Optimising remote interpreting technologies: the user experience perspective

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RI Technologies

This paper presents the findings of an empirical study that addresses the use of remote interpreting technologies and their impact on public service interpreters.

Research Question:

1) Do the existing RI technology satisfy the community interpreters´ needs?;

2) Based on the users experience (interpreters), how could the existing technology be optimised?

3) To what extent does each mode of RI technologies affect community interpreters?

Objectives:

1) to identify the most used interpreting mode in community interpreting (telephone, videoconference or remote simultaneous interpreting);

2) to analyse the impacts (both positive and negative) of the use of RI technology on interpreters; and

3) to involve interpreters, through their suggestions and feedback, in the improvement of the technologies they already use

Methodology:

(a) Identify, through literature review, the pros and cons of RI technologies,

(b) survey the impacts (both positive and negative) of the use of RI technology on community interpreters

Data collection

Survey approach

The survey was completed by 25 women and 12 men in total, from different countries: Spain (21), UK (7), Canada (3), Germany (2), USA (2), Switzerland (1) and China (1).

Frequency of use of RI modalities in public services

TI comes first (94.59%) followed by VCI (40.54%) and finally RSI (16.21%).
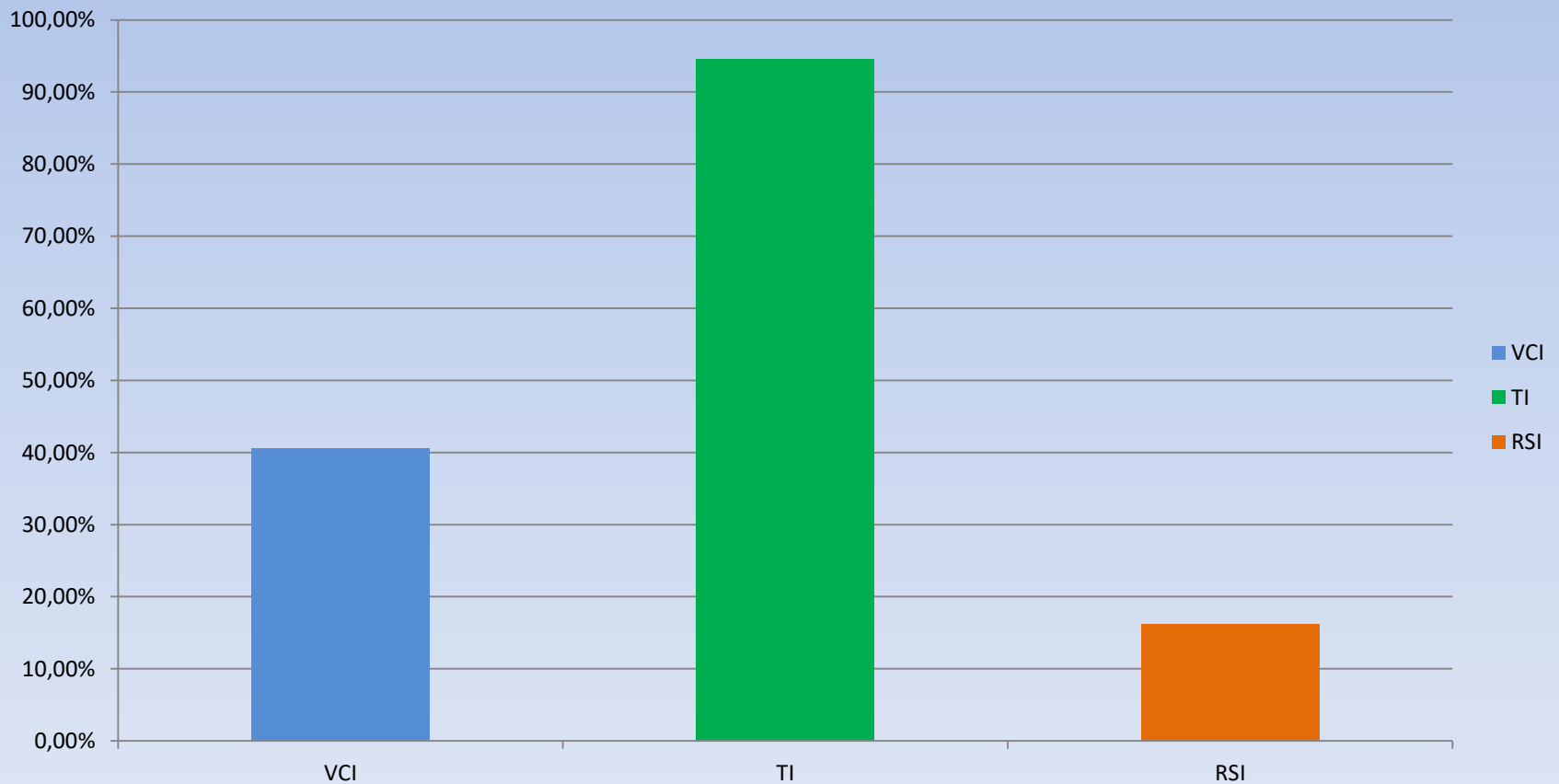
RI and Public Service settings

