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Trends & **T**raditions in **T**ranslation & **I**nterpreting **Studies**

Understanding hybridity in the context of remote interpreting

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Abstract

Hybridity is an inseparable aspect of remote interpreting. In recent years, demand for remote interpreting services rose due to new technological advancements in videoconferencing, but also due to the global pandemic of Covid-19. Unlike translators, interpreters were greatly affected by its restrictive measures since the previous on-site events had to be either cancelled or at least moved to an online sphere. Interpreters thus had to adapt and interpret from home; a new situation for many. And even though the pandemic does not pose such a threat anymore, many events never returned to big venues and stayed in the online world. This strengthened the position of remote interpreting on the market and that is why it is important to focus on this specific way of interpreting. Hybridity is an important concept to work with to better understand the specifics of remote interpreting. This paper is therefore dedicated to exploring hybridity, its meaning, history, perception, and current views to better understand how all of this translates to remote interpreting services, and to many other hybrid forms of interpreting.

1.   Introduction

The concept of hybridity is used in many disciplines that are often very far apart from each other. Therefore, it is only natural that it describes different phenomena in various fields. The origin of the term can be traced to the 17th century, when it was used in fields such as botany, agrology, and biology to describe the process of plant crossbreeding (see Lewis 2020). In the following centuries, the term was adopted by other fields, most notably by postcolonial studies, where it described the merging of cultures (see Canclini 2015). In the second half of the 20th century, the term started to be used in more and more fields, which naturally led to broadening of the meaning. Hybridity can be found also in translation studies, and it can manifest itself differently depending on whether it is used in translation or interpreting. For example, hybridity in literary translation can be found in the hybridity of authorship (see Huťková 2019) or in a hybrid place created between the realities of different national cultures (see Simon 1996). Hybridity in interpreting is present in many forms, whether it is in a relation to input and output of the interpreting (e.g. written to spoken), usage of different types of languages in interpreting (e.g. interpreting spoken language to sign language), or the channel that is being used for interpreting.

One instance of hybridity related to a channel is remote interpreting. It is possibly one of the most common scenarios where hybridity in interpreting occurs. Hybridity is present in this form thanks to the different geographical location of the event, interpreter, and possibly the audience as well. This requires a specific channel in order to establish communication between all parties. When the event uses such channel, we can talk about a hybrid event because it is taking place at least in two places at the same time.

Hybridity in remote interpreting therefore lies in the channel through which the communication is mediated. There can also be other elements added to the hybridity (e.g. in relation to the input and output). Any new modality makes the hybridity in remote interpreting more complex and thus leads to an increased difficulty for the interpreter on various levels, such as cultural, technical, and language skills.

The aim of this article is to analyse and interpret the concept of hybridity and understand it in the context of remote interpreting more deeply. We will try to explain why it is a hybrid form of interpreting and how does it manifest itself, since the grown of remote interpreting in recent years has made it more relevant than ever. Hybridity is crucial in defining the specific aspects of this type of interpreting. We will try to point out the influence of hybridity on remote interpreting and vice versa, while also paying attention to other forms of hybridity in interpreting setting.

The methodology consists of a comparative analysis of definitions and contextualization of hybridity in interpreting; and introducing a survey on use of remote interpreting in Slovakia.

2. The expansion of hybridity

The term hybridity is used in many fields. The meaning of the term may slightly vary in each field, as it tries to adapt to its specific needs. However, the term hybridity itself brings with it a concept that is invariable in every sector. We will now look at a brief history of the use of the term in different disciplines, the gradual change in its perception, the problematic nature of its use, and also the current view of it. All these factors will help to better understand the use of the term in the field of translation studies, and especially interpreting. It will provide an overview of how the term got into the translation studies and where did it come from. We will also be able to compare the meaning of the term in other fields with interpreting studies, and more specifically with remote interpreting. Lastly, based on the evolution of the term, it might be easier to see how the hybridity in translation studies will further develop in the future.

The Oxford Dictionary[1] offers these explanations for the adjective hybrid: 1) (of an animal or plant) having parents of different species or varieties; 2) that is the product of mixing two or more different things; 3) (of a vehicle) using two different types of power, especially petrol or diesel and electricity.

The Cambridge Dictionary[2] describes the noun hybrid as follows: 1) a plant or animal that has been produced from two different types of plant or animal, especially to get better characteristics; 2) something that is a mixture of two very different things.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary[3] provides following interpretations of the noun hybrid: 1) an offspring of two animals or plants of different subspecies, breeds, varieties, species, or genera; 2) a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions; 3) something heterogeneous in origin or composition; 4) something (such as a power plant, vehicle, or electronic circuit) that has two different types of components performing essentially the same function.

