of interpreting experience)

4.2.3 *What interpreters disliked about telephone interpreting*

Regarding the question (Q17) “What aspects of telephone interpreting do you dislike?”, interpreters were allowed to choose as many as relevant from 12 answer options and permitted to offer narrative comments.

As shown in Table 5, the majority of 465 respondents disliked each of the following six aspects of telephone interpreting: (i) poor sound quality (353, 76% of 465 interpreters), (ii) low remuneration (288, 62%), (iii) overlapping speech (280, 60%), (iv) clients’ lack of knowledge about how to work with interpreters effectively over the phone (279, 60%), (v) clients’ lack of familiarity with, or misunderstanding of, the interpreter’s role (250, 54%), and (vi) a lack of briefing from clients (237, 51%).

As noted previously in Table 2 in Section 4.1, the total number of professional interpreters and paraprofessional interpreters in this study was 204 and 224, respectively. The respective numbers of professional interpreters and paraprofessional interpreters who identified specific unfavourable aspects of telephone interpreting are presented in Table 5. Interestingly, Chi-square test results show that the proportion of professional interpreters who disliked low remuneration for telephone interpreting ($\chi^2(1, n=424)=6.99, p=0.008, phi^4=0.13$), a lack of briefing from clients ($\chi^2(1, n=424)=4.26, p=0.039, phi=0.11$), a lack of non-verbal information ($\chi^2(1, n=424)=4.03, p=0.045, phi=0.10$), clients’ impatience and rudeness towards interpreters ($\chi^2(1, n=424)=5.62, p=0.018, phi=0.12$), and the unpleasant content of some phone calls ($\chi^2(1, n=424)=5.85, p=0.016, phi=0.12$) respectively was significantly higher than the proportion of paraprofessional interpreters who thought so. These findings indicate that professional interpreters, compared with paraprofessionals interpreters, appear to be more

4. The phi coefficient is a correlation coefficient and can range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a stronger relationship between the two variables – in this case, interpreters’ NAATI accreditation level and their dislike of low remuneration for telephone interpreting. The guidelines for evaluating the phi coefficient value are: 0.10 indicates a small effect; 0.30 represents a medium effect; and 0.50 suggests a large effect.

Table 5. Aspects of telephone interpreting that interpreters disliked

Aspects of telephone interpreting that interpreters disliked	No. of interpreters	Percentage of 465 respondents (%)	No. of professional interpreters	No. of paraprofessional interpreters
1. Poor sound quality	353	76	157	166
2*. Low remuneration	288	62	141	125
3. Overlapping speech	280	60	129	134
4. Clients not knowing how to work with interpreters effectively over the phone	279	60	131	126
5. Clients not knowing the interpreter’s role	250	54	118	111
6*. Clients not providing a briefing about the topic or context of phone calls	237	51	115	102
7*. Lack of non-verbal information	219	47	108	95
8. The irregularity and unpredictability of telephone interpreting work causing inconvenience	152	33	72	67
9*. Some clients being rude and impatient over the phone	148	32	77	59
10*. Unpleasant content of some phone calls (complaint, etc.)	114	25	61	43
11. Physical discomfort (e.g., sitting for too long, long calls hurting arms and ears)	90	19	46	36
12. Telephone interpreting work being simple, repetitive and boring	36	8	22	10
Other (please specify)	82	18	N/A	N/A

Note. As to each of the star-marked (*) aspects of telephone interpreting, the proportion of professional interpreters who disliked it was significantly higher than the proportion of paraprofessional interpreters who thought so.

demanding in terms of satisfactory remuneration, appropriate working conditions and due respect from clients in the performance of telephone interpreting work.

Furthermore, 82 (18% of 465) interpreters contributed additional comments to either expand on the above 12 answer options or to describe other dis-

advantages of telephone interpreting. These included: (i) heavy accents and/or unclear pronunciation in some clients' English and/or LOTE, (ii) diverse topics and unfamiliar technical terms, (iii) interpreting in situations for which telephone interpreting is inappropriate, (iv) work-related stress, and (v) a lack of support from interpreter employers.

4.3 Challenges in telephone interpreting

When asked what challenges they perceived in telephone interpreting (Q18), respondents could choose as many as relevant from eight answer options and could utilise an "Other (please specify)" option to provide open comments based on their telephone interpreting experience. It is notable that there is some overlap between interpreters' perceived unfavourable aspects of telephone interpreting, the eight challenges in telephone interpreting provided as answer options, and the 16 challenges that emerged from interpreters' narrative comments.

