

AVIDICUS comparative studies – part II: Traditional, videoconference and remote interpreting in police interviews

1 Introduction

The Belgian partners in the AVIDICUS project- Lessius University College, Antwerp, and the Antwerp Local Police – set up a number of contrastive experimental tests to observe and analyse the differences in performance and perception between Face to Face (FF), Videoconferencing (VCI) and Remote Interpreting (RI) in criminal proceedings.

There were three full testing days which will be reported on here. Two test days were hosted by the audio-visual centre of the University of Leuven, Belgium, on 1st (when 7 role plays carried out) and 25th February 2010 (when 5 recordings were made). The third test day (7th May 2010, 4 role plays recorded) was organized between Utrecht Court and Zeist Asylum Centre in the Netherlands. The four Belgian partners were present during the tests and were assisted by the on-site technical staff of the host institutions.

The test corpus consists of sixteen role plays of about 25 to 30 minutes each, between Dutch-speaking officials (in this case police officers) and Hungarian-speaking suspects or witnesses. Four role plays were interpreted using traditional face-to-face interpreting (FF), four were of the videoconference interpreting A type (VCI A, i.e. the interpreter sits with the police, the suspect/defendant is in another location); four were videoconference interpreting type B role plays (VCI B, i.e. the interpreter is in the same location as the other language speaker while the police officer is in a different location) and four were remote interpreting settings (RI; i.e. the interpreter is on his or her own, in a different location from the other participants, both the police officer and the suspect or witness).

The topics of the role plays were taken from real-life police interviews and dealt with four situations: police questioning of someone suspected of credit-card fraud; interview of a suspect of human trafficking; interview of a witness to a hold-up in a hotel, and finally, questioning of a suspect of criminal conspiracy. The role plays were not scripted – there was no fixed script to follow – but the participants were briefed on the topic and on the general drift the interrogation or interview should pursue. Occasionally, specific instructions were given to one of the role players on positioning, behaviour, body language, coherence and register to try and gauge the effect of these parameters on the overall interpreting performance. The detailed analysis of the role plays below will highlight a number of these effects.

The role plays were conducted in Dutch and Hungarian, the latter being a language completely unknown to the police officers, which forced them to rely exclusively on the interpreting and prevent them from hazarding any guesses or from being able to check the validity of the interpreting on the basis of their proficiency in a more ‘common’ language. The participants in the role plays were, first of all, four Dutch-Hungarian interpreters, who had between five to fifteen years of interpreting experience each, including experience in legal interpreting, though not in VCI or RI. The ‘actors’ playing the role of suspect or witness were all native speakers of Hungarian, with little or no

Dutch at all, most of them postgraduate or postdoctoral students at the University of Leuven. The two police officers, one Chief Inspector and one Inspector, one male and one female have long-standing experience of conducting interviews with legal interpreters though, again, not in VCI or RI. In the course of the four test days, every interpreter did one face-to-face (FF) interview, one videoconference interpreting A (VCI A) interview, one videoconference interpreting B (VCI B) session and one RI interview (RI) in random order. All role plays were video-recorded for later analysis.

2 Product and process analysis

The sixteen recordings were analysed according to two main categories: interpreting categories and audio-visual categories; in other words, analysis took place at the product level and the process level.

The product level itself focuses on overall accuracy in transferring the message (misunderstanding, *contresens*, etc.), and in particular on omissions and additions. Furthermore, at this level the linguistic, paralinguistic, contextual, synchronization and interaction issues of the interpreting performance are also considered. At the process or 'technical' level the primary consideration was whether there was any connection between the interpreting performance and resulting problems on the one hand, and the technical circumstances of the videoconference or remote setting on the other, as compared to the 'default' form of FF interpreting.

The main research question was whether the process influences the product. In particular, consideration was given to whether there are significant differences in interpreting quality and interpreting performance between FF and the other forms, whether the quality of the image or sound – the technical level – affects the quality of the interpreting, and whether, all parameters being equal, a higher technical quality leads to better interpreting quality.