Healthcare (72.97%).
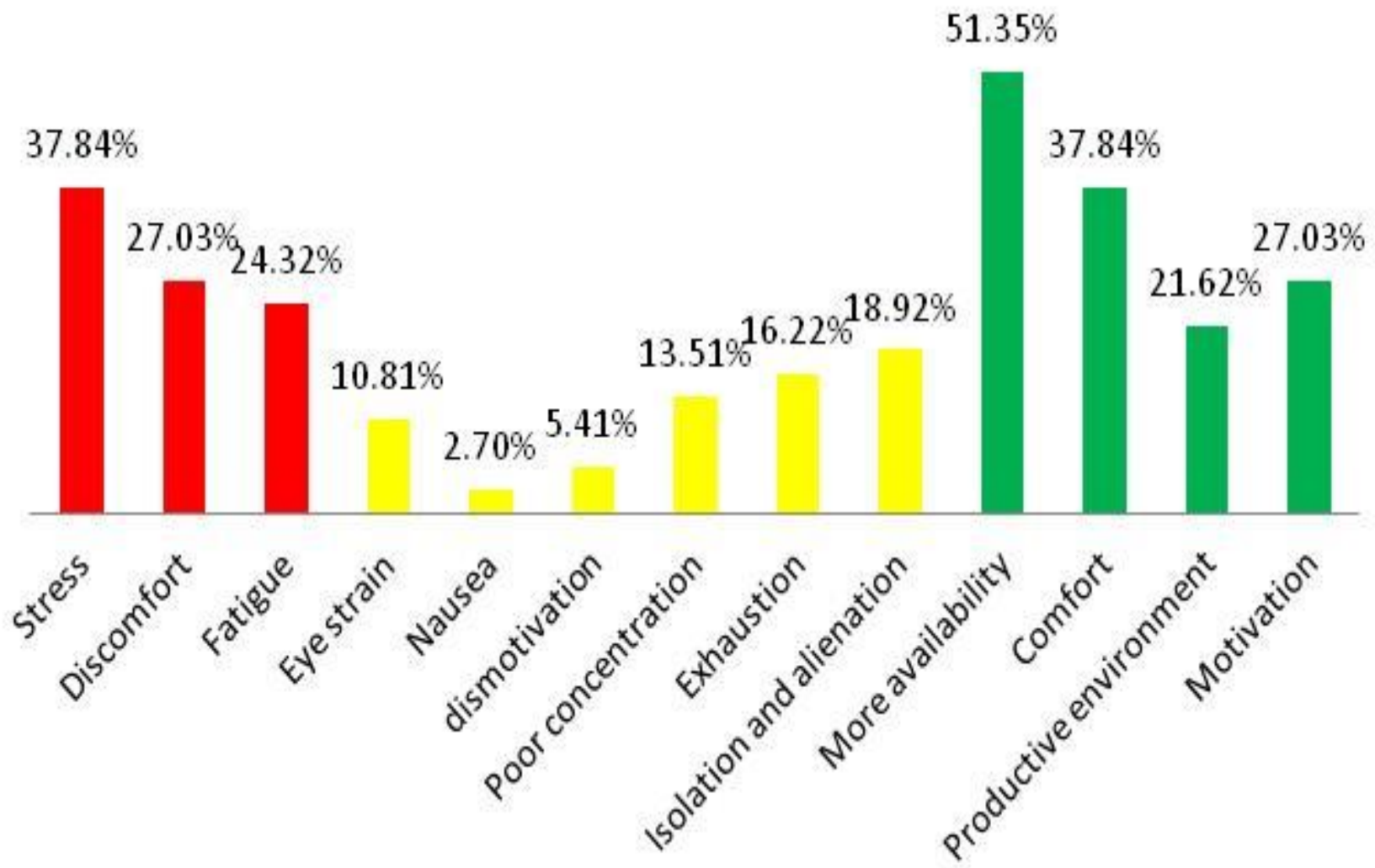
Social and administrative (62.16%).

Legal and judiciary (56.76%).

Police stations (51.35%).

Educational centres (27.03%).

Others (21.62%).

Positive and negative impacts of RI technologies

Training courses received in different RI modalities

TI (70.27%);

RSI (18.92%);

VCI (13.51%), while

29.73% of respondents did not receive any training courses in any of them.

Other psychological or physiological impacts

P15/P16: «*A kind of **insecurity** in cases where **body language** is not visible* ».

P41: «*Sometimes **discouragement**, because they **pay less***».

P44: «*Feeling of **time difference** .Lack of suitable **team work** .**Headache** .*».

