The New Remote Interpreting Landscape: Back to the Hack

Katharine Allen, MA
ATA Webinar Series - 1/26/2021

KATHARINE ALLEN
English-Spanish Interpreter, Licensed Trainer, Textbook Author, Advocate for the Profession... and...
Who’s Here?

1. What areas of interpreting do you work in?
2. Have you interpreted remotely?
3. Have you done RSI?
4. What is your greatest challenge/concern?

Today’s Presentation

- COVID-19’s Impact
- Remote Interpreting Types/Platforms
- RSI Assignments
- RSI Challenges
- Interpreter Tech Set Up
- The Virtual Booth (Back Channel)
- RSI with a Phone Bridge
- Your Skill Set

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
Two Weeks in March 2020...

Interpreting went from mostly on-site to mostly remote in a few short weeks.

Interpreters, LSPs and participants all had to adjust overnight.

In many cases, language access was severely compromised.
Anyone feel like this?

Remote Interpreting Platforms
Remote Interpreting Platforms / Types

**DEDICATED**
- Over the Phone (OPI)
- Video Remote (VRI)

**NON-DEDICATED**
- Web conferencing platform

**HYBRID / INTEGRATIONS**
- Zoom is a HYBRID platform with a partial RSI solution. Some non-dedicated platforms can integrate with a dedicated RSI platform.

A DEDICATED platform is designed for interpreting and usually has a pool of trained interpreters available for on demand assignments.

A NON-DEDICATED platform is not designed for interpreting and does not have a pool of trained interpreters available on-demand.

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
RSI: Platform Buffet

Dedicated RSI Platforms
- Kudo
- Interprefy
- Voiceboxer
- Interactio
- Ablio
- ZipDX

Integration Solutions
- Platforms that can integrate with RSI platforms
  - Teams
  - Web Ex
  *This list is likely to increase.*

Non-RSI Platforms:
- GoToMeeting
- Webex
- Google Meets
- Facebook Live
- Facetime/Skype/Whatsapp

Non-RSI Platforms:
- Require a second audio channel / conference call available to provide interpretation

REMOTE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING
Standard Web Conferencing Platform
Requires a second audio channel to provide interpreting

Interpreters use a video call as a virtual booth.

Language 1 remote interpreters

Second audio connection via a phone line for interpreting.

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
Zoom - A Hybrid Platform

- The interpreting function has to be set WHEN the meeting is scheduled.
- The English channel also functions as the floor.
- Once you have been assigned as the interpreter, you cannot hear the other interpreter.
- You have to switch to English for the “floor” to hear you.

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021

Traditional and Emerging RSI Assignments

Traditional conference interpreting
  - diplomatic, international organizations, business conferences

Educational interpreting
  - board meetings, public events, special education, parent-teacher

Healthcare
  - classes, public health departments, COVID-related public meetings

Local government / non-profit
  - public meetings, community engagement, disaster response

Legal/Court interpreting
  - attorney-client, depositions, immigration court, court audiences

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
RSI Webinar Events vs. Interactive Meetings

**Webinar Events**
- Similar to more traditional conference interpreting.
- May interpret in one language direction only.
- The interpreter closes the camera off and interacts with a backchannel booth.
- Question and answer sessions are limited and often handled by a chat function.
- "Live" questions handled by a moderator.

**Interactive Meetings**
- All participants are on video as part of meeting.
- Interpreter is often on screen as well.
- Interpreter may need turn-taking and intervention protocols as part of a negotiated dialogue.
- Interpreter will need to frequently switch channels between languages.

CHALLENGES

Often, the interpreter will have the most information/knowledge on how to successfully complete an RSI encounter because many participants or clients think:

- RSI is just like OPI
- RSI is just like VRI
- "Just join the Zoom call, it's easy!"
- "You're just interpreting, it's not that hard/technical"

Each encounter is different. The needs depend on:

- Participants
- Subject/Topic
- Platform
- Communication Dynamics

The interpreter needs to advocate for what will make the encounter successful.

- IT Arrangements
- Preparation
- Audio Needs
- How to Connect to Interpreting
- Communication During Encounter
Things Fall Apart When...

- The client does not understand how to enable interpreting.
- The client does not give instructions for how to access interpreting.
- With Zoom, the meeting was scheduled without the interpretation feature enabled.
- Participants cannot access the interpreting (when using a phone or tablet to access the meeting).
- No process for how to handle Q&A sessions was set up.
- No one is assigned to IT.
- The interpreter and/or client is new to RSI.