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[1] See https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/hybrid_1?q=hybrid. Accessed on: 27 February 2024.

[2] See https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hybrid. Accessed on: 27 February 2024.

[3] See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybrid. Accessed on: 27 February 2024.

According to the *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka*[4] (Dictionary of the Contemporary Slovak Language) (2021), the adjective *hybrid* describes a concept – the union of two or more heterogeneous components, e.g. *hybrid rocks*, *hybrid artistic genre*. The dictionary goes on to list the various fields in which the term is used: in linguistics, for example, one can speak of *hybrid languages* or *hybrid words* that are formed from bases from different languages. In the automotive industry, there is the term *hybrid car*, which refers to a vehicle using both an internal combustion engine and an electric motor.

From a dictionary interpretation alone, the concept of hybridity is established in certain industries, but it can also occur in many other fields and in a wider range of contexts. When talking about the meaning, it is important to distinguish whether the word is in a position of a noun or an adjective. All of the stated dictionaries provide at least one satisfactory explanation of the term for a better understanding of hybridity in remote interpreting. In The Oxford Dictionary, the second explanation is the most relevant: product of mixing two or more different things; in The Cambridge Dictionary, it is also the second meaning: something that is a mixture of two very different things; in The Merriam-Webster dictionary, the third example is the most useful for our context: something heterogeneous in origin or composition; The Dictionary of the Contemporary Slovak Language completes the list: the union of two or more heterogeneous components. These explanations are the basis for understanding hybridity in the context of remote interpreting. In the most general sense, the term expresses a concept where two or more elements of different origin or source are combined to create something new.

According to P. Baltes and N. Smelser (2001) the term hybridity is used in the social sciences, literary, artistic, or cultural fields. It refers to the processes of bringing together particular social practices or structures that previously existed separately to create new structures, objects and practices where previous elements are blended. B. Adab and Ch. Schäffner (2000) add that in linguistics and discourse analysis the term is used to describe the characteristics of genres and types of texts.

Alongside the neutral dictionary definitions of the term hybridity, there are also specific domains where the term is perceived positively or negatively. Some studies endorse the continued expansion of hybridity while others draw attention to the frivolous use of the term (see Isaac 2004; Carvalheiro 2010). Authors emphasise the critical and problematic

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[4] See
https://slovnik.juls.savba.sk/?w=hybridn%C3%BD&s=exact&c=X47e&cs=&d=kssj4&d=psp&d=ogs&d=sssj&d=orter&d=scs&d=sss&d=peciar&d=ssn&d=hssj&d=bernolak&d=noundb&d=orient&d=locutio&d=obce&d=priezviska&d=un&d=pskfr&d=pskcs&d=psken#. Accessed on: 27 February 2024.

nature of its use in sociology due to the celebration of mixing cultures without regard to negative impacts for the involved communities.

According to D. Huddart (2014), the concept of hybridity captures the different ways in which certain phenomena are characterized. It is primarily about the complexity or mixture of phenomena at the expense of simplicity or purity of meaning. It is a term that describes things as they are, but often takes on a prescriptive character. In such cases, it is not just that the phenomena are hybrid at different levels, but at the same time it is expected that they should be hybrid or at least become more hybrid. The prescriptive character shifts the focus from static hybridity to dynamic and never-ending hybridity. Such reasoning then leads to the assumption across disciplines that although all phenomena are only minimally hybrid, some historical changes have accelerated and exaggerated hybridity. Based on this perception, an ethical consideration might arise regarding the use of hybridity in translation studies. However, in translation studies and especially in interpreting, the hybridity is not so much connected to the people and communities, but rather to the way of working, based on the area in which hybridity occurs (e.g. hybridity in relation to the input/output of interpreting, hybridity in the communication channel, or hybridity in the use of technology – computer-assisted interpreting).

Hybridity found its place in the fields of sociology, cultural studies, and anthropology. It is perhaps in these fields of science that the term hybridity is used most often. Before the term came into widespread use in these three fields, its primary domain was biology, agrology, and botany (see Lewis 2020).

