Evaluating the Use of Virtual Learning Environments in the Education of Interpreters and their Clients

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Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been employed in interpreter education and training to make teaching resources accessible, to overcome problems of trainer availability and to enable training across geographical distances. ICTs are also particularly useful in enabling interpreting students and those who require interpreting services to train together in virtual "mock conferences", "moot courts" and similar settings. ICT-based solutions for education and training open up new opportunities for situated learning, for example through simulation where access to real-life settings is difficult or impossible for learners. As a further advantage, the use of ICTs in education and training helps learners acquire digital competence and prepares them for 21st century working environments and practices.

Research into the use of ICTs to create Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in different educational settings shows positive results but also raises questions about the affordances of different technologies and the impact of system design on the learning process. In the context of interpreter-mediated communication, questions that need to be investigated further are how and what interpreting students and users of interpreting services learn in VLEs; how different VLEs can support different types of learning activities; how VLEs are able to simulate real-life conditions to bridge the worlds of work and education; and how VLEs simulating interpreter-mediated communication can work for learners from diverse backgrounds.

Moreover, ICT-based educational solutions present novel opportunities for analysing learning processes and evaluating the effectiveness of VLEs. In the field of interpreter education, these opportunities remain to date largely unexplored. However, analysing and evaluating different VLEs through the lens of a process as complex as interpreting promises to yield rich insights for the design of future VLEs.

This seminar, organised by the EU Lifelong Learning Project EVIVA – 'Evaluating the Education of Interpreters and their Clients through Virtual Learning Activities', addresses the educational opportunities that VLEs such as 3D virtual worlds, video-based and videoconference-based environments provide for future interpreters and their clients. It seeks to discuss the affordances of different types of VLE, explore appropriate evaluation methods and formulate design recommendations for VLEs in the context of educating and training interpreters and their clients.

Particular attention will be paid to 3D virtual worlds as their use has increased in education, triggered by the fact that they have matured in the last decade. It has been suggested that 3D virtual worlds are likely to help overcome some of the problems with motivation and participation associated with older VLEs because of the sense of presence they generate.

The seminar aims to provide a forum for discussion and to encourage dialogue between the designers and users of VLEs in the context of interpreter education. It will bring together:

- Researchers and developers with an interest in applying ICTs to education and training in the field of interpreting
- Interpreting scholars interested in interpreting pedagogy
- Interpreter trainers and those who train interpreter clients
- Users of interpreting service
- VLE designers and developers

The programme will include experts in all fields that are relevant to this seminar: interpreting, interpreter training, client education, developing and evaluating ICT-based educational solutions, exploiting 3D virtual reality and other emerging technologies for educational purposes.

Speakers:
- Barbara Moser-Mercer, Geneva
- Katerina Dara-Lepoura, European Parliament
- Fernando Leitão, European Commission
- Jesús de Manuel Jerez, Granada
- Tugba Tokel, Ankara
- Members of the EVIVA project consortium

Practical information: The seminar is free of charge but you must register, as places are limited. To secure your place, please email **eviva-seminar@virtual-interpreting.net** by 22 September 2014 at the latest.

EVIVA Project partners: University of Surrey (co-ordinator), Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου (University of Cyprus), Bangor University, Steinbeis-Transferzentrum Sprachlernmedien.

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