P44: «***Remote SI tires more**. The only benefits are for the **public institutions** on **big savings**. The low frequency **humming damages the brain***

Other psychological or physiological impacts

P57: «*Stress about the fact that **my own home/office/environment is on show**, because at times there might be noises at my end that I cannot do anything about (fire alarms, neighbours)*

P57: «*Boosts my self esteem to be able to provide services in **the comfort of my own hours and home***»

P58: *I would only want to use this media for interpreting if the **technical quality** of both sound and vision are of a very high standard*

Stress level perceived by interpreters in each modality

VCI (57.13%), more than RSI (49.99%) and TI (39.39%).
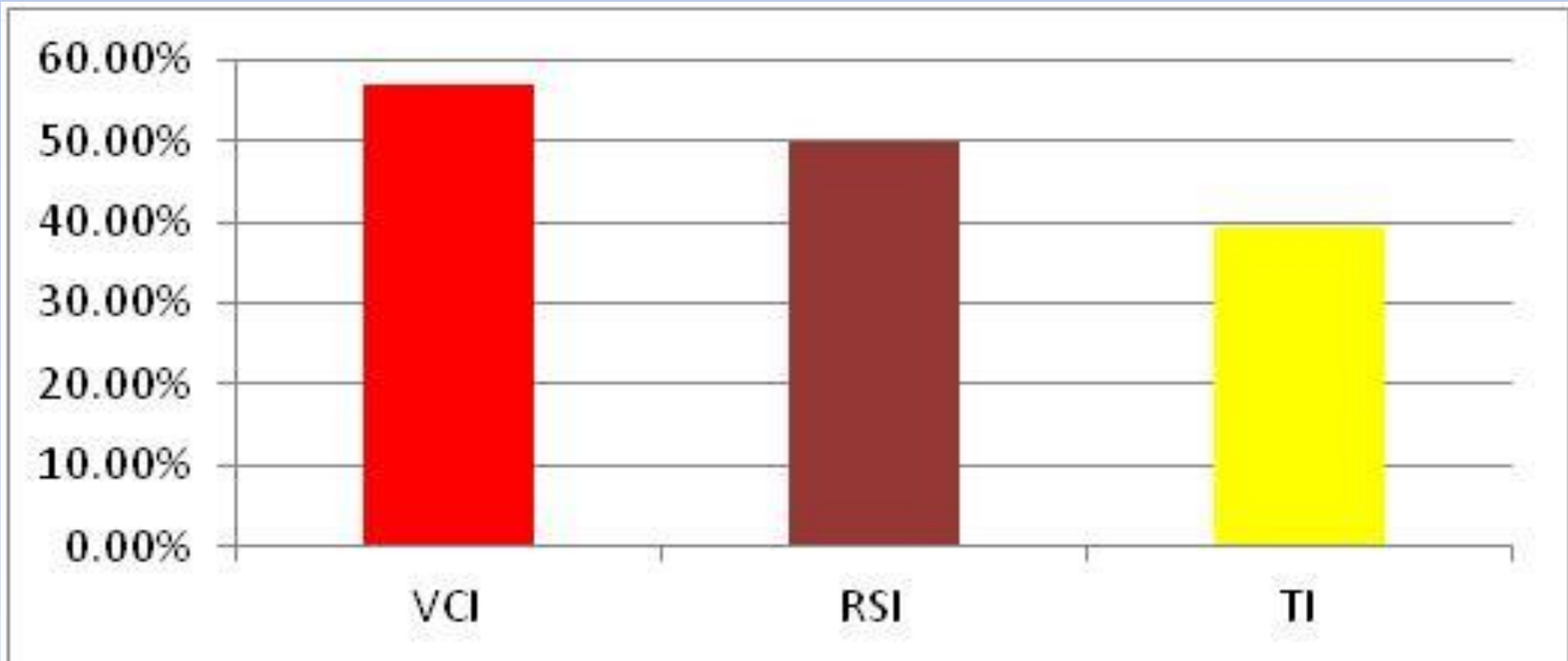
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P6: "*To use always **use a camera**. Telephone interpreting is much more stressful*"

P12: *«To **fix screens**, special **environment**, only use of **LAN connection**».*

P41: *«To introduce **training courses**».*

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P46/P59/P65: *«Improvement for **technical equipment**, the **coordination** of turns between speakers, informing the user of **how to use the service**».*

P51: *«**Sound quality** improvement».*

P63: *«**Training**. Only [should be used] where **non-sensitive cases**, i.e. not where vulnerable clients».*

Conclusion

◈ Telephone interpreting is the most used mode in community services.

◈ Each and every one of the positive aspects reaches a higher percentage than any of the negative aspects, except for three elements: stress (37.84 %), fatigue (24.32%) and discomfort (27.03%).

◈ Interpreters are aware of the advantages provided by usage of RI technology.

◈ The aspects that most negatively affect interpreters are: the lack of visual context, the instability of the connection, the inadequacy of the medium of communication used and the lack of knowledge about how to use the RI service.

Recommendations

◈ To moderate the use of telephone.

◈ To provide more technological support and consider the technical requirements of each interpreting mode and setting.

◈ To provide knowledge and necessary training modules on the use of RI technologies.

Acknowledgement

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