2.1 Product analysis: Interpreting categories

Omissions, additions, inaccuracies

The four interpreters totalled the following number of omissions:

Form of interpreting	Number of omissions
FF	11 (25%)
VCI A	8 (19%)
VCI B	8 (19%)
RI	16 (37%)

As the table shows, the percentage of omissions is much higher in RI than in the other three forms. The lowest number of omissions occurs in VCI A and VCI B. However, it has to be noted that one of the interpreters alone was responsible for 17 omissions or almost 40% (39.5%) of all omissions.

Addition

It was envisaged that the results in the table below would give a general impression of the inclusion of additions in the interpreters' strategies, but once more a discrepancy can be noted:

Form of interpreting	Number of additions
FF	8 (40%)
VCI A	2 (10%)
VCI B	9 (45%)
RI	1 (5%)

Again, these figures should be treated with caution, since one interpreter was responsible for 11 (55%) of the additions, whereas one interpreter had no additions at all.

Accuracy

As far as accuracy is concerned, the figures show a more even distribution of the number of 'misinterpretations'.

Form of interpreting	Number of inaccuracies
FF	16 (24.6%)
VCI A	16 (24.6%)
VCI B	17 (26.2%)
RI	16 (24.6%)

The overall result for inaccuracies across the different forms of interpreting is evenly distributed but if the interpreters are again examined individually it can be seen that one interpreter was responsible for 37 (58%) cases of (in-)accuracy.

2.2 Product analysis: Linguistic issues

This subcategory within the product level looks at the following interpreting issues: Lexical/terminological problems; problems with idiomaticity; grammatical problems; problems with cohesion, coherence and style; and problems of register. The results are as follows:

Form of interpreting	Number of linguistic problems
FF	48 (27%)
VCI A	41 (23%)
VCI B	48 (27%)
RI	42 (23%)

It is again an evenly distributed result. These results suggest that the different forms of interpreting do not have a major impact of the various linguistic problems. A similar picture arose for paralinguistic issues including unnecessary repetition; hesitation; articulation problems; false starts; and voice quality problems. Regarding the performance of the individual interpreters, it could be suggested that every interpreter encountered linguistic problems in the different forms of interpreting more or less equally and that as far as this issue was concerned, it was not an individual phenomenon for one or two of them.

2.3 Product analysis: Paralinguistic issues

The paralinguistic issues that were analysed consist of unnecessary repetition; hesitation; articulation problems; false starts; and voice quality problems.

Form of interpreting	Number of paralinguistic issues
FF	200 (29%)
VCI A	164 (24%)
VCI B	152 (22%)
RI	170 (25%)

This is, again, a reasonably evenly divided result, which seems to suggest that paralinguistic issues do not depend on the form of interpreting. Two of the four interpreters had the most problems with repetition and hesitation. They were responsible for 30.6% and 36.2% respectively of all the paralinguistic problems in all forms of interpreting.

Synchronisation/Interaction issues

Synchronisation and interaction include the following issues: turn-taking problems; overlap; and artificial pauses. In this subcategory there is a very pronounced shift between the four forms. The overall results are as follows:

Form of interpreting	Number of synchronisation and interaction issues
FF	31 (11%)
VCI A	83 (30%)
VCI B	90 (32%)
RI	77 (27%)

A fuller understanding of these figures necessitates a closer examination of individual issues.

Turn-taking problems

Form of interpreting	Number of turn-taking problems
FF	24 (15%)
VCI A	42 (27%)
VCI B	45 (29%)
RI	45 (29%)

Overlapping speech

Form of interpreting	Number of overlaps
FF	7 (7%)
VCI A	27 (29%)
VCI B	39 (41%)
RI	22 (23%)

Artificial pauses

Form of interpreting	Number of pauses
FF	0 (0%)
VCI A	2 (40%)
VCI B	3 (60%)
RI	0 (0%)

In all of these categories a shift can be observed. All the interpreters had problems with turn-taking and overlap. In the other categories above it can be seen that there were always one or two interpreters who had problems with a specific issue. However, in the case of turn-taking and overlapping, all four interpreters encountered similar problems. At the same time, they made few, if any, artificial pauses. It can be tentatively suggested that the reason for this shift in the area of synchronisation/interaction will be found on the other level, i.e. on the technical process level. Before testing this assumption, however, the other subcategories within the product level should be explored.