4.3.1 *Quantitative results regarding perceived challenges in telephone interpreting*

Quantitative results regarding the answer options of challenges in telephone interpreting are presented in Table 6. As many as 383 (82% of 465) interpreters considered technical problems, poor sound quality and background noise as challenges in telephone interpreting. This corroborates results in previous literature (Lee 2007; Rosenberg 2007). This finding highlights the need for users of telephone interpreting services, especially public service providers, to use appropriate equipment such as dual handset phones to ensure good sound quality (Gracia-García 2002; Kelly 2008b; Mikkelson 2003). This result also highlights the need for interpreter employers to provide telephone interpreters with proper equipment such as hand-free phones and high-quality headsets (with a mute button, separate dual volume control and an amplifier) so that they can interpret to the best of their ability (Mikkelson 2003; NAJIT 2009). Additionally, 285 (61% of 465) respondents deemed overlapping speech a challenge in telephone interpreting. Apart from these major challenges, other difficulties in telephone interpreting included: (i) clients speaking very fast, (ii) diverse topics of phone calls, (iii) confusion as to who said what, (iv) difficulty in establishing rapport with clients, (v) some phone calls being mentally draining, and (vi) difficulty in managing the triadic communication over the phone. It is interesting to note that only seven interpreters responded that they had never encountered any difficulties in telephone interpreting.

Interestingly, Chi-square test results reveal that the proportion of paraprofessional interpreters who considered fast speakers as a challenge in telephone

interpreting was significantly higher than the proportion of professional interpreters who thought so ($\chi^2(1, n=424)=4.33, p=0.038, phi=-0.11$). However, the proportion of professional interpreters who viewed overlapping speech as a difficulty in telephone interpreting was significantly higher than the proportion of paraprofessional interpreters who held this view ($\chi^2(1, n=424)=6.35, p=0.012, phi=0.13$). These new findings potentially highlight how interpreting experience and expertise seem to play roles in the coordination strategies employed by telephone interpreters in the three-party communication. Further research is required to understand the significance of these.

Table 6. Challenges in telephone interpreting perceived by interpreters

Challenges in telephone interpreting	No. of interpreters	Percentage of 465 respondents (%)	No. of professional interpreters	No. of paraprofessional interpreters
1. Technical problems, poor sound quality and background noise	383	82	172	179
2*. Overlapping speech	285	61	139	124
3*. Some clients speaking very fast over the phone	189	41	69	98
4. Telephone interpreting covering a wide range of topics	187	40	76	96
5. Confusion about who said what	181	39	78	88
6. Difficulty in establishing rapport with clients	140	30	61	69
7. Some phone calls being emotionally and psychologically draining	125	27	61	52
8. Difficult in managing the triadic communication over the phone	76	16	42	29
Other (please specify)	139	30	N/A	N/A

Note. Regarding each star-marked (*) item in the first column, the proportion of professional interpreters who deemed it a challenge in telephone interpreting was significantly different from the proportion of paraprofessional interpreters who thought so.

4.3.2 *Qualitative results regarding perceived challenges in telephone interpreting*

Apart from the abovementioned quantitative results, qualitative results from 139 (30% of 465) interpreters' written comments on challenges in telephone interpreting are presented below, along with representative quotes. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed 16 challenges in telephone interpreting that could be categorised as (i) comprehension-related challenges, (ii) communication-related challenges, and (iii) other challenges.

Comprehension-related challenges

Challenges affecting interpreters' comprehension in telephone interpreting included: (i) poor sound quality, (ii) a lack of non-verbal information, (iii) heavy accent and/or unclear pronunciation in some clients' English and/or LOTE, as well as (iv) diverse topics and unfamiliar terminology.

Twenty-six interpreters commented on poor sound quality due to technical problems, sudden disconnection or poor connection, unreliable phone connectivity, poor Internet connectivity, background noise, and inappropriate equipment. Quote 5 highlights these issues:

- (5) Some non-English speakers call from a noisy place or call using a very unreliable phone line but the English-speaking staff member blames me for the noise. Some non-English speakers put the loudspeaker on and their family members interfere with the interpreting. When sound quality is very poor, I have to maximise the volume of my phone and this is going to damage my hearing in the long term.

