An Overview of Simultaneous Remote Interpretation By Telephone

David Frankel, CEO, ZipDX
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Agenda

• Demo Logistics
• Simultaneous Interpretation Background
• Over-The-Phone SI: How it Works
• The Challenges
• Lessons Learned
• Questions & Answers
Demo Logistics

• Live Demo during this talk
• Join by phone: dial +1 888 947 3989
  – 1*4252-4252# for English
  – 2*4252-4252# for Spanish

• Join on the web at http://gala.zipdx.com
  – Use Chrome or Firefox to hear the audio
It’s A Multilingual World

• The United Nations figured it out decades ago
• When meeting participants can talk and listen in their native language, they experience:
  – Greater comprehension
  – More engagement
  – Fewer misunderstandings
  – Less stress & fatigue
  – Higher productivity
• Simultaneous (vs. consecutive) interpretation is the enabler
Facilitating Simultaneous Interpretation

• Meeting rooms that support simultaneous interpretation require special capabilities:
  – Sound system with multiple audio channels
  – Microphones, headphones and channel selectors at each seat
  – Soundproof interpreter booths with audio-switching consoles
  – “Floor control” mechanisms

• None of this has been available “over the phone”
Simultaneous Interpreting Goes Virtual

• Internet technology has enabled new functionality for Virtual Meetings, including:
  – Webinars in multiple languages
  – Automated interpretation
  – Our application: Conference Calls

• Used for (same as in-person):
  – Decision-making (Board of Directors)
  – Research / collaboration (Experts, Trials)
  – Diplomacy (Government, NGO)
  – Customers (sales & marketing); Supply Chain (negotiating, problem-solving)
  – Corporate communications (investor relations, labor councils)
### In-Person vs. Virtual Multilingual Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In-Person</th>
<th>Virtual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>10 - 500</td>
<td>2 – 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>1 - 5 Days</td>
<td>45 minutes – 4 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Expense Items</strong></td>
<td>Travel + Venue + Interpreters</td>
<td>Interpreter(s) + Bridge</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lead-Time</strong></td>
<td>Weeks or Months</td>
<td>Hours or Days</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy Required</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpreters</strong></td>
<td>Human; 2 per language</td>
<td>Human, 1-2 per language</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>Multilingual Audio System</td>
<td>Phone, Computers, Internet</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agenda</strong></td>
<td>Gather, work, lunch, work, network</td>
<td>Connect, Talk, Adjourn</td>
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</table>
**Participants** join the conference call as usual

- No special equipment
- Connect via any telephone (office, mobile, home)
- Dial-in access numbers in 50+ countries
- Or the system calls to anywhere in the world
One or more *interpreters* also join the conference

- They work from any location with internet access
- They use a computer, headset & ZipLine web browser app
- “Virtual Interpreter Booth with directional control
A Bilingual Meeting Example

- There are three audio channels: **Floor**, **Spanish** & **English**
- The interpreter always hears the **Floor** channel
- The interpreter controls the direction of interpretation based upon the language being spoken on the floor
A Bilingual Example Call

- Participant joins in their appropriate language channel
- Based on their “profile” stored in our system, or on the digits they dial when they connect
When a Spanish speaker has the floor the interpreter delivers into the English channel

Spanish speaking participants hear the original speaker

Interpreter using a computer, headset & ZipLine
Example Meeting: English-to-Spanish

• When an English speaker has the floor the interpreter delivers into the Spanish channel
• English speaking participants hear the original speaker
A bilingual participant listens to the **Floor** channel and does not hear the interpreter.
ZipLine 3.0 Interpreter Console

- A web application running in the Chrome browser*
- Provides interpreter controls similar to conference booth
- With two languages, it is easy to switch directions and to monitor a partner during lengthy sessions

* Works on Windows, Mac & Linux systems
Channel Selection

• **Participants** can switch channels using telephone keypad
  – #0 selects Floor channel
  – #1 - #8 select a specific language channel

• For example, a bilingual participant would normally select the **Floor** but might move to **Spanish** to hear the interpreter when a heavily-accented **English** speaker starts talking.
Audio Cues

- Since participants cannot see each other, audio cues give them some awareness of what is happening on the call.
- The original speaker’s voice is played softly underneath the interpreter.
- The interpreters voice is played softly back to the original speaker’s channel.
- Volume levels are adjustable, and can be turned off if desired.
Beyond Bilingual: Multilingual

ZipDX supports up to 8 separate languages per conference!