One of the most influential theorists who dealt with postcolonialism was Hommi K. Bhabha. In his work, he built on the existing concept of hybridity in colonial studies and developed it further in the 1990s. He described in detail how colonialism led to complex cultural interactions and hybrid identities, which challenged the binary position of the colonizer and the colonized. The concept of hybridity, then, is based on the notion that the process of cultural translation is a complex form of signification, and that efforts to transpose cultural patterns into a different environment always create a third space in which these cultural patterns are influenced by the local culture (Bhabha 1994, 247). There is a connection between the K. Bhabha's perception of identity and personality of the interpreter since the interpreter speaks on behalf of the speaker in first person as if the ideas were his own. Such hybridity in identity is more relevant in community interpreting and we will not work with it in this article.

The term hybridity is still being used in cultural studies, postcolonial theory, anthropology, and sociology. The concept continues to evolve and adapt to new contexts within these fields. H. Bhabha had a great influence on many authors thanks to his book *Locality in Culture* from 1994. Since the publication of this work, the concept of hybridity has appeared very frequently in scientific discourse. P. Stockhammer (2012) criticises that the

concept of hybridity is often understood as an exclusively postcolonial phenomenon that has no place in other disciplines. Discussions of hybridity have very rarely crossed narrow boundaries within a narrow field of study, by which he meant postcolonialism.

A. Brah and A. Coombes (2000) argued at the beginning of the new millennium that the concept of hybridity had become well known, not only in academia, but in society as well. In the second half of the 20th century and in the early 21st century, there has been a more significant expansion of the term into other disciplines that have no connection to postcolonialism or other social sciences. For example, F. G. Hoffman (2007) explains hybridity as a part of the hybrid warfare. In healthcare, F. Sabol (2014) mentions the so-called *hybrid method* as a type of surgical method. J. Kotuľák (2013) describes hybridity in the phrase *hybrid organization*. The author claims that hybridity is not just a mixture of characteristics of different sectors on which an organization may be built but is about the fundamental and diametrically different governance and operational practices in each sector. This concept is true for hybridity in remote interpreting as well. By increasing the influence of hybridity to the remote interpreting, the remote interpreting does not only get modified, but it creates a whole new scenario.

In most cases, hybridity describes a combination of two or more elements that form a single entity. It may be the combining of elements to create a new whole, e.g. a hybrid method in a medical procedure. On the other hand, however, the concept of hybridity can serve as a definition of a certain state of affairs.

The above examples show that the term has succeeded in breaking out of the narrow confines of postcolonial studies and other social sciences. Translation studies are no exception. Hybridity can manifest itself in different scenarios depending on whether it is present in literature, translation, or interpreting.

3.   Hybridity in language and literary translation

Hybridity in language or linguistic hybridity is closely connected to interpreting since the aim of interpreting is to mediate a message from one language to other language. Every interpreter therefore needs to master at least two languages. This is already a sign of hybridity in interpreting since the interpreters are working with at least two systems and cultures. They need to consider specifics (e.g. culture, habits, customs) of both parties that they interpret for.

Hybridity in language from a broader sense could describe a state of affairs – there are many languages, and so it would be logical that these languages are able to coexist, and in certain cases even at the same time in the same place, such as in the case of bilingualism of a certain population. However, language hybridity could be also understood as the

mixing of elements to form a new whole (see Charalambous and Rampton 2012). In such a case, for example, there may be both intentional and unintentional crossing of languages. In intentional crossing, elements of several languages may be mixed to create a new, artificial language, e.g. Esperanto. Unintentional crossing involves the influence of one language on another. In this case, one language accepts elements from the other language. Elements most often cross over from the more widespread language into the less widespread language, but the influence can also work in the opposite direction. New elements in a language change its character, which entails not only linguistic phenomena but also sociological ones (see Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens 1968; Fishman 1997; Rampton 1998).

This fact is pointed out by A. Keníž (2016, 6, own translation), who states that "in our [Slovak] society, the Slovak language is neglected already in kindergarten, then in primary school and further on in secondary school. Therefore, students come to university with a lack of natural, innate, or cultivated immunity to foreign languages (English, Czech, etc.), with poor knowledge of the written language, with overconfidence and various individual attitudes towards the language. This undercurrent then gives rise to hybrid texts – the Slovak language is hybridised not only in translation, but also in the production of original Slovak texts."