(a professional Cantonese/English interpreter, untrained, seven years of interpreting experience)

In addition, 30 interpreters commented that the lack of non-verbal information was a significant challenge in telephone interpreting. This corroborates the findings of previous research (Cheng 2015; Gracia-García 2002; Lee 2007; Wadensjö 1999). Interpreters in the present study considered the following non-verbal cues as crucial for them to produce effective interpretations: speakers' facial expression, lip movement, body language, information about what is happening in the immediate environment, as well as people, objects and documents that speakers refer to during the conversation.

The lack of non-verbal cues, poor sound quality and a lack of clients' briefing indicate that telephone interpreters work under poor working conditions. Feasible measures to improve telephone interpreters' working conditions include: (i) clients and interpreters using appropriate equipment for telephone interpreting services, (ii) replacing telephone interpreting with videoconference interpreting,

and (iii) clients receiving compulsory training on how to work effectively with interpreters over the phone.

Another 22 respondents mentioned that it was difficult to understand some clients' English and/or LOTE due to their heavy accent and/or unclear pronunciation. This new finding indicates that an important part of telephone interpreting training is to help interpreters become familiar with different accents and with clients who come from various socio-cultural backgrounds.

Many interpreters also regarded diverse topics and unfamiliar terminology as difficulties in telephone interpreting. This result confirms Cheng's (2015) findings. This finding indicates that users need to brief interpreters about the context and topic of phone calls, and offer repetition, clarification and confirmation when requested. That is, clients need to be aware that the quality of telephone interpreting not only depends on interpreters' skills and knowledge, but also on their own communication skills and cooperation with interpreters, as discussed further below.

Communication-related challenges

Interpreters in this study encountered the following difficulties when coordinating the three-party communication over the phone: (i) overlapping speech, (ii) clients' lack of knowledge about how to work effectively with interpreters over the phone, (iii) clients' lack of familiarity with the interpreter's role, and (iv) some clients' lack of professionalism or rude attitudes towards interpreters.

In the absence of visual cues, clients' overlapping speech makes it difficult for interpreters to understand source language utterances and manage turn-taking. Some interpreters stated that they had to intervene with clients when there was overlapping speech, as expressed in quote 6:

- (6) Overlapping speech is frustrating, so I have to ask both the non-English speaker and the English-speaking professional to restrain from doing it.
(a professional Spanish/English interpreter with postgraduate level interpreting training and 22 years of interpreting experience)

Additionally, 34 interpreters complained that many users were not trained in terms of how to work effectively with interpreters over the phone. For example, some clients (i) did not brief the telephone interpreter about the topic or context of phone calls, (ii) began talking without identifying themselves and their institutions, (iii) spoke extremely fast (e.g., rattling off names), (iv) talked nonstop, (v) did not wait for the interpreter to interpret or finish interpreting, (vi) interrupted the interpreter constantly, (vii) provided long or irrelevant answers, (viii) kept repeating themselves, (ix) refused to cooperate when the interpreter intervened to manage turn-taking, (x) ignored the interpreter's request for briefing, repeti-

tion, explanation or clarification, (xi) did not notify the interpreter of important non-verbal information, (xii) lacked understanding about cultural differences, (xiii) demonstrated poor communication skills, and (xiv) were disrespectful to the interpreter. These communication-related difficulties in telephone interpreting can be highlighted during client education. Some of these challenges are expressed in quote 7:

- (7) Some public service providers fail to properly identify where they're calling from and their names. It gives me the impression that they think of interpreters as machines and fail to recognise the human process. Some clients (the elderly in particular) do not understand the mechanics of working with interpreters. When clients understand some Spanish, they don't wait for me to interpret, but talk directly over me. Some service providers are rude to interpreters by extension, when they mean to be rude or talk harshly to their clients. Many service providers seem to have not received training on how to work with interpreters and do not facilitate communication. As a result, their speech is too lengthy and confusing; they backtrack on what they have just said; and they do not like it when the interpreter interrupts and explains how they should be talking.

(a professional Spanish/English interpreter, untrained, 22 years of interpreting experience)

Moreover, 13 interpreters expressed the view that some users were unfamiliar with, or misunderstood, the interpreter's role. For example, some clients (i) confused interpreting and translating, (ii) considered telephone interpreters as machines, robots or online translators (see quote 8), (iii) often addressed the other primary party in the third person pronoun rather than the first person pronoun, (iv) asked the telephone interpreter personal questions, and (v) had unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the interpreter. These results indicate that users of telephone interpreting services need to be educated about the interpreter's role. These findings echo the results of other studies (Cheng 2015; Hale and Napier 2016; Lee 2007; Wang, in press).