Imagine a call in four languages:

- English
- French
- German
- Spanish
Call Flow: A Multilingual Lecture

Channels
- Floor
  - English
  - French
  - German
  - Spanish

- English Audience
  - French/English Interpreter
  - English Channel
  - French Audience
  - Mexican Audience
  - German Audience
  - Spanish Audience
Question From An English Participant

Channels
- Floor
- English
- French
- German
- Spanish

English Channel

English Audience

French/English Interpreter

French Audience

German/English Interpreter

German Audience

Spanish/English Interpreter

Spanish Audience
Relay: Question From A French Participant

Channels
- Floor
- English
- French
- German
- Spanish

English Channel

English Audience

French Audience

French/English Interpreter

German Audience

German/English Interpreter

Spanish Audience

Spanish/English Interpreter

3/22/2016 ZipDX
Relay: Question From A German Participant

Channels
- Floor
  - English
  - French
  - German
  - Spanish

English Channel

- English Audience
- French/English Interpreter
- French Audience
- German/English Interpreter
- German Audience
- Spanish/English Interpreter
- Spanish Audience

3/22/2016
Relay: Question From A Spanish Participant

Channels
- Floor
  - English
  - French
  - German
  - Spanish

English Channel
- English Audience
- French Audience
- German Audience
- Spanish Audience

Question From A Spanish Participant
• Status & control for the host
• Who’s there and who’s not
• Who’s talking (or making noise)
• Roles & Channel Assignments
• Interpreter Status
• Audio Controls
Moderator Dashboard 2

• In addition to settings for the conference as a whole, the on-line dashboard also allows the host to adjust some parameters for each participant.
Multilingual Conferencing Audio Channels

- Real-time interaction allows for natural conversation
  - Participants can interrupt each other, just like in a regular conference call
  - Feature can be disabled if it’s not appropriate
- Can accommodate up to 8 different languages at once
  - Requires appropriate interpreter team
  - Relay interpretation is supported
Web Content

• Presentations and webinars usually include “web content” (PowerPoint slides or other images)

• Ideally, content is “language-friendly”:
  – Pictures, tables, charts: captions/legends in all languages
  – Otherwise, separate slide decks for each language

• ZipDX tools run in browser without download
  – “WebSharing” allows sharing of screen or app
  – “SlideShow” allows sharing of preloaded, translated slides
  – Audio also available in Chrome & Firefox

• Rule: Keep it simple (especially for delegates)!
• Best for interpreters to have 2 monitors
Multilingual Conferencing Scenarios

Use over-the-phone simultaneous interpretation for:

• Recurring group meetings (3 to 40 participants*)
• Interviews (2 to 6 people*)
• Training (10 to 100 participants*)
• Informational & Sales Webinars (20 to 400 participants*)
• Use in combination with other video-casting tools

* participant counts are examples, not hard limits
Example Users

- US-based charitable foundation monthly advisory board (EN/ES)
- UN (Nairobi-based) project quarterly executive committee (EN/FR)
- US/Mexico water treaty project (monthly or more) (EN/ES)
- US Agricultural Promotion board & subcommittees (weekly+) (EN/ES)
- Canadian global mining operator (local interface) (EN/ES)
- EU Multinational Labor Council (EN/DE/FR/IT)
- EU Multinational Labor Council (EN/FR/DE/ES/IT/PL/RO/HU + PT)
Multilingual Conferencing – Other Modes

Most of the delegates are gathered in person

- **Remote Participation**
  - Delegates connect remotely by phone and/or web
  - Can participate in their own language
  - Benefit from venue-based interpreters

- **Remote Interpretation**
  - Interpreters work remotely (don’t travel to venue)