Contextual issues

In this subcategory the problems of lack of awareness of the local or cultural context were considered. The results are as follows:

Form of interpreting	Number of contextual issues
FF	2 (15.0%)
VCI A	5 (38.5%)
VCI B	5 (38.5%)
RI	1 (8.0%)

Once again, a shift between the different forms can be discerned, but it should also be noted that these results are based on a very small number of occurrences.

Recall problems

Recall problems such as complete blackouts or disconnection from the event do not occur often enough to draw substantial conclusions from it.

Form of interpreting	Number of recall problems
FF	3 (19%)
VCI A	7 (44%)
VCI B	6 (37%)
RI	0 (0%)

Language mixing

Concerning use of the wrong language and code switching there is again differences between the different forms of interpreting, but in this case too it should be pointed out that these results are based on a very small data sample.

Form of interpreting	Number of instances of language mixing
FF	2 (11%)
VCI A	4 (22%)
VCI B	8 (45%)
RI	4 (22%)

2.4 Product analysis: All categories

The aggregate result of all the interpreting, linguistic and paralinguistic issues shows a reasonably evenly distributed picture:

Form of interpreting	Number of issues
FF	321 (25%)
VCI A	319 (25%)
VCI B	340 (26%)
RI	317 (24%)

There is no marked discrepancy in the overall results of all the interpreting categories. The results are equally distributed, which leads to the tentative conclusion that the difference in the forms of interpreting may not significantly affect the overall quality of interpreting. There may be specific problems or issues requiring attention and thus training, but on the whole, the different forms of interpreting seem to produce similar quality.

2.5 Process analysis

On the process level audio-visual and technical issues are considered.

Gaze

Whenever there is a screen in a room, people seem to become mesmerised by it. Even when other people are present, a screen grabs the attention, at the expense and to the detriment of personal rapport. This is the reason why the issue of gaze and rapport needs careful consideration and analysis, given the importance of positioning and rapport in interpreted criminal proceedings including police interviews.

In general, in the VCI A setting (interpreter with police officer), it was observed that both police officer and interpreter looked at the screen and almost never looked at each other. They focused on the suspect/witness in the remote location and did not realize that they were not looking at each other when speaking. However, when questioned about this, it became apparent that they did not see this as a disturbing element.

In the experiment involving a VCI B setting – a case of the criminal conspiracy – the interpreter was together with the suspect while the police officer was alone in a remote location. The interpreter was sitting behind the suspect so that the suspect could not see the interpreter. The suspect was clearly disturbed by this set up and always turned towards the interpreter when speaking. Finally the suspect said:

- S: Nemlehet, hogyeztígy... nemlátommagátrendesen.
Is it possible, that I ... (the suspect turns her chair towards the interpreter) I don't see you well.
- I: Mag ik mijn stoel verzetten? Ik zie de tolk niet.
Can I move my chair? I don't see the interpreter.
- PO: U hoeft de tolk niet te zien. De tolk zal gewoon vertalen en wij kijken naar mekaar.
You don't have to see the interpreter. The interpreter will translate and we look at each other.
- I: Önneknemkell a tolmácsotlátnia, ööö mi nézzükegymást.
You don't have to see the interpreter, hm we look at each other.
- S: Deháténszeretémlátni, hogymitmond. Könnyebbígy.
But I would like to see what he is saying. It is easier for me.
- I: Maar ik zou graag willen zien wat de tolk zie... zegt. Zo is het gemakkelijker.
But I would like to see, what the interpreter see... # says. This is easier.
- PO: Helpt u dat?
Does it help you?
- I: Segítez most?
Does it help you now?
- PO: Helpt u dat?
Does it help you?
- I: Segítezönnek?
Does it help you?
- S: Háttermészetesen, szeretnémlátniazarcátamíg...
Of course, I would like to see his face when ...
- I: Euh, natuurlijk ik wil het gezicht van de tolk zien.
Hm # of course, I would like to see the face of the interpreter.