- (8) Some English-speaking clients think that telephone interpreters are robots or online translators. They don't brief us about the topic of phone calls or clarify the spelling of non-English speakers' names. They think that we are just machines without a need to understand the general picture.

(a professional Vietnamese/English interpreter with Advanced Diploma of Interpreting and 13 years of interpreting experience)

Further, 21 interpreters complained that some clients were impatient with them or disrespectful to them by taking advantage of the invisibility and anonymity in telephone interpreting, as expressed in quotes 9 and 10:

- (9) When more clarification from the non-English speaker is needed for me to understand the subject matter spoken over the phone, some English-speaking clients don't have patience for that, and are rude enough to remind me about how my job is only to interpret, not to have conversations with the other party. People are ruder and more disrespectful knowing I can't see them. Sometimes two parties shout at each other into the phone, not realising that I am the end recipient of all that in the middle.
(a professional Persian/English interpreter, untrained, 6 years of interpreting experience)
- (10) Some clients are very quick to blame me for their own inability to communicate effectively. If anything goes wrong, clients often assume that it's my fault. They can even be bullies and very dictatorial towards interpreters. Somehow, the phone and the anonymity give everyone a licence to “let loose.”
(a professional Arabic/English interpreter with Advanced Diploma of Interpreting and 14 years of interpreting experience)

Such inappropriate behaviour on the part of clients is likely to affect interpreters' concentration and mental health, again to the detriment of the accuracy of interpretation. These new findings regarding telephone interpreting corroborate the results of Hale and Napier's (2016) survey of court interpreters in Australia. Further, these findings indicate that some clients lack respect for interpreters, do not trust in interpreters' professionalism and interpreting competence, and use interpreters as scapegoats, thus suggesting the low professional status of interpreters in general and the need for client education.

Other challenges

Interpreters in the present study identified other challenges in telephone interpreting, including (i) low remuneration, (ii) casual employment, (iii) the irregularity and unpredictability of phone calls, (iv) the unpleasant content of some phone calls, (v) clients' inappropriate use of telephone interpreting services, (vi) physical discomfort, (vii) work-related stress, and (viii) insufficient support from interpreter employers. These findings are consistent with previous research (Cheng 2015; Lee 2007).

Many respondents not only felt dissatisfied with poor remuneration for telephone interpreting⁵ (see quote 11), but also complained about being employed as casual contractors without regular income and work-related entitlements. As low

5. Based on the researcher's contracts with interpreting agencies in Australia, remuneration for interpreting a single 15-minute phone call varies from AUD10 to AUD12.50, whereas the remuneration for interpreting a single one-hour phone call ranges from AUD30 to AUD37. In other words, interpreters are better-off interpreting short phone calls than long ones.

remuneration reflects the low professional status of interpreters in general (Hale and Napier 2016), this finding stresses the need for remuneration for telephone interpreting to be raised.

- (11) Telephone interpreting can be extremely draining work for a low hourly rate.
(a professional Serbian/English interpreter, untrained, 18 years of interpreting experience)

Additionally, some interpreters viewed the irregularity and unpredictability of telephone interpreting work as a challenge. The fact that phone calls may come in at any time – such as late at night – causes inconvenience to interpreters' daily lives and interferes with their other work (e.g., translation), deadlines or appointments. Moreover, interpreters may receive many calls one day but none another day, resulting in irregular working hours, an unpredictable amount of work, an unstable income and job insecurity.

Furthermore, many respondents considered phone calls on the following topics as unpleasant and mentally draining: domestic violence, legal matters, refugee experiences, mental health consultations, emergencies, disputes, and highly emotional content. Such content resulted in telephone interpreters feeling sad and stressed, thus possibly causing vicarious trauma to them.

Many interpreters in the current study also complained that telephone interpreting services were used in highly complex situations, for which on-site interpreting services would be more appropriate. Twenty-three interpreters commented that telephone interpreting services should not be used for the following situations and clients: mental health settings, prisons and detention centres, situations requiring the interpreting of read-out documents and/or sight translation of lengthy contracts and medical consent forms, hospital pre-admissions, group meetings, tribunals, highly complex matters, the hard-of-hearing, the elderly, children, and clients with low levels of literacy. These results substantiate claims in previous literature (Gracia-García 2002; Kelly 2008b; Mikkelson 2003; NAJIT 2009; Wang 2018).

