

# **PRESS REVIEW 2020**

## **CONTINUATION OF COLLECTIVE BRAINSTORMING ABOUT THE JITSI PROJECT AIIC SWITZERLAND**

### **RSI and AI: a threat to our profession?**

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Remote simultaneous interpreting, once a marginal practice, will undoubtedly account for a significant proportion of our missions in the future. Of course, I prefer to work in an ISO booth with a colleague, and the support of a technician, but if the pandemic continues, or if any other similar health concerns arise, the options for working will be limited, and I think we have no option but to adapt to these new circumstances.

Remote interpreting entails various technical problems, but the major concerns are ethical, relating to the storage of data and the confidentiality of any information exchanged. Moreover, the business model of several RSI platforms, which recruit interpreters at low cost with no geographical constraints, threatens to lead to the 'Uberization' of our profession.

I have used all of the main platforms for my direct clients, and their highest quotes can be up to three times more expensive than the lowest ones, for the same service! That means there has to be a better deal for us.

The money spent by our clients on interpreting services will be better used if interpreters are properly paid. Technical costs must be kept at reasonable levels; all too often, this is not the case at present.

In addition to the economic argument, I believe we also need to be careful to avoid the data streams travelling via platforms ultimately being used to develop artificial intelligence solutions. We must be very alert to this danger: artificial intelligence has done considerable damage in the field of written translation, notably by exploiting good-quality human translations that have been made publicly available. Artificial intelligence is a misnomer: it actually consists of a set

of statistical tools fuelled by big data. AI needs ever-increasing amounts of data to be developed further; we need to be careful we do not end up digging our own grave.

To combat this threat, I believe it is vital for interpreters' professional organisations, including AIIC, to develop one or more technical solutions dedicated to remote interpretation for their members, grounded in strict ethical principles, failing which we will lose a significant number of markets, both in the private and public sectors.

This issue was already raised by some colleagues at the PRIMS meeting in Lyon in January.

In conclusion, I believe it would make sense for AIIC to get involved in the development of these technical tools so that they do not end up enslaving us – or even, ultimately, doing away with the need for us altogether.



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