- PO: OK? Dat is goed, geen probleem. Als de tolk er geen problemen mee heeft.
OK? It is fine. No problem. If the interpreter doesn't have any problems with it.
- I: De tolk heeft daar geen probleem mee.
The interpreter doesn't have any problems with it.
- PO: OK, dat is goed.
OK. That's fine.
- I: Rendben. Rendben.
Alright. Alright.

Following this exchange, the suspect moved her chair and then seemed to be sitting very comfortably. She was pleased because she could now see the interpreter. Although she still did not gaze at the interpreter, it seemed to be necessary for her to see the person who was speaking.

Other non-verbal issues: Posture, gesture, facial expression, actions

It is often said that to some extent interpreters also need to be actors. They have to pay attention to their posture, gesture, facial expression, tone of voice, and general behaviour. For the most part, all of the interpreters involved in this study were very professional. They were generally not disturbed by the presence of the camera. However, an exception to this occurred in a VCI B setting, a police interview involving a case of credit-card fraud.

The interpreter in this case studied law in Hungary but has been living in Belgium for twenty years. She speaks Dutch fluently and appears to be a very responsible and reliable legal interpreter. This particular situation, however, seemed unusual and difficult for her. She became very defensive in the course of the interview and unconsciously began to act as the suspect's 'advocate'. Consequently, she established a relationship with the suspect and whispered to her. In her feedback interview she explained that she had indeed formed a bond with the suspect because of the common language they shared and because of the situation that found themselves in: sitting in a darkened room, looking together at the screen with the police officer speaking to them. She said she felt as if they were in a movie theatre. The interpreter and her 'friend' the suspect were together in the cinema watching the screen where the police officer - the 'bad guy' - was playing his role. The police officer also felt the distance. He felt he was never really part of the conversation and felt powerless. It seemed as if he could only look at the screen and could not 'get through' to the suspect. At one point during the interview there was a strange artificial pause of eight seconds: a significant time period in this context. The frustrated police officer appeared very much alone during this pause, looking helplessly at the two people at the other end of the video link. Thus, the use of the video link in this particular instance appears to have impacted significantly upon the relationship dynamics of the police interview. This could potentially harm the quality of the evidence achieved.

Technical issues

(Not) being in shot

During the role plays, various experimental situations were introduced. In videoconference or remote interpreting the quality of sound and image is paramount and should convey as reliable and true-to-life a picture as possible. The colour of the skin, the

size of the person, gestures, movements and tone of voice should all be conveyed. However, the police officers indicated that they wanted to see more, or at least have access to more detailed observations such as the movements of the suspect's hands or his/her eyes. Using the so called fish-eye shot, they wanted to focus on the suspect's body language. With a close-up of the suspect they wanted to get a 'better' picture of the reliability of the information they were receiving. This was tried out in a VCI B situation. The suspect did not notice anything, as the only person using the fish-eye shot was the police officer. However, this raises the question of who 'calls the shots' and who monitors the images.

Sound-cutting out; Inaudible segment

The second experiment was in a VCI A situation where the interpreter was together with the police officer, while the suspect was located at a second site. At one stage, the role player was asked to act very anxiously, to behave very nervously and to start moving about in his chair. This movement resulted in poorer sound quality and in an inaudible fragment for the interpreter and for the police officer. As a result, the police officer asked the suspect to sit still. A nervous person can thus be the cause of technical sound and image problems and such situations need consideration.

