Videoconference interpreting

Interpreters need to hear and see proceedings at a meeting clearly to be able to interpret. The quality of sound and image transmission has improved so much that it is now possible to provide simultaneous interpretation at videoconferences.

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Interpretation can occur at videoconferences in various settings, each determining the technical requirements.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Participants and interpreters must hear and see the same thing, at the same time. Sound-image transmission between the meeting place or places and the interpretation place must be instantaneous and of high quality. A time lag of more than 2 seconds in sound reception by the interpreters can lead to misunderstandings and errors.

Synchronisation

Perfect sound-image synchronisation is crucial. You may have watched TV newscasts with a reporter speaking in a remote location and you don’t hear any sound for a few seconds. You will have lost part of his message. The same applies when interpreting.

For instant and complete understanding of a speaker’s message, interpreters need to hear and see the speaker. Therefore, there must be dedicated cameras and operators focusing on the speaker of the moment.

Importance of images

60% of what you understand from a speech or conversation comes from what you see. Isn’t that amazing? Blind people develop their sense of hearing and feeling much more, to compensate the lack of vision. In a conversation, it is not just the speaker’s face that you see, but the surroundings, what goes on nearby, where the speaker is looking, etc.

That is why for videoconference interpretation you should provide interpreters with at least two screens: one showing the speaker of the moment, the other showing the rostrum, the meeting room, the screens on which something is being projected.

Location of booths and screens

For a videoconference with two languages only, the interpreters can be seated at a table in a sound studio or any other room, facing two screens.

If more than two languages are involved, interpreters will usually be seated in regular interpretation
booths set up in a quiet room. In that case, large screens should be placed in front of the booths, at eye height, showing the speaker and the meeting room and/or projection screen.

**Technical staff**

Your sound engineers and camera operators and all technical staff for your videoconference must be made aware that there will be simultaneous interpretation, and must understand the requirements for this.

Introduce your AIIC consultant interpreter to your Chief Engineer so that they can agree on the setup of booths, cameras, sound links, etc. in advance of your meeting. They should perform at least one rehearsal before the actual meeting.

**Documentation**

It is crucial that the interpreters have all the documents that participants receive. At any meeting participants will refer to specific documents and, very often, will quote from them. Without all the documents, your interpreters are at a loss.

You should provide documents about the meeting or the subject of your meeting (including reports of previous meetings) to the interpreters as early as possible, so that they can prepare for the subject.

You may be an expert in hydroponics but that does not mean that your interpreters know all the vocabulary of hydroponics in five languages. They need to study and prepare for your meeting.

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**Recommended citation format:**