Some respondents also complained about physical discomfort in telephone interpreting, including sore ears due to interpreting long phone calls and clients' loud voices, irritation to ears due to heated batteries in mobile phones, decline of hearing due to clients' high volume of voice and background noise, strain on vocal cords due to being asked to speak louder, headaches, constant note-taking, sitting for a long time, and few or no breaks. These findings indicate that telephone interpreters' poor working conditions need to be improved. Quote 12 illustrates that the high demand on the experienced interpreter's vocal cords led her to avoid telephone interpreting work. Some respondents thus recommended that telephone interpreting assignments should not exceed 30 minutes.

(12) The high demand on interpreters’ vocal cords is a challenge for me. I was often asked to speak louder when there was a lot of background noise, or the client was hard of hearing, etc. Because of the strain on my vocal cords, I have cut down my phone interpreting from about 30 hours a week to now hardly doing it this year.

(a professional Mandarin/English interpreter with postgraduate level interpreting training and 18 years of interpreting experience)

Moreover, many interpreters in this study commented that telephone interpreting work was stressful. They identified the following sources of stress: interpreting for highly complex settings (e.g., court cases, mental health consultations), the unpleasant content of some phone calls, no pre-task preparation, a lack of non-verbal cues, uncooperative or impolite clients, job insecurity, low remuneration, physical discomfort, long phone calls, the intensity of telephone interpreting work, and working in isolation. These findings corroborate Cheng’s (2015) results.

Despite feeling stressed, telephone interpreters received little support from their employers. Some interpreters in the present study commented that their employers (i) did not encourage communication between them and other telephone interpreters, (ii) communicated with them in a top-down manner, (iii) rebuked them for negative feedback from customers, (iv) did not inform them of customers’ positive feedback, and (v) failed to respond to their feedback or concerns.

4.4 Coping strategies

A follow-up question (Q19) was how interpreters dealt with the various challenges in telephone interpreting. Respondents could choose as many as relevant from five answer options and contribute additional comments through an “Other (please specify)” option. Findings in this section contribute new knowledge to the available literature on telephone interpreting. In relation to interpreters’ coping strategies, quantitative results regarding answer options are presented before qualitative results regarding respondents’ written comments.

As many as 407 (88% of 465) interpreters asked clients for repetition, explanation or clarification when they did not hear or understand what the clients had said. To cope with poor sound quality, 213 (46%) interpreters used high-quality earphones or headsets or landline phones, and 185 (40%) interpreters used reliable telecommunications services. In addition, 152 (33%) interpreters took the initiative to explain the interpreter’s role to clients at the beginning of phone calls. To manage work-related stress, 48 (10%) interpreters sought moral support from family, friends or counsellors.

Moreover, 95 (21% of 465) interpreters provided open comments to describe their coping strategies. Firstly, interpreters used effective strategies to address comprehension-related challenges in telephone interpreting. Nine interpreters commented that they always worked at quiet places to minimise distraction and background noise. In relation to background noise on clients' side, one interpreter assertively asked them to minimise the noise, whereas another interpreter asked them to mute their microphones when not speaking. To cope with the lack of non-verbal cues, many interpreters (i) requested speakers for a briefing at the beginning of phone calls, (ii) required speakers to identify themselves and their organisations at the start of phone conversations, and (iii) carefully listened for speakers' "body language" by focusing on their speech features such as tone and volume. Furthermore, some interpreters proactively dealt with diverse topics and unfamiliar terminology in telephone interpreting by (i) looking up new words in dictionaries while interpreting, and (ii) using online resources such as Google, Google Translate and clients' official websites during interpreting.

Secondly, interpreters intervened with clients as necessary (i.e., explicitly coordinated the three-party communication over the phone) to cope with communication-related challenges in telephone interpreting. For example, when clients asked interpreters for advice or engaged them in personal conversations, the interpreters explained the interpreter's role to the clients so as to remain impartial. Additionally, to manage turn-taking, interpreters asked clients to (i) pause or break up long remarks, (ii) slow down, (iii) stop interrupting their interpretation, and (iv) speak one at a time. Alternatively, to avoid cognitive overload and ensure the accuracy of interpretation, some interpreters took notes when clients were speaking rapidly or nonstop. Furthermore, in extreme situations, some interpreters chose to withdraw from phone calls. These extreme situations included: (i) when communication went out of control, (ii) when clients showed no understanding of or respect for the interpreter's role, (iii) when clients were rude or abusive to interpreters, and (iv) when telephone interpreting was used in situations for which it was inappropriate. When interpreting for agitated or emotional clients, several interpreters remained patient and put themselves in the clients' shoes.