Visual

During the VCI B hearing of a witness to a hold-up in a hotel, a document reader was introduced. It was the first time during the role plays that the interpreter and the police officer made use of this device. The police officer asked the witness to draw the location where the hold-up had taken place. She had to place her drawing on the document reader, but the police officer could not see the picture clearly. The witness had used an ordinary biro, but the picture could not be clearly seen at the other end of the video link. The interpreter had a thicker pen with her, and offered it to the witness so she could make a new drawing. Meanwhile the police officer gave instructions to the interpreter on how to turn and adjust the light of the document reader. The experiment shows that training and experience are necessary for both the interpreters and the police officers when it comes to using devices such as document readers.

2.6 Interim conclusion

By way of interim conclusion, it can be suggested that, although there does not seem to be a significant difference in the overall interpreting quality among the four forms of interpreting, videoconference or remote interpreting can be a cause of specific problems on the product level. The first part of this analysis revealed some issues of concern such as increased difficulties with turn-taking and overlap in VCI and RI.

Turn-taking problems in FF only represented **15%** of the total number of turn-taking problems, whereas in VCI A the number rose to **27%**, and in VCI B and RI to **29% each**. On the basis of these results it can be suggested that turn-taking problems occur more frequently when the communication is mediated by technology, which could add a factor of distraction and potential stress. Moreover, in contrast with the other issues highlighted in the study, turn-taking problems were experienced by all four interpreters, irrespective of their linguistic and interpreting skills. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

In VCI A:

- W: ... észgylátszott, hogyittki van gombolva... [onderbreking/interruption]
... and you could see, that his shirt was
- I: Egypillanatra, hogyhamegállna
A moment please, if you could stop.
- W: azinge.
open
- I: akkorezt is lefordítanám.
I would like to translate what you were saying.
- W: Igen.
Yes.
- I: [...] dus die droeg een zwarte hemd,
So, he was wearing a black shirt,
- W: Ésbélülilyenzsebeivoltak a bőrkabátnakés ...
And inside the leather coat there were some pockets and ...
- I: Egypillanatra, egypillanatralegyenszíves! Legyenszívesegypillanatramegállni, mégnefordítottam le. Euh, euh dus een zwarte hemd,
One moment, one moment please! Stop for a moment please, I didn't translate yet what you were saying. Hm, hm so a black shirt, ...

In VCI B:

- PO: [...] Ik wil u nogmaals bedanken voor uw bereidwilligheid, en voor uw opmerkzaamheid bij de feiten.
I would like to thank you again for your willingness and for your attentiveness.
- I: St
St (sic)
- PO: Als wij nog vragen hebben... Ja zeg maar, zeg maar...
If we have some more questions... Yes, say it, say it ...
- I: Ja. Akkorazthiszem, hogymegfelelőmennyiségűfelvilágosítástkaptunk. Köszönjükazegyüttműködéstés a részvételtésamennyibenkérdésünklesz... Jazegt u maar voort, hoor!
Yes. I think we have got enough information. Thank you for your cooperation and your participation and if we have some more questions...(in Dutch to the police officer) You can continue!
- PO: Als we nog vragen zouden hebben, kunnen wij u nog contacteren?
So if we have some more questions could we contact you?
- I: Tehátamennyiben, mégkérdéseklennénekfelvennékönnel a kapcsolatot.
So if there were any more questions, they would contact you.

In RI:

- PO: Dan zou ik willen vragen, dat u zich voorstelt als beëdigde tolk aan mevrouw. Kan u dat even doen?
So I would like to ask you to introduce yourself to the lady as the sworn interpreter. Could you do this?
- I: ÖöJónapotkívánok! Üdvözlömkedveshölgyem! A mai nap alkalmávalénleszekazönööhivatalostolmácsa.
Hm. Good afternoon! Welcome. Today I will be your hm official interpreter.