Literature is intrinsically linked with language and its identity. Hybridity can be found in literature on several levels. A. Huťková (2019) discusses the following levels: hybridity of authorship (this can include e.g. inspiration by another author, blurring of boundaries, overlapping identities of the author or translator); hybridity of the original (which can be achieved by internal inspiration by another text or appropriation of another work); hybridity of language and expression (this is a questioning of the identity of the space and different expectations of acceptance in different cultural spaces). These kinds of hybridity predetermine for the translator certain translation solutions, strategies, and interventions to be made with regard to intercultural contact.

Space in the translation of fiction has been explored by S. Simon (1996), who argues that translation represents a space that cannot be grasped by any author, as it is a hybrid place created between the realities of different national cultures. The same could be applied to interpreting – the interpreter's words and ideas are not authentic for the source nor the target culture. His speech creates a third space, in between the two cultures. However, she also adds that this hybrid place is at the heart of any process of understanding and communication between different languages and their cultures.

Hybridity in translation can also be understood from another perspective. A. Huťková (2019) understands hybridity in translation as the questioning of reality. Hybridity in this case occurs when real elements are embedded in certain situations, but at the same time, elements deliberately invented to distort reality are also present. It is thus a kind of authorial

intention to create a fictional place, which, however, partly carries elements from the real world.

Hybridity in translation, however, does not have to refer exclusively to authorship, realism, or expressiveness of elements, but also the product. For example, in Slovakia, some translation agencies (e.g. ASAP Translation[5]) offer a so-called hybrid translation service. This is a translation process in which the source text is compared with already translated texts in the translation memory. Identical sentences that are found in the memory are automatically translated. Other sentences are translated by a specialized machine translation, which achieves higher accuracy for specific texts.

4. Hybridity in interpreting

Hybridity is present in one form or another in language, literature, and translation. Similarly to these fields the concept of hybridity is also applied in interpreting. M. Štefková (2015) describes the hybrid forms of interpreting in a legal context – a client might request an oral summary of the source text. Interpreter then explains the meaning of the given text to the client. Hybridity is present in the different type of source and target text – source text is written, and target text is orally delivered. Interpreter in this scenario acts more like an adviser who might clarify other issues besides the text. This is yet another form of hybridity in interpreting since the interpreter is responsible for at least two roles at the same time – the role of interpreter and of the counsellor. This could be classified as a hybridity in relation to role. Another example could be a situation when interpreter accompanies their client during the visit of a bureau. Client needs the interpreter for their language skills but also for their knowledge of local laws and processes.

S. Hodáková (2021) points out that various hybrid forms of interpreting are mainly implemented depending on the requirements of the client. As examples of these forms, she mentions chuchotage, sight translation or relay interpreting.

Most of the mentioned forms of interpreting are types of simultaneous interpreting, but hybridity can also occur in a consecutive interpreting setting thanks to note-taking. Each interpreter has his or her own system of note-taking, which suits them best and allows to convey the communication as effectively as possible. While some interpreters take notes in the source language, others write down information directly in the target language. However, it is not uncommon for an interpreter to combine the two working languages, or even to add elements from other languages if they are used to them, e.g. a Slovak interpreter interpreting from English

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[5] See https://prelozime.sk/hybridny-preklad.html. Accessed on: 27 February 2024.

into German writes down the Slovak conjunction *a* to express the coordinating relationship between the two words, as it is shorter than the English *and* or the German *und*. All other information is written in either German or English, or a combination. D. Müglová (2009) calls such multilingual note-taking hybrid.

Hybridity in interpreting manifests itself not only in individual genres but also in different situations. These can be scenarios where interpreters combine or switch between different interpreting modes or techniques in order to meet the communicative needs in a particular context. We will list a few scenarios in which hybridity in interpreting occurs:

1. Hybridity in relation to input and output – this kind of hybridity focuses on input and output of the interpreting. In a non-hybrid scenario, input and output would be of the same type – spoken language (though there would be at least two languages). For example, the input would be a speech in English and the interpreter would interpret the speech to French language, which would be the output. Following are the scenarios when hybridity in relation to input and output occurs:

(a) Sight translation – this type involves the oral presentation of a written text, the language of which is different from that of the oral presentation. During the reading, the interpreter must therefore process the written information in a short time and present it in an understandable form. In addition to the fact that the interpreter has to perform two activities at the same time – reading and speaking – hybridity in this context also manifests itself by being partly both translation and interpreting. The interpreter reads the text and tries to translate it, and only then do they orally deliver this translation.

(b) Sign language interpreting – in specific communication situations, interpreters use both sign language and spoken languages in one interpreting assignment. Such a scenario arises when one or more deaf communicants communicate with one or more hearing communicants. The interpreter thus alternates between sign language and spoken language in their utterance, depending on which party they are communicating with.