Thirdly, interpreters in this study managed work-related stress by (i) logging into telephone interpreting systems only for brief periods, (ii) logging out of the systems after interpreting stressful phone calls to allow for a break, (iii) engaging in enjoyable leisure activities to rejuvenate themselves following periods of stress, and (iv) accepting counselling services when offered by employers or clients. An important finding is that a number of interpreters avoided or ceased to provide telephone interpreting services for reasons such as (i) mentally draining phone calls, (ii) clients' lack of familiarity with the

interpreter’s role, (iii) employers taking no actions to address interpreters’ concerns, (iv) low remuneration, and (v) physical strain. Quote 13 expressed some of these issues:

- (13) If the assignment is draining, I simply don’t take telephone interpreting assignments for a while, until I feel up to it again. It doesn’t pay much, anyway, so it’s much better to spend time on something pleasant for me.
(a professional Serbian/English interpreter, untrained, 11 years of interpreting experience)

5. Conclusions

In this study, 465 interpreters in Australia completed a questionnaire about their views of favourable and unfavourable aspects of telephone interpreting, challenges in telephone interpreting, and their coping strategies. Results show that slightly over half of the respondents enjoyed working as telephone interpreters. Results also reveal that interpreters identified many favourable and unfavourable aspects of telephone interpreting. From the respondents’ perspective, the main merits of telephone interpreting are: the convenience of not having to travel, flexible working hours, and good use of their spare time. However, interpreters identified many comprehension-related challenges (poor sound quality, a lack of non-verbal information, some clients’ heavy accent and/or unclear pronunciation in English and/or LOTE, as well as diverse topics and unfamiliar terminology), communication-related challenges (overlapping speech, clients’ lack of knowledge about how to work effectively with interpreters over the phone, clients’ lack of familiarity with the interpreter’s role, some clients’ lack of professionalism or rude attitudes towards interpreters), as well as other challenges (low remuneration, casual employment, the irregularity and unpredictability of telephone interpreting work, the unpleasant content of some phone calls, clients’ inappropriate use of telephone interpreting services, physical discomfort, work-related stress, and a lack of support from interpreter employers).

Interestingly, interpreters adopted various coping strategies, including using high-quality earphones or headsets to cope with poor sound quality, intervening with clients when necessary to clarify information and manage turn-taking, asking clients for a briefing to contextualise phone calls, using dictionaries and online resources during telephone interpreting to deal with diverse topics and unfamiliar technical terms, explaining the interpreter’s role to clients at the beginning of phone calls, exercising self-care to deal with work-related stress, and ceasing to provide telephone interpreting services.

These findings have implications for the provision and use of telephone interpreting services. Firstly, there is a need to establish national protocols for telephone interpreting, outlining situations and user groups telephone interpreting services are (in)appropriate for, and providing effective communication frameworks for telephone interpreting (e.g., briefing, turn-taking, the three parties' choice of personal pronouns). Secondly, clients need to use appropriate equipment for telephone interpreting services, receive training on how to work effectively with interpreters over the phone, and be aware of their own important roles in the success of interpreter-mediated communication over the phone. Thirdly, interpreter employers need to provide appropriate equipment, telephone interpreting training and sufficient support to their telephone interpreters, raise remuneration for telephone interpreting work, establish mechanisms to monitor and enhance the quality of telephone interpreting performance, and replace telephone interpreting with videoconference interpreting. Fourthly, telephone interpreters need to undergo telephone interpreting training and professional development to improve their skills, including listening for non-verbal information and managing turn-taking in triadic communication. That is, all stakeholders need to work together to improve the quality of telephone interpreting services.