- S: J6.
That's fine.
- I: Ja, ik heb het gedaan.
I did so. (in Dutch to the police officer)

A similar picture can be discerned in the case of overlaps. In FF, overlaps amounted to 7%, in VCI A to 29% , in VCI B to 41%, and in RI to 23%. Again, these problems are not specifically related to one particular interpreter's performance. All four interpreters had difficulties with overlap in VCI and in RI, as illustrated by the following example:

- S: Igen, természetesen. HorváthFerencnekívnak,
Yes, of course. My name is FerencHorváth,
- I: Janatu
Yes, of cou...
- S: Ik kom van Honga
I am from Hung...
- I: Mijnaam is FerencHorváth.
My name is FerencHorváth
- S: 1986 júniushuszonharmadikán.
On the 23rd of June in 1986.
- I: Ik woon in Hongarije ik ben geboren op 23 juni 1980
I live in Hungary and I was born on the 23rd of June in 1986.
- S: Egybudapestiutazásiirodánakdolgozom.
I'm working for a travel agency in Budapest.
- I: En ik werk voor een reisbureau in Boedapest.
And I'm working for a travel agency in Budapest.

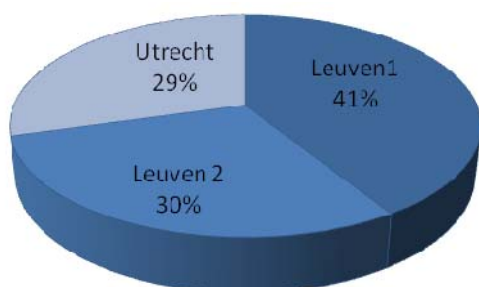
2.7 The role of technology

Because of the importance of the process level, it seems legitimate to ask whether there is a direct relation between technology (process) and product (interpreting). This is the reason why the tests were conducted in two different test sites, one in Belgium (Leuven) and one in The Netherlands (Utrecht/Zeist). In Leuven, in the audio-visual centre of the University of Leuven, the equipment was good but not specific. Similarly, the technician in attendance was not experienced in the legal field. In Utrecht/Zeist, on the other hand, the technology was specifically for court interpreting and was monitored by someone with expertise in this field.

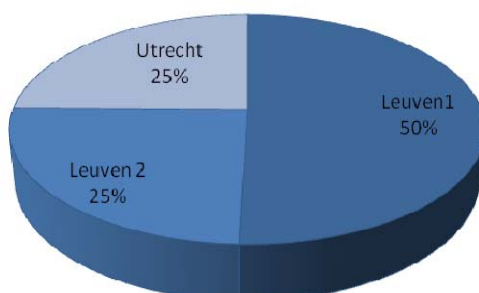
The video-mediated tests were distributed as follows:

Leuven 1:	2 VCI B; 1 VCI A; 1 RI
Leuven 2:	3 VCI A; 1 VCI B
Utrecht/Zeist:	3 RI; 1 VCI B

When the test results are analysed according to location (and implicitly the technology used), the following picture of interpreting problems at each site emerges:



There is a slight improvement noticeable in the interpreting quality categories in the last (Utrecht/Zeist) location and under the better technical circumstances. Most of the problems in the product (interpreting) category occurred on the first day in Leuven. On the second day in Leuven, when both the interpreters and the police officers had gained some experience, an apparent improvement can be observed. In the third location, working with better technology, a further slight improvement can be discerned. Looking at some crucial issues the results revealed in VCI and RI - synchronisation/interaction issues (turn-taking; overlap; artificial pauses) - the following results can be observed:



Most of the problems with turn-taking and overlap appear to occur on the first day in Leuven. At that point, the interpreters did not have any experience with videoconference or remote interpreting or with the technical equipment involved. On the second day in Leuven, under the same technical circumstances, the results were better, which seems to point to the importance of experience rather than to an overriding importance of the quality of technology.

In order to answer the question of whether or to what extent better technical circumstances lead to better interpreting quality it would be necessary to carry out more experiments on the relationship between technology and the interpreting product. However, as the participant feedback suggests, the quality of sound and image is paramount for delivering good quality interpreting and, additionally, that training of both the interpreters and police officers on how to conduct video-mediated interpreting sessions is essential.

3 Feedback

In addition to the statistical analysis of both the interpreting product and process, it was considered important to receive personal feedback from all participants involved in the role plays regarding the advantages, disadvantages, points of concern of the various forms of interpreting. To this end the partners organised both written and oral feedback sessions, the salient points of which are summarised below.