(c) Combination of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting – in most cases, the interpreter interprets the entire event either consecutively or simultaneously. However, in a hybrid scenario, it may happen that the interpreter interprets a certain part of the utterance consecutively and then starts interpreting simultaneously when the situation calls for it and allows it. An example would be a discussion that turns into a monologue by one of the communicants.

(d) Multilingual context – in certain communication situations the interpreter has to switch between several source and target languages. Such performance requires high linguistic skills and the ability to adapt quickly in different language combinations.

2. Hybridity in relation to technology – using technology in interpreting is natural and in case of simultaneous interpreting even a

necessity. Technical equipment and booths are therefore considered a standard for carrying out interpreter's work. In a hybrid scenario, additional tools and solutions are used to make the interpreter's work easier and more fluent. These technologies do not do all the work for the interpreter, but only facilitate it.

(a) Computer-assisted translation tools – during their work, interpreter may use various software tools to find the meaning or provide a translation of certain phrases and words. Interpreter can access such tools thanks to a laptop or tablet computer right in front of them in the booth. In general, computer-assisted tools are used more by translators than by interpreters, but technology in the field of interpreting is already becoming more and more up-to-date and usable in practice.

(b) Simconsec interpreting method – M. Orlando (2010) points out to the so-called simconsec interpreting method that is available thanks to the special digital pens with built-in microphone, camera, speakers, and a recording software. This method is also called the digital assisted consecutive interpreting. The digital pen allows for recording of the speaker's utterance while the interpreter is note-taking. When the speaker finishes, the interpreter can replay the speech thanks to the recording software within the pen. Therefore, they can interpret simultaneously and help themselves with the notes they have written down. If the interpreter is also using a specialised tablet compatible with the digital pen, they can track their own note-taking and by simply touching the corresponding word from their notes, they can play the recorded utterance from the point when the word was written down.

(c) Speech to text – interpreter may use a tool that is able to process natural language. Speech is then converted to text and the interpreter may proceed the same as in sight translation.

3. Hybridity in relation to channel – the natural channel in interpreting is the air. This medium is only viable in consecutive interpreting and some forms of simultaneous interpreting (e.g. chuchotage). For conference simultaneous interpreting, though, the need for artificial channel occurs. The communication is then carried out using technology – microphone for input and headphones for output. The spoken words are therefore transmitted digitally through cables and various devices. Hybridity in relation to channel can be taken even further – metaphorically and physically. Remote interpreting works on the same basis as simultaneous interpreting since it is carried out digitally. In remote interpreting, however, an extra channel is necessary due to the distance between the speaker, interpreter, and the audience. This can be either the Internet or telecommunication services. Today, remote interpreting is possible from almost anywhere in the world, regardless of the distance.

5.   Remote interpreting and hybridity

It is clear that there are many situations where hybridity in interpreting occurs, but we will now focus on hybridity in remote interpreting. N. Di Marco (2021) considers remote interpreting to be the most common form of hybridity in interpreting. He defines remote interpreting in this form as a hybrid event that, with the right tools and equipment, allows participants to connect remotely thanks to special portals. However, he goes on to add that the most important participants are often physically present at the event. As speakers, they thus have technical support from professionals and do not have to rely on their own amateur equipment, which would be available in their own homes. In addition, they can enjoy the other benefits of a face-to-face event while the audience remains in the online space. Unlike important speakers, audience will lose the benefits of a face-to-face event, but remote participation does have its own advantages such as saved travel costs and time.

According to H. Skaaden (2018) the videoconferencing tools were underused in the early 21st century because the required technologies were not yet developed enough to provide reliable audiovisual transmission of remote meetings. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, big institutions such as the United Nations have attempted to implement remote interpreting into their routine practice (Gigliobianco and Ziegler 2018). Interpreters were interpreting through a phone call. Further attempts were made as the years went by, even by other organizations, such as the European Union. In the mid-1990s, the technologies used not only audio, but also video signals. Remote interpreting was a way of solving the linguistic and logistical problems that arose as a result of the growth of the European Union, including the lack of interpreting booths in meeting rooms. However, K. Ziegler and S. Gigliobianco (2018) pointed out that there have always been two main factors preventing the large-scale implementation of remote conference interpreting: technological limitations and overall refusal to use these new technologies by interpreters.

