

In 2020, Mexico's CMIC was the first Interpreters'/Translators' Association in the world to launch a Survey and write a report thereafter called "Some Recommendations," of which a copy was submitted to this Federation. The paper included opinion charts on relevant questions discussed by members at the time. In hindsight, it is still relevant in many aspects, while some issues have become moot. Based on those surveys, we finally reviewed the issues that we would have to watch out for as individual members.

Following are some of the new circumstances surrounding ISaD (or IaD -Interpretación a distancia, in México), better known in English as RSI. These insights arise from a growing concern that some of the negative aspects of RSI already detected in early 2020 were not only growing but infecting other core work areas of our members.

At the same time, this paper discusses technical issues that were unforeseen or unfortold, like the wanting technology on the side of the speakers and event production companies.

While, in general, the Pandemic has been considered a given cause for the economic problems of most of our members, we have also detected a growing reduction in acceptable economic offerings from hiring stakeholders. This issue will not be discussed herein, as it involves much ground to cover, yet it should not be overlooked in future submissions.

### **The New Reality in RSI Interpretation**

Several aspects give meaning to the words New Reality, a.k.a the New Normal. The New Reality involves staying more at home to work; it involves transforming a part of one's house into a (at best) soundproof video booth with adapted earphones, appropriate hardware, and a very functional video computer. It also involves hiring the best Internet service available in the area, and possibly considering a second internet purveyor. The New Reality includes buying up monthly software, sitting down longer searching for leads, or working or just researching the next gig. It also means transforming your work hours and your daily life. It means becoming more knowledgeable of hardware and software, under penalty of obsolescence. At work, we need to perform our regular duties, while at the same time we are making sure the technical aspects are working, reminding people to do things, and communicating on another medium with our technician or person in charge of the meeting—end result: An overstressed, overworked interpreter.

In a nutshell, this is the New Reality. Let us look at some salient aspects.

#### **Microphones, Headphones and Noise.**

Sound and its cousin noise are undoubtedly an interpreter's friend and foe. In this RSI times, having a good pair of headphones, microphone, and noise reduction during meetings seemed like a foregone conclusion, yet the most common complaint amidst the RSI circle is the lack of appropriate gear on the side of the speakers, participants, and audience. A bad sound source precludes any great sound gear on the interpreter's side. Short of subtitles (and no, automatic subtitles do not work), nothing can help an interpreter get clear words from a speaker talking to a computer microphone at more than a meter's distance in a half-empty room.

Adjacent to that is the role of internet bandwidth. Regardless of whether you are using WIFI or LAN, if the internet provider is not furnishing you AND your speaker and participants with the appropriate and constant amount of voice bandwidth necessary (usually more than 20 Mb is appropriate), then you can expect lag, dropouts, and low voice bandwidth resulting in jitter and clanking. This is the intangible, unmanageable part of video meetings, where neither party can really do much, but the result may be an eventful meeting at best and an abandoned meeting at worst. In the middle, an interpreter with a great deal of stress. There must be further and a stronger emphasis on speakers and anyone in charge of video meetings to ensure appropriate sound is provided at all levels.

### **The Speakers and lack of Speaking Basics**

Video Meeting producers and agencies need to understand that some basic training for the Speaker and participants in essential video presentation skills would go a long way. There is a disconnect between the content that is required to be presented and the way it is communicated. The speaker lacks notes that can be appropriately distributed, there is a lack of regard for the interpreter, for whom a few previous words with the speaker are always important, mediocre intermediation and technical assistance by the companies in charge seem to be the rule rather than the exception. Poorly placed microphones, no microphones (except built-ins), disregard for interpreters' requirements, and a lack of an appropriate internet connection all compound on every occasion to diminish the message by the speaker or the agency in charge. They also end up affecting the mental stamina of the interpreter.

### **Hear Me Roar!**

Preventing the latter problem of stress can easily be solved: Talk to your client, person in charge, or intermediary. Be forceful. Be clear. People have forgotten about the role of the interpreter, but each of us needs to be the vehicle for change. Usually clear and direct language is all it takes to get the conditions you need to perform well. If all else fails, direct your counterpart to the ISO standards regarding **Conference material for Interpretation ISO 4043:2603** and the ISO Standards **ISO PAS 24019 and ISO 20108 regarding Sound, Video and Platforms and other conditions for Remote Simultaneous Interpretation** .

## **Platforms and Workhours, and an Unsung Hero:**

Two years ago, CMIC provided to its members with recommendations on a few Interpretation platforms that existed at the time. Further development has gone into several platforms, and even the ones from two years ago have evolved in many respects. Nevertheless, as it stands on our side of the World, Zoom and Teams continue to be strong, although lacking on having a true interpretation platform. Other platforms are also relevant, and many of our members work with international and national hub platforms as well. But our pick of the crop is Lithuania's own INTERACTIO.

In terms of workhours, two years ago we suggested that the workday should not extend beyond six hours. That proved to be wrong. Given new anecdotal evidence from our members, we can assert that working online is much more stressful than working live. Some of the reasons are stated in the paragraphs above. While we cannot extend a recommendation, due to lack of scientific evidence, we can safely say that the time working online is significantly more stress-inducing than the same period live. Thus, less time online would be better, when at all possible.

Finally, but not least, are our unsung heroes, the booth technicians. They have been woefully missed. They were the people who allowed us to concentrate on the task at hand, i.e., Interpreting, and disregard all other issues around us. They made sure our mic was on, our sound was spic-and-span, our speaker spoke on a (great) microphone, and many other gracious tasks. We do not forget them; we know they are hurting from the current times and only wish we could join them more at work.

## **Interpreter's Health and Staying Home.**

Postural health is a topic not often discussed regarding Interpreting. However, sitting down longer at home has brought about a series of new disorders that Interpreters on the go did not use to have. Some recommendations: Sitting down for more than one hour leads to vascular diseases, leading to varicose veins or even embolisms. Not taking breaks and remaining seated on your off time is not recommended. Always consider the importance of a good seat, but also of an appropriate desk! Get up constantly, at least once every hour. Take advantage of being off camera and stretch and walk about on your off time. Standing Up desks are a worthwhile investment. Being healthy as an online RSI Interpreter may be more difficult, but not impossible.