3.1 Summary of *written* feedback of the police officers

- In VCI A the police officers experienced a feeling of greater ‘distance’ than in FF and they found it more difficult to gauge the emotions of the suspect/witness and establish confidence. VCI A made it more difficult for them to follow body language, hence their suggestion to be able to see a close up as well as a whole body image. However, their impression was that the interpreters seemed to be quite at ease in VCI A.
- In VCI B they felt even less ‘rapport’ with the suspect/witness. They tended to focus on the screen with the result that non-verbal information in particular was lost or not sufficiently picked up. Their main concern was a feeling of ‘rapport’ between interpreter and suspect/witness in the other location, even to the extent that the suspect appeared to be ‘supported’ by the interpreter.
- RI, the police officers felt, was characterised by more interruptions and overlaps which made the role plays less fluent. The impression was that this seemed the most difficult form for the interpreter.

3.2 Summary of *written* feedback of the interpreters

- VCI A: Three of the four interpreters claimed they felt there was no significant difference in quality of interpreting. However, they did point out that turn-taking, ‘fluency’ and contact with the police officer require attention and training. This was because of the interpreters’ focus on the screen, watching the suspect/witness, which led to the interpreters’ distraction and inattentiveness to the police officer.
- In VCI B the physically closer ‘contact’ between the interpreter and the suspect/witness (and the decreased contact with the police officer) was considered to be the most significant issue. Three out of four interpreters felt that this form of interpreting was more fatiguing and required more concentration (paying attention to the police officer on the screen), though this was not considered to be the case during the role plays in The Netherlands because of the “excellent” quality of sound and image.
- RI: for three interpreters the turn-taking and interaction were more difficult to handle than in the other forms of interpreting, and the general feeling was that proceedings were “slower”. The fact that two participants who do not speak a common language were together in a different location made it more tiring for three of the four interpreters. There was a greater need for note-taking – which could be distracting – and it was generally felt that overall quality and performance satisfaction levels decreased in RI. However, there was one

interpreter who had conference ('booth') interpreting experience and who felt quite at ease in RI and, indeed, considered it to be the most efficient setting.

- Generally speaking, the interpreters felt that the quality of interpreting was not fundamentally influenced by VCI or RI provided the quality of image and sound was "excellent". They were, on the whole, satisfied with their performance.

3.3 Summary of individual feedback interviews with the interpreters

The following points were stressed during the individual interviews with the four interpreters:

- There remained a preference for FF on the grounds of their own previous experience in police interviews, the feeling of being more "involved" in the situation, and the greater awareness of non-verbal information and body language.
- However, in the end, they saw no fundamental differences among the four forms of interpreting with regard to guaranteeing interpreting quality and performance.
- As mentioned above, VCI A most resembled interpreters' previous experiences and thus was seen as the easiest new form of interpreting to accommodate. VCI B strengthened the relationship between the interpreter and the suspect/witness at the expense of the police officer, simply because of the physical proximity of two people speaking the same language finding themselves in the same location. VCI B was therefore felt to be more "uncomfortable". RI (at least for 3 out of the 4 interpreters) was the most difficult and "controversial" because of the feeling of distance, the relation to the other participants, the need for greater concentration, an increased need to take notes, difficulties with turn-taking, and the "dominance" of the screen at the expense of live contact.
- Nevertheless, all four interpreters were satisfied with their own performances and felt that VCI or RI were feasible forms of interpreting in criminal proceedings. However, they should only be used on condition that sound and image quality were excellent, training was provided to allow interpreters and legal professionals to become familiar with the specific requirements of VCI A, VCI B and RI and that training take the form of role plays and experiments that should be as realistic as possible.

3.4 Summary of final feedback (round table)

The final feedback session consisted of a round table with the two police officers, three of the four interpreters and the four Belgian project partners. Most of the issues that had already been raised in the responses to the questionnaires or in the interviews were touched upon again. However, the following important points need to be emphasised once more:

- Not surprisingly, there was a general preference for FF because of the immediate interaction it allowed, the better rapport between the interlocutors, the importance of body language cues for the interviewer, the rapport that was felt, the more easily manageable turn-taking and, most importantly, because it allowed the police full use of interviewing strategies (including deliberate use of silence).