Today, videoconferencing services and technologies are reliable enough to be commonly used for both formal and informal communications. Various platforms, applications and software tools are already so adapted to the requirements to meet in an online space that they are relatively easy to use for the public. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, S. Braun (2015) predicted that there would be an increase and diversification of remote interpreting services due to the speed of development and proliferation of communication technologies.

In hindsight, S. Braun's (2015) assumption was correct – more and more popular videoconferencing software solutions start to offer interpreting function. This function usually comes with the cheapest subscription of the software (e.g. Zoom, Webex), but there are some companies that offer it for free (e.g. Microsoft Teams), although with some

limitations. Then there are dozens of specialised programmes that focus exclusively on interpreting and their aim is to provide the best possible environment for the performance of interpreting services (e.g. Interprefy, Kudo).

S. Braun (2019) points out that in recent years, technologies have sought not only to create the best possible environment for the interpreter and listeners, but also to replace the interpreter and convey all the information without the need for a human being – something advances in natural language processing and the rise of artificial intelligence have made possible. A machine interpreting has emerged, similar to machine translation already commonly used by general public (e.g. Google Translate, DeepL) despite its imperfections. Moreover, it can be assumed that the automation of interpreting will be more challenging than the automation of translation because of its nature. D. Slančová (1996) points out to the concepts of communication noise and channel. These factors are important in the communication because potential errors within them could lead to incorrect information transfer. Another problematic aspect is the issue of responsibility for the translated information (see Horváth 2021, Dignum 2018); in addition to linguistic ability, in interpreting there is a greater emphasis on the communication situation. Thus the machine must appropriately evaluate the specific social situation and generate a correct translation based on it. However, intercultural communication is very diverse and cannot be clearly written down in formulas that a machine can understand. Such deciphering and evaluation of the situation therefore lies upon the shoulders of the interpreter, literally – in their brain. Until a better understanding is gained about the human brain and the ways in which it processes language, culture, non-verbal signs and other aspects, it will not be possible to fully replace the work of the human interpreter. At least not in all communication situations (see Toneva and Wehbe 2019).

Interpreters must adopt new technologies if they want to be competitive in the job market. According to G. Pastor and M. Gaber (2020), remote interpreting requires the adaptation of all parties involved and their tools – interpreters, users, service providers, and technical equipment. Adapting to new technologies and habits in the interpreting sphere is particularly relevant after the Covid-19 pandemic. Conferences, business meetings, and public events in general have taken a back seat or disappeared completely for two years. Based on research by M. Djovčoš and P. Šveda (2022), in Slovakia, both at the beginning and the end of the first pandemic wave, we see that up to half of the interpreters had lost 70 – 100% of their contracts. The situation was similar in other countries too. The pandemic has caused an almost total shut-down of interpreting contracts (see Cheung and Liu 2022). Novice interpreters who just started their interpreting careers have been affected the most because they were relatively new to the community and could not find interpreting contracts as easily (see Chaillou and Van Der Kallen 2020). The return to the state

of affairs from before the pandemic is gradual, but we can no longer speak of an identical state, as it now involves many changes that are here to stay. Some events that have had to move online because of the pandemic still voluntarily continue to remain online. A. Cheung (2022) claims that due to today's highly globalized society, it is unlikely that the situation will return to the pre-pandemic state. The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been an impetus for the boom in remote interpreting – the public has had the opportunity to see that meetings do not have to take place only in person but can sometimes much more easily be organised virtually. Society has embraced this alternative and today it is commonly used as part of business meetings, conferences, or other types of events.

As H. Ammour (2021) points out, before the pandemic, on-site interpreting services accounted for around 80% of all spoken language services delivered around the world, but the pandemic measurements changed the odds dramatically in favour of other modes of interpreting, mainly remote interpreting.

Some in-person events are also held in parallel in the online sphere. Such events could be called hybrid events, and they arise in an effort to make their content as accessible as possible to the widest audience possible. The audience can therefore participate from anywhere without having to spend time and resources on transport, accommodation, etc. And if the event is interpreted, such interpretation service can also take place online. The reasons for this are varied – it can be more economically viable for event organisers to place interpreting in the online sphere where the vast majority of the audience can often be found, thus providing easy access to the service. Interpreting requires certain spatial and technical facilities (in particular when interpreting simultaneously), which may not be easy to provide. That is why the hybrid event is held in two places at the same time, but the content is (or at least should be) the same.

