



## Notes on videoconferencing

With the rapid development of technology, videoconferencing is finding applications in every sector of the economy and is becoming a familiar instrument for communication.

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Technical Committee.

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Like all new technologies, videoconferencing has its place. But it cannot be taken as an overall solution to cutting back on expenses and travel time for international conferences. It is important to understand the advantages and limitations of videoconferencing so that it can be used in the best way.

To help you understand the details, we've prepared a of some of the terms used in this new technology, plus a few specifically for remote conferencing.

Videoconferencing should not be confused with remote conferencing, which applies to situations when all the speakers and participants are at one or more sites, while the interpreters are at a different site.

Below are some of the most important details that interpreters and conference organisers need to know about videoconferencing.

### **Good sound quality is a MUST for successful videoconferencing.**

A standard telephone connection provides the following frequencies:

- low-range ISDN frequency = 3100 Hz
- high-range ISDN frequency = 7000 Hz

### **The ISO standard requires the full range of sound audible to the human ear: 125-12,500 Hz**

At the present state of the art, there are only two ways of getting the clear, intelligible sound and lip synchronisation of video and audio that interpreters need:

- a) satellite transmission from end to end (i.e. broadband)



b) (i.e. broadband)

But even with perfect broadband sound and image, conference organisers should not forget that:

- Interpreters consistently report a feeling of alienation and isolation from their audience, which affects their performance.
- Videoconferencing is never the same as an event in which all concerned (participants, interpreters, technicians, staff, etc.) are present at the same site. Videoconferencing demands a far greater effort by the interpreters and, therefore, working time should not exceed 3 hours a day.

### **Experiments**

are being carried out in videoconferencing and remote interpretation to determine the best way of putting this new technology into practise and its viability at different stages of development.

### **An important detail**

The interpreters need top-quality earphones capable of supplying the full range of sound. It's no good to spend a fortune setting up the best possible videoconferencing session and then ruin it all with inadequate earphones.

### **Image and sound quality**

At the current state of the art, we can't have best of both sound and image. It's a trade-off, and the interpreters should make sure that the technical personnel adjust the system to provide the best sound quality -- which will mean sacrificing some image quality.

The generally poor quality of images received in videoconferencing is also tiring for interpreters and more likely to cause eyestrain and increased tension than using monitors in booths under local conditions.

### **The importance of expert advice**

Videoconferencing requires the presence of an experienced coordinating interpreter, participating fully in the preparation of the conference with the video and sound technicians.

### **What do interpreters need to know about a videoconference session?**



There are a few details that interpreters need to know about a videoconference session (apart from the usual information needed for any multilingual conference) so they can organise the right team and prepare properly.

- How much time is involved?
- How many speakers?
- Where is it all coming from?
- Will there be discussion/debate or just speeches?

### **The bottom line**

Videoconferencing technology is improving fast but still has a way to go before it can provide truly satisfactory conditions for conference interpreters.

And even in the best of conditions, it will still suffer from the same limitations as any kind of "long-distance" interpreting.

aiic's position on the use of videoconferencing, as advised by the **Technical and Health Committee**, is that an interpreter should not be required to work more than 3 hours a day in a videoconference. If it is scheduled to last longer, manning strength must be increased.

Because of the growing relevance of videoconferencing and its impact on conference interpreters, aiic has drawn up a **Code for the Use of New Technologies in Conference Interpretation**, available in [which](#) gives more details on how videoconferencing can be used to its best advantage in a multilingual situation.

For more details on the organisational and technical side of videoconferencing, see the following:

- ISO standard 2603:1998
- ISO standard 4043:1998
- IEC standard 60914:1988
- Code on New Technologies
- Guidelines for Remote Conferencing



- ETSI: Study of ISDN Videotelephony for Conference Interpreters, 1992

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