

Do technological tools facilitate multilingual communication in public service provision? The perspective of public service interpreters and translators.

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The ever-increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in urban settings around the world is raising public service providers' demand for so-called bridging instruments for overcoming language barriers in written and oral communication with foreign-language clients. In this paper, we focus on the use of technological bridging instruments used by public service interpreters and translators (PSITs).

The impact of technology on professional translation and interpreting in public service settings is undeniable these days. So far, research in these settings has for instance focused on Remote Interpreting Technologies (RITs), which enable professional interpreters to provide their services 'from a distance' or remote site or the application of corpus-based tools. Technological advances are bringing about new possibilities for providing interpreting and translation services to different types of public service 'clients', but are at the same time also causing new challenges or even raising some concerns (e.g. with respect to quality).

We present the results of an online survey among PSIT professionals (N=188) from different countries and continents who are involved in different domains of public service provision. The objectives of the present study are (1) to gain a broader understanding of the way and the extent to which professional PSITs use different types of technologies (e.g. CAT tools, machine translation apps, Instant Messaging systems, videoconferencing tools, terminology management systems) in multilingual service encounters, and (2) to gauge the perceptions of PSITs concerning the possibilities, challenges and concerns related to the use of these technologies in professional contexts. We conclude our presentation with a reflection on the general implications of the study, especially in terms of policy-making and PSIT training.

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