M. Djovčoš and P. Šveda (2023) show that the demand for remote interpreting has increased – while at the beginning of the first wave of Covid pandemic in Slovakia (end of March 2020), only 18.75% of interpreters were asked to provide remote interpreting services, six weeks later, the number rose to 39.69%.

It is evident that demand for remote interpreting services in Slovakia rose rapidly. In our own survey (more complex results to be published), we wanted to gather information about providing remote interpreting services in Slovakia. We focused on practical questions like the proportion of remote interpreting compared to on-site interpreting, remuneration for remote interpreting and comparison with on-site interpreting, perception of difficulty of remote interpreting from the interpreters' perspective etc. Our goal was to map the situation and changes in this area after the Covid pandemic. We anticipated that remote interpreting rose in demand and became more popular than before the pandemic. We addressed 357 interpreters and 32 language agencies in Slovakia. Addressed interpreters

were found thanks to the official databases of interpreters of The Slovak Association of Translators and Interpreters[6] and The Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic[7]. The call to fill out the survey was also distributed on social media – in a private Facebook group for Slovak translators, interpreters, and editors[8]. The addressed agencies were members of Association of Translation Companies of Slovakia[9]. Additional agencies were found on the Internet. The survey was distributed in November 2023. By mid-December 2023, we have gathered 103 responses from interpreters and 12 responses from agencies. As the results indicate, more than half of both interpreters and agencies do provide remote interpreting services (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). Research confirmed that there is indeed a big demand for remote interpreting services, and therefore it is important to pay attention to it. The possible limitations of the survey might be in the number of responses we received both from the interpreters and the agencies. A larger research sample would provide a more authentic image of the current situation, but we believe that even these preliminary results indicate positive tendency in development of remote interpreting, as well as the rise of demand for it.
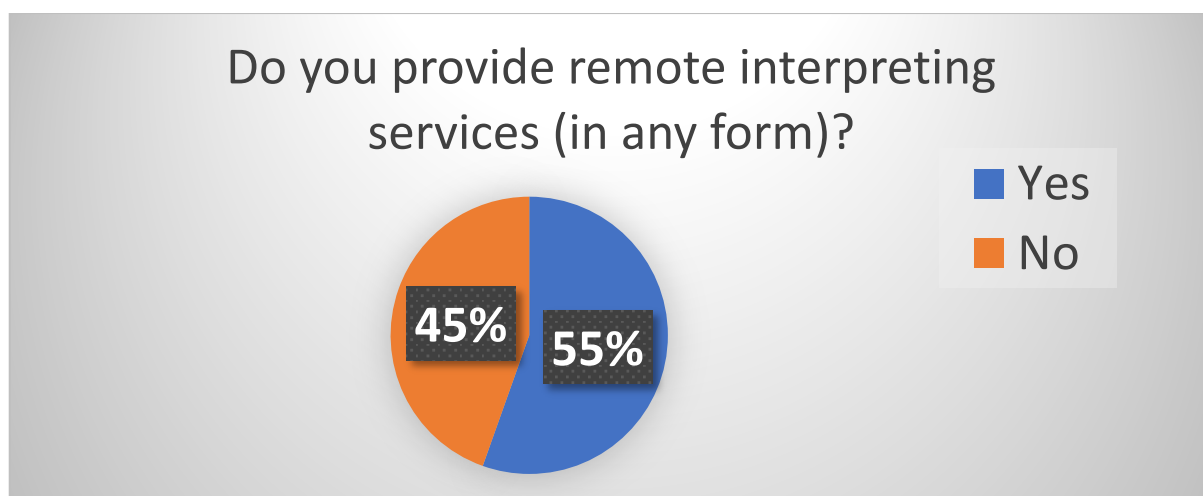

Figure 1. Proportion of interpreters providing remote interpreting services (answered by the interpreters)

[6] See https://www.sapt.sk/en/about-us/members-list/?post_id=2235&form_id=7e520b1&queried_id=2235&interpreter=1. Accessed on: 5 March 2024.

[7] See https://www.justice.gov.sk/registre/tlmocnici/?stav_string=zapis&rozhodnyDatum=07.03.2024&pageNum=1&size=10&sortProperty=meno_sort&sortDirection=ASC. Accessed on: 05 March 2024.

[8] See https://www.facebook.com/groups/50917867928. Accessed on 5 March 2024.