Before You Interpret and the Tech Check
Video Demo: The Interpreter Tech Set Up

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-4SNtSOYBQ

Before the Assignment Check List

- Is it a direct client or through a language service company?
- Have they organized an RSI meeting before?
- What kind of meeting is it?
- Will you need an interpreting partner?
- What platform is it on?
- If Zoom, who will coordinate the interpretation channels?
- Do you need a phone bridge for interpreting?
- Is it being livestreamed or recorded?
- Who is responsible for IT?
- Will there be a tech check?
The Tech Check

- How will attendees know how to log onto the interpreting channel?
- Request/provide a visual with interpreting channel instructions.
- If using Zoom, confirm that the meeting has been scheduled with interpretation enabled.
- Test everyone’s sound and video.
- Require or encourage headset/microphone use by all.
- Determine how Q&A session will be handled.
- Determine if turn-taking between participants is required.
- Obtain contact information for primary contact before and during the event.
- Determine who is responsible for tech problems during the event.
- Request all relevant event documents and materials ahead of time.

The Log On Slide

WELCOME TO OUR SPANISH SPEAKERS

- “Would you like to listen to this conversation in Spanish? Follow these steps...”
  1. Haga clic en el icono de interpretación en la parte inferior de su pantalla.
  2. Seleccione español

- Watch the meeting LIVE on the Facebook event page.
  - Vea la reunión EN VIVO en la página de eventos de Facebook del
The Log On Slide

WELCOME TO OUR SPANISH SPEAKERS

- “Would you like to listen to this conversation in Spanish? Follow these steps...
  1. Haga clic en el icono de Interpretación en Español.
  2. Se abre la pantalla de selección de idiomas.
- Watch the meeting LIVE on the Facebook event page.
  - Vea la reunión EN VIVO en la página de eventos de Facebook del event page.

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
The Log On Slide

Q&A Sessions
- Chat feature in the platform or,
- Use mics to verbally ask questions or,
- “Raise hand” function in platform or,
- Group meetings that encourage open dialogue.

How to Manage
During your pre-session brief or introduction ask and determine:
- Who will monitor the chat box for questions?
- Who will interpret the questions (if there is more than one interpreter)?
- What signal will you or the participants use to indicate they want to comment?

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
The Virtual Booth
Video Demo: The Virtual Booth / Back Channel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-4SNtSOYBQ

OPTION 1:
Use a second device with a video call to coordinate with your partner.

OPTION 2:
If on ZOOM, use a second device to log into the same meeting and listen to your partner on the interpreting channel.

Setting Up a Virtual Booth

Hi, what back channel would you like to use? I would rather have a visual signal instead of using a chat window. And how often should we switch?

Let’s use a video call on our phones. We can use a thumb’s up signal. I think we should switch every 20 minutes.

When working on web conferencing platforms not designed for remote simultaneous interpreting, interpreters create their own virtual booths to coordinate during the event.

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
Interpreter Back Channel on a Single Device

OPTION 3:
Log onto a second video app on a single computer to coordinate with your partner (Whereby, Google Meet)

Interpretation 1

Interpretation 2

Whereby chat

All virtual booth set ups require you to manage TWO audio channels:
- The event
- Your partner

Set up your virtual booth in advance and PRACTICE when working with a new partner!

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
Video Conference with Phone Bridge

Video Demo:

REMOTE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING for a Video Conference Meeting Using a Phone Bridge

Created by Katharine Allen and Danielle Meder for Cross-Cultural Communications, 2021

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
When the simultaneous mode is used for dialogs...

- Many meetings that have traditionally been interpreted consecutively are now being interpreted simultaneously.

- When the meeting involves a discussion or dialogue between parties, the interpreter needs:
  - Introduction scripts
  - Turn-taking signals (physical and verbal)
  - Intervention scripts

- In RSI for interactive meetings, interpreters are visible, sometimes part of the discussion and in charge of managing the platform to help everyone’s voice be heard.

---

**FINAL STEP:**
Know Your Skill Set

- Have you interpreted remotely before?
- If so, which modes?
- Are you comfortable interpreting in all modes.
- Do you understand the RSI platforms?
- Do you have and know how to use the required tech set up?
- Have you practiced intervention skills when interpreting remotely?
- Have you team interpreted?
- Have you used a virtual booth?
- When will you say “yes”? And when will you say “no”?
- Where will you seek help or guidance?
TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH!

• ZOOM Fatigue
• Acoustic Shock
• Cognitive Overload

RESOURCES: Cross-Cultural Communications
Remote Interpreting Webinar Series

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNjL_WcM4BiBwI1OX_ls63Q/videos

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021
RESOURCES: Remote Simul Interpreting Youtube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/c/RemoteSimulInterpreting/videos

Katharine Allen, MA © 2021

Feel free to connect: sierraskyit@gmail.com

Thank You!