Multimodal explorations of interpreter-mediated interaction: recent trends and future developments

Elena Davitti, University of Surrey

This paper reflects on the opportunities (and constraints) of adopting a multimodal approach to the investigation of interpreter-mediated interaction. Multimodality refers to different analytical and methodological frameworks that have looked at communication as being more than about language and, therefore, needing to account for resources other than talk (such as gaze, gestures, head and body movement, proxemics) when investigating how we interact with one another, with artefacts and technologies in different contexts. Since the early 2000s, a branch of Interpreting Studies has increasingly explored interpreter-mediated interaction through multimodal lenses, thus establishing a synergy that has yielded very interesting findings and deepened our understanding of specific interactional dynamics in both monologic and dialogic types of interpreting. Nevertheless, a common multimodal analytical framework to account for the interplay between verbal, visual, aural, embodied and spatial meaning-making resources has not yet been agreed upon. The call for methodological innovation is strengthened by the emergence of video-mediated interpreting, where interacting via screens without sharing the same physical space adds a further layer of complexity to interactional dynamics. This paper will first provide an overview of recent trends and developments in multimodality applied to interpreting, with a view to highlighting the current state of the art of research in this area. Drawing on authentic extracts from (mostly dialogic) interpreter-mediated interaction, this paper will then problematise how the integration of a multimodal perspective into qualitative investigation of interpreter-mediated interaction can contribute to the advancement of the field. Building on the assumption that broadening the analytical scope is useful, the focus will be on the questions that a multimodal approach can help us tackle, and on how this holistic type of analysis can become more systematic in order to promote a truly multimodal turn in this field.

Short CV

Elena Davitti is a Lecturer in Translation Studies at the Centre for Translation Studies, University of Surrey (UK). She holds a PhD in Translation and Intercultural Studies from the University of Manchester and an MA in Conference Interpreting from the University of Bologna at Forlì. Her research has mostly focused on (dialogic) interpreter-mediated interaction that she has analysed through multimodal lenses. Her interests include technologies applied to interpreting, particularly video-mediated and mobile interpreting, interlingual respeaking and innovations in interpreter education.

e.davitti@surrey.ac.uk

Technology
Arts Sciences
TH Köln