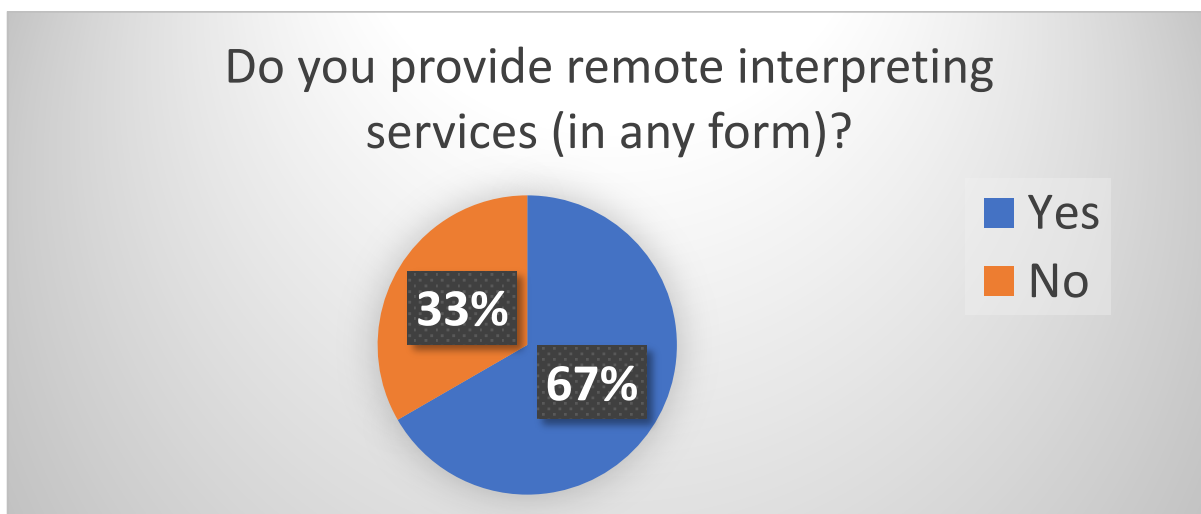[9] See https://www.atcsk.sk/en/. Accessed on: 7 March 2024.

Figure 2. Proportion of agencies providing remote interpreting services
(answered by the agencies)

6.   Conclusion

Hybridity can take on different forms and shapes. The meaning of the term varies from discipline to discipline, but the concept remains the same – the combining of two or more elements to create a new phenomenon. In interpreting as a single discipline, hybridity also manifests itself in different forms. We can talk about hybridity in relation to input/output, technology, or channel. We have mentioned the history of the term to better understand its origin and current use in various fields. We have described several hybrid forms and genres of interpreting and provided examples of specific situations that can be defined as hybrid. However, our aim was not to provide a comprehensive list of all possible hybrid scenarios in interpreting. Instead, we focused on one particular scenario – remote interpreting. Due to its practical advantages, institutions started to implement it in the 1970s, but after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic it experienced a real boom (see Gigliobianco and Ziegler 2018; Chaillou and Van Der Kallen 2020). It is also a relatively simple hybrid form of interpreting because it is similar in many ways to on-site interpreting. It does not automatically entail, for example, the use of multiple working languages, the substitution of other roles, etc., but the demands on technology have undoubtedly increased, and there are additional skills needed for this kind of interpreting. This form is in itself a hybrid form of interpreting, but it can be further combined with additional hybrid elements, rendering it a more complex phenomenon with potentially a multitude of aspects to be considered during and even before the interpreting starts.

As a result of the pandemic, remote interpreting has seen a huge increase in demand and according to experts, it will remain so in the future

(see Cheung 2022). At the same time, the findings regarding remote interpreting should also be applicable to various other hybrid forms of interpreting, as many of them are based on it.

The examining of the connection between hybridity and remote interpreting can help us better understand the true complexity of this type of interpreting. It provides a valuable insight on the functioning of remote interpreting and other types of hybrid forms of interpreting. By revealing the individual layers, we can get a better idea of what it takes to properly prepare for the given scenario, from the point of view of an organiser, interpreter, or a participant.

Based on the history of hybridity, it is safe to assume that anything hybrid will become even more hybrid in the future. The complexity of anything hybrid will only rise, even though the prescriptive character of hybridity is often criticised. In conference interpreting, hybridity is dependent more on technological progress and implementing new solutions to interpreter's work. Given the technological advancements of the last years, we can expect new inventions and adjustments of existing solutions that will make the interpreter's work both easier (new computer-assisted software) and harder (new complex scenarios and situations) at the same time. The evolution and future improvements of machine interpreting could also bring a new type of hybridity to interpreting and be a start of a new era.

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