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. More open-ended questions and scales (e.g., scales regarding the frequency of encountering certain challenges in telephone interpreting) could have been used in the questionnaire to elicit more insights from interpreters and allow the researcher to conduct more cross-tabulation of data. In relation to the question about what aspects of telephone interpreting that interpreters disliked, the provision of as many as 12 answer options which were mainly negatively phrased might have prompted interpreters to choose these answer options. Additionally, questions and answer options in the questionnaire could have been phrased more carefully to avoid the aforementioned overlap between interpreters' perceived unfavourable aspects of telephone interpreting and their perceived challenges in telephone interpreting. Open-ended questions rather than closed-ended questions about favourable and unfavourable aspects of telephone interpreting, challenges in telephone interpreting and interpreters' coping strategies should have been utilised in the questionnaire to shed more light on these issues. These methodological weaknesses of this study should be avoided in similar survey studies in the future.

It is important to note that communication technologies have been developing rapidly in ways that can bring (or perhaps are bringing) telephone interpreting closer to videoconference interpreting and can revolutionise the provision of language services. Nowadays, interpreters can perform telephone interpreting by using landline phones, mobile phones, mobile applications and online platforms. More and more interpreter employers in Australia and other countries

have commenced providing videoconference interpreting services in addition to telephone interpreting and face-to-face interpreting services. In the future, remote interpreters may be able to perform sight translation through digital scanning and instant message (Kelly 2008b). There might also be machine-interpreted telephonic communication (Gracia-García 2002).

Further research is required to survey other stakeholders (e.g., public service providers, clients, interpreting agencies) about their views of telephone interpreting, explore the dynamics of triadic communication in real-life interpreter-mediated telephone conversations, and compare telephone interpreting, video-conference interpreting and on-site interpreting in terms of quality of interpreting performance.

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Appendix. The English questionnaire on telephone interpreting

1. **Your gender**
 - Female
 - Male
2. **Your age group**
 - 20–29
 - 30–39
 - 40–49
 - 50–59
 - 60–69
 - 70–79
3. **Which state/territory of Australia are you living in?**
 - New South Wales
 - Victoria
 - Queensland

- South Australia
 - Western Australia
 - Australian Capital Territory
 - Tasmania
 - Northern territory
4. **What is your highest educational qualification?**
 - School certificate
 - High school certificate
 - Vocational qualification (e.g., Technical and Further Education [TAFE])
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Postgraduate Diploma or Master's degree
 - PhD
 - Other (please specify)
 5. **Have you completed any formal interpreting training?**
 - No
 - Yes. Please specify the name of your training program:
 6. **What is your NAATI accreditation for interpreting?**
 - I don't have NAATI accreditation for interpreting
 - Recognised Interpreter
 - Paraprofessional Interpreter
 - Professional Interpreter
 - Conference Interpreter
 - Conference Interpreter (Senior)
 7. **Please write down the language pair of your NAATI accreditation for interpreting:**
 8. **In which year did you receive your NAATI credential for interpreting?**
 9. **On average, how many hours of interpreting (all kinds of interpreting work) do you do per week?**
 - Less than 10 hours
 - 10–19 hours
 - 20–29 hours
 - 30–39 hours
 - 40–49 hours
 - At least 50 hours
 10. **In what year did you start to work as a telephone interpreter?**
 11. **Overall, what's the percentage of your telephone interpreting work compared to your on-site interpreting work?**
 - Telephone interpreting work (%):
 - On-site interpreting work (%):
 12. **For which agencies do you work as a telephone interpreter? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
 - TIS National (Translating and Interpreting Service)

- VITS (Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service)
 - ONCALL Interpreters & Translators Australia
 - All Graduates Interpreting and Translation Services
 - Department of Human Services
 - Other (please specify)
13. **On average, how many telephone interpreting assignments do you complete per week?**
- Fewer than 10
 - 10–29
 - 30–49
 - 50–69
 - 70–89
 - At least 90
14. **What topics does your telephone interpreting work typically involve? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- Medical appointments
 - Mental health consultations
 - Legal settings
 - Police interviews
 - Public housing
 - Social welfare payment
 - Child support (child maintenance fee that one divorced parent pays to the other parent)
 - Domestic violence
 - Utility bills
 - Driving tests
 - Car registration
 - Public transport
 - Insurance
 - Other (please specify)
15. **Overall, do you enjoy working as a telephone interpreter?**
- Yes
 - No
 - Neutral
16. **What aspects of telephone interpreting do you like? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- Convenience (no travel)
 - Flexible working hours
 - Enabling interpreters to make the most of their spare time
 - No face-to-face contact with clients
 - Other (please specify)

