



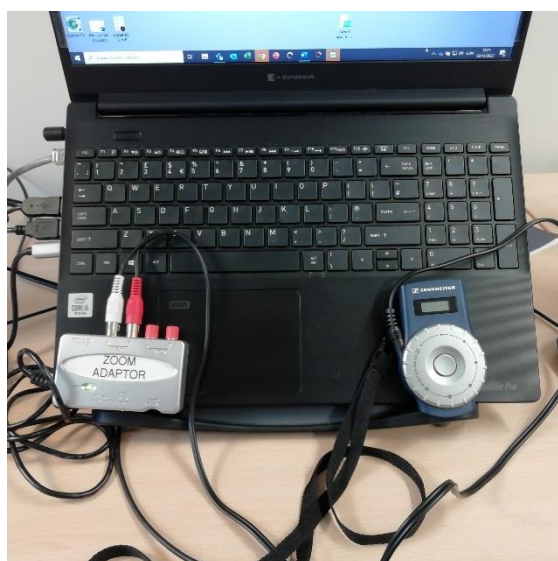
Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Adapting to a new world: Interpreting in hybrid meetings (adapter for the Zoom video platform)

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It is true that many adjustments have had to be made by organisations across Wales and beyond to respond to the pandemic, and whilst getting used to new ways of working.

In this study, Bangor University describe what they have done in order to be able to hold hybrid bilingual meetings or events through the use of an adapter for the Zoom video platform. As the picture below shows, the adapter is a small box that connects to a laptop at one end and to a translation headset (a specific one usually used by someone who uses hearing aids) at the other end.



Why did the university set out to use the system?

Following the changes to work patterns due to Covid-19, the vast majority of meetings held by Bangor University from March 2020 onwards were online meetings. During this period, the Translation Team at Canolfan Bedwyr, Bangor University was proactive in ensuring that meetings could be held bilingually from a distance, and simultaneous translation was offered via Zoom.

As we came out of lockdown and looked towards a time beyond Covid-19, the possibility that some meetings would be hybrid was becoming more and more real. I.e., some of the people are present at the meeting in person and others join from

afar. Careful consideration had to be given to how to provide a simultaneous translation service in such a context. Without an adapter, it would not be possible for the people joining Zoom to hear the translator, unless the translator wears two microphones – which would be impractical and uncomfortable.

How did the university go about implementing this?

The Translation Team at Canolfan Bedwyr, Bangor University worked with a third party provider, and following discussions with them, an adapter was commissioned for the university during March 2021. There was a period of trial and refinement of the adapter, and one or two unsuccessful hybrid meetings, before the team was satisfied with the adapter.

How does the adapter work?

The adapter connects directly to the Zoom meeting through the translator's laptop, and is then connected to a translation headset (usually a specific one used by someone who uses hearing aids). The adapter carries the translator's voice from the normal simultaneous translation radio microphone to those who have joined the meeting via Zoom. The rest of the non-Welsh speakers present in the same room will listen to the translator through the normal simultaneous translation headsets, as if they were in any other meeting with a simultaneous translator. It is not possible for the translator to join the meeting remotely and provide simultaneous translation for the people in the room; the interpreter must be present in the room.

What results has the university seen so far?

Following the commissioning of the Zoom adapter, simultaneous translation has been successfully provided at the university in various hybrid events, including committee meetings, conferences and workshops.

According to those who have used the simultaneous translation service on Zoom through the adapter, the sound quality is very good, and as good as if the translator was providing a service in a normal Zoom meeting, rather than a hybrid meeting.

Organisation's contact details: Bangor University

E-mail: cbs601@bangor.ac.uk

Contact officer: Lowri Catrin Jones, Principal Simultaneous Translator

The Welsh Language Commissioner's opinion

There is a requirement for organisations under the Welsh language standards to consider the effects of policy decisions on the Welsh language when they draw up a new policy, or review or modify an existing policy. That may include decisions to be made relating to the exercise of its functions or the conduct of its business.

It is likely that organisations will increasingly face change in the future and with that, will have to make important policy decisions on their methods of working and operating which will shape their future. The situation since the pandemic has highlighted that.

Here, there is an example of the change that has been made by one organisation to respond to this new situation. What is essential is that organisations ensure that consideration for the Welsh language is given a prominent place from the start and that they are clear about any changes or adjustments that need to be made to ensure that there is no negative impact or reduction in the level of provision Welsh is available.

More generally, there is also a requirement on organisations to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably during events that it funds or organises. There are also requirements to ensure that there is an offer to contribute in Welsh in meetings if the attendees so wish. Therefore, this is an example of the way in which an organisation has proactively gone about ensuring that, and that there has been collaboration with the translation team to decide on an effective method to ensure that the level of Welsh provision can be maintained when changing to a hybrid system.