- Generally speaking, the video-mediated forms of interpreting were seen to highlight the issues of quality and interpreting competences. For example, source language comprehension, note-taking while watching a screen, turn-taking management, and target language production demanded more assured interpreting skills than in FF. Thus, the suggestion was put forward that a pre-briefing before the assignment should be organised (though, according to the police officers, this should not be too detailed in order to avoid “coloured” interpreting). Both VCI A and VCI B were seen as more distracting for the police because of gaze and turn-taking confusion, screen focus, and because it was felt that these forms of interpreting encouraged speakers to ramble and hence cause overlaps. VCI B in particular carried the danger of too close a rapport between interpreter and suspect/witness, which made the police officer feel excluded, resulting in problems such as the marked switches to the 3rd person and the loss of non-verbal information for the police. It was suggested that perhaps a different positioning in VCI B might be advisable, i.e. with the interpreter sitting behind the suspect/witness instead of next to him/her, thus allowing a fuller view of the suspect/witness. It was suggested by the police officers that a split screen (two images of the suspect/witness: one close up, one full body) might remedy some of the information loss. They questioned the need to see the interpreter in VCI B and RI, since the interpreter’s image, according to the police officers, distracted rather than aided in the interview. As said above, in RI two of the three interpreters present experienced less involvement, though the interpreter with conference experience saw in it a greater opportunity for concentration and the use of resources.
- The suitability of VCI or RI in criminal proceedings was raised as an issue of principle. These forms were seen as feasible for witness interviews, for standard procedures (e.g. a remand hearing), for information exchange procedures, and in cases of serious security risk, but not for serious or difficult in-depth interrogations, evidence assessment or trials. In other words, guidelines should be drawn up as to when these forms can be used and are in line with legal and human rights procedures.
- Finally, two conditions for successful VCI or RI in criminal proceedings were stressed. First, the need for training, both for the police and the interpreters (becoming familiar with camera and screen; coping with a different experience of rapport and feeling of remoteness; gaze and turn-taking management; interpreting skills in a potentially more stressful environment; and interviewing strategies in these forms of interpreting). A considerable part of that training should be directed towards both the police and the interpreters and should involve realistic settings. Secondly, a *conditio sine qua non* is the quality of sound and image (including, among other things, lighting, positioning and synchronicity) without which it is impossible to conduct an efficient and reliable VCI or RI interview.

4 Conclusions

Summarising all feedback information, the following seem to be the salient points:

- Those involved in the Belgian/Dutch study agreed that FF is the most 'comfortable' and efficient forms of interpreting in police interviews.
- However, there is also consensus among the participants that videoconference and remote interpreting will play an increasingly important role in legal interpreting.
- VCI A, with the interpreter being in the same location as the police officer, seems acceptable to all participants as a form of interpreting.
- RI is also deemed by the police to be acceptable as a form of interpreting, since the police officers feel that they do not really have to see the interpreter. In this case, the more important consideration for them is to be in same location with the crucial participant, i.e. the suspect or witness. The fact that the interpreter is in a different location is not of concern to them. The interpreters, on the other hand, experience RI as a challenging form of interpreting, which they are confident can be mastered with training and experience. This appears to be borne out by the assessment - and quality - produced by the one interpreter who had simultaneous booth experience.
- For all participants VCI B - the suspect and interpreter in the same location, the police officer on his or her own in a different place - turned out to be the most problematic form. The police officer felt distanced, disconnected and powerless to monitor the situation. The interpreters too felt uncomfortable at being 'on their own' with the suspect or defendant. The general feeling was that VCI B should only be used in certain circumstances such as a witness interview. VCI B was the least favourable form of videoconference interpreting.
- Finally, all participants stressed the need for good sound and image quality, for guidelines on how to conduct VCI and RI, and for training.