17. **What aspects of telephone interpreting do you dislike? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- Lack of non-verbal information
 - Clients not providing a briefing about the topic or context of phone calls
 - Clients not knowing the interpreter’s role
 - Clients not knowing how to work with interpreters effectively over the phone
 - Some clients being rude and impatient over the phone
 - Overlapping speech
 - Unpleasant content of some phone calls (complaint, etc.)
 - Poor sound quality
 - Low remuneration
 - Physical discomfort (e.g., sitting for too long, long calls hurting arms and ears)
 - The irregularity and unpredictability of telephone interpreting work causing inconvenience
 - Telephone interpreting work being simple, repetitive and boring
 - Other (please specify)
18. **Based on your experience, what are challenges in telephone interpreting? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- Telephone interpreting covering a wide range of topics
 - Some clients speaking very fast over the phone
 - Technical problems, poor sound quality and background noise
 - Difficulty in establishing rapport with clients
 - Difficulty in managing the triadic communication over the phone
 - Confusion about who said what
 - Overlapping speech
 - Some phone calls being emotionally and psychologically draining
 - Other (please specify)
19. **How do you cope with the challenges that you identified in Question 18? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- Explaining the interpreter’s role to clients at the beginning of phone calls
 - Asking clients for repetition, explanation or clarification when I don’t hear or understand what they have said
 - Using high-quality earphones or headsets or landline phones to maximise sound quality
 - Using reliable telecommunications services to ensure high quality of sound
 - Seeking moral support from family, friends or counsellors to manage work-related stress
 - Other (please specify)
20. **What do you think of the remuneration for telephone interpreting work?**
- Very satisfactory
 - Satisfactory
 - Acceptable

- Unsatisfactory
 - Very unsatisfactory
21. **Overall, do you prefer on-site interpreting or telephone interpreting?**
- On-site interpreting
 - Telephone interpreting
 - I like both equally
 - My preference depends on the following factors:
22. **In your telephone interpreting work, apart from interpreting the content, do you also facilitate the communication through intervention?**
- No
 - Yes
 - Normally I just interpret the content. I only intervene with clients when the communication breaks down or misunderstanding occurs.
 - Other (please specify)
23. **In your opinion, do clients of telephone interpreting services understand the interpreter's role?**
- Most clients do
 - Some clients do but others don't
 - Most clients don't
 - Other (please specify)
24. **In telephone interpreting, do you interpret in the first person pronoun ("I") or in the third person pronoun ("he", "she")?**
- Always in the first person pronoun
 - Often in the first person pronoun
 - Often in the third person pronoun
 - A mixture of both the first person pronoun and the third person pronoun
 - Other (please specify)
25. **In your telephone interpreting work, how do clients address each other?**
- Typically clients address each other by saying "you"
 - Typically clients address each other by saying "he" or "she"
 - Often a mixture of both
 - Other (please specify)
26. **In your opinion, is telephone interpretation as accurate as on-site interpretation?**
- Yes, equally accurate
 - No, telephone interpretation is less accurate
 - No, telephone interpretation is more accurate
 - It depends on various factors. Please list the factors that may influence the accuracy of telephone and on-site interpretation:

27. **In your opinion, when should telephone interpreting be avoided? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- When a client is hard of hearing
 - When a client is an elderly person
 - When a client has a heavy accent in English and/or LOTE
 - When a client has mental illness
 - When conversations are about life or death
 - When conversations have high emotional content
 - Other (please specify)
28. **How to improve the accuracy and efficacy of telephone interpretation? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- Clients always brief telephone interpreters about the topic and context of phone calls
 - Clients talk one at a time
 - Interpreters engage in special training and professional development workshops on telephone interpreting
 - Interpreting agencies educate their clients about the telephone interpreter’s role
 - Interpreting agencies educate their clients about how to work effectively with interpreters over the phone
 - Other (please specify)
29. **What do you want your interpreting agencies to do for you? (Please choose as many answer options as relevant and use “Other (please specify)” to provide written comments.)**
- Nothing
 - Raise the remuneration for telephone interpreting
 - Offer me training on telephone interpreting
 - Offer me professional development workshops on telephone interpreting
 - Give me opportunities to communicate with other telephone interpreters
 - Give me support and counselling services to help me cope with work-related stress
 - Offer me appropriate teleconferencing equipment such as hand-free phones or high-quality headsets
 - Other (please specify)

Address for correspondence

Jihong Wang
School of Languages and Cultures
The University of Queensland
BRISBANE
QLD 4072
Australia
j.wang7@uq.edu.au
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6965-7949>

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