Can be tricky to integrate venue & cloud technologies

Some parties feel isolated or disadvantaged
Privacy & Confidentiality

- Meeting access can be configured for individual participant PINs (attendance tracking)
- Interpreter connections & web content are encrypted
- Client & participant lists confidential to meeting organizer
- Profiles are password-protected
- Registered participant phone numbers are “masked”
- Recordings are locked; only the organizer can share
Interpreter On-boarding

Online resources:

• Best Practices Guides & FAQ’s
• Starting Guide For Interpreters
  – Step-by-step setup guide written for non-technical people
  – Includes short video tutorials
• Administrators Guide to Creating Multilingual Meetings

30-60 Minute Practice Session

• Experienced Conference Interpreter
Audio Challenges for Delegates & Interpreters

Compromises:
• Mobile Phones
• Speaker Phones
• Room Acoustics
• Background Noise
• Bad Connections

Impacts
• Accuracy & Comprehension
• Recognition of voices
• Challenges with accented speakers
• Understanding during “double-talk”
• Productivity
• Fatigue
• Need for repetition
• Enjoyment
• Errors and stress for interpreters
Audio Misunderstandings

• "But I told him to *pass* the books for distribution, not to *pad* them!
• Words are indistinguishable in “narrowband” (3300 Hz Audio)
Standard Definition Audio (3.3KHz): 40 ambiguities per minute

High Definition Audio (7KHz): 4 ambiguities per minute

Reference: Jeff Rodman, Polycom, 2003 from French & Steinberg, Bell Labs, 1947
The Role Of Video - Or Not

- Multilingual audio tools can be used with or without a video component
- Most are audio-only or audio + slides (just like conference calls)
- Some use webcams or more sophisticated video technology
- Video introduces more technology requirements (computers, bandwidth)
- Likelihood of trouble is exponential with # of participants
- Also consider the geographies involved and their infrastructure

- We often hear that over 90% of communication is non-verbal, but...
  - “Unless a communicator is talking about their feelings or attitudes, these equations are not applicable” (per the original study’s author)
Addressing the Challenges

• Best possible audio connections
• Testing audio prior to the meeting, especially for lecturers / presenters
• Distribution of presentation materials ahead of the meeting
• Visual conference status and controls for interpreters (who’s talking)
• Limitations on meeting times
• Reduced turn times for interpreters
• Education of participants regarding nuances of multilingual meetings
• Audio cues for participants
• Respect for time zones
Human Factors & Nuances

• Some interpreters “just don’t like it”
  – Self-selection; only those that are enthusiastic should undertake it
• Meetings go best when delegates use “multilingual courtesy”
  – Speak at a measured pace
  – State your name when you start speaking
  – Yield the floor explicitly when you are done
  – Avoid overly-complex phraseology and don’t mumble
• Limit meeting duration; include breaks
• Number slides & make regular references to current slide number
• Verbalize meeting instructions and allow them to be interpreted
• Start on time; have an agenda; avoid silence
• Similar best practices from in-person interpreted meetings
Education, Training & Promotion

• Professional interpreters need to know & evaluate the technology
  – Interpreter education needs to include these modalities
• Many opportunities for multilingual conferencing go unaddressed
  – Compromises of forcing participants to their 2^{nd} (or 3^{rd}) language are underestimated
  – Meeting organizers don’t realize that multilingual virtual meetings are (now) possible
• We need to educate / inform the world!
• ZipDX makes our platform broadly available
  – No-charge use of platform for interpreter on-boarding and customer demos
  – Discounts for academic institutions teaching interpretation remotely
• We are soliciting feedback from interpreters & incorporating suggestions
Conclusions

• Multilingual virtual meetings can be a huge boon for participants & meeting sponsors

• Planning and practice is required ("Your second meeting will go well.")
  – Don’t be scared by all the things that might go wrong, but do be diligent

• Start simple and introduce technology at a measured pace

• “Going virtual” is a new frontier and opportunity for language professionals
Questions & Discussion

More at http://multilingual.zipdx.com