

2021

## Knowledge-Oriented Training of Trainers: Feedback on a Seminar in Hybrid Mode

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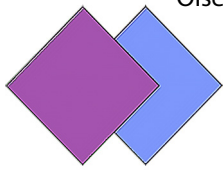
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### Network Recommended Citation

Olsen, Barry S. and Pöchhacker, Franz (2021) "Knowledge-Oriented Training of Trainers: Feedback on a Seminar in Hybrid Mode," *International Journal of Interpreter Education*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie/vol13/iss1/3>

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# Knowledge-Oriented Training of Trainers: Feedback on a Seminar in Hybrid Mode

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## Abstract

We describe and evaluate a Training of Trainers seminar organized by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in Washington, D.C., that pioneered a hybrid mode of delivery. In one of two back-to-back events, each lasting 1-and-a-half days and including some 10 participants, videoconferencing was used to allow online participation by seven interpreter educators together with a diverse group of on-site participants, including three signed language interpreters. After presenting the background and content of the course, we introduce the physical and technical setup and discuss the various challenges in ensuring communicative interaction among all participants. Drawing on a video recording of the sessions and a feedback survey administered online immediately after the event, we examine the hybrid-mode seminar for perceptual conditions, communicative presence, group interaction, and personal learning outcomes for on-site as well as remote participants. Our findings show that hybrid-mode delivery of this type of seminar is challenging but viable and offers new opportunities for Training of Trainers courses, particularly in times of restricted contacts and travel.

*Keywords:* training of trainers, AIIC, hybrid mode of delivery, remote participation

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# Knowledge-Oriented Training of Trainers: Feedback on a Seminar in Hybrid Mode

Building on a tradition going back to the 1960s, the notion of a “training paradigm” for conference interpreting gained prominence by the 1990s (Mackintosh, 1995). While largely informed by the pioneering work of the “Paris School” (Seleskovitch & Lederer, 1989), it was most actively promoted by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) (e.g., Thiéry, 2015). Indeed, one of the basic tenets was that courses in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting should be “designed and taught by practicing conference interpreters, preferably AIIC members” (Mackintosh, 1995, p.124). Another paradigmatic assumption was that interpreter training should be positioned at the master’s level, often within academic degree courses. In light of the progressive academization of such programs, it became increasingly debatable to view the requirement of professional experience and status as the key qualification for university-level teaching (see Sawyer, 2019). Following some pioneering initiatives, most notably by Barbara Moser-Mercer at the University of Geneva, AIIC had put the training of trainers on its agenda by the turn of the millennium and offered its first 2-day seminar, on *Teaching Strategies for Simultaneous Interpreting*, in Porto, Portugal, in 2003 (AIIC Training, 2002). Subsequent editions were held in Rome, and the practice became institutionalized over the course of 15 years. In addition to the annual event in Rome, typically offered as two back-to-back seminars lasting 1-and-a-half days each, such seminars on topics ranging from note-taking for consecutive interpreting to feedback have been run by other AIIC Regions, including South America, to accommodate demand from the organization’s worldwide membership. The first such Training of Trainers (ToT) seminar in the United States was held in October 2018 and is the subject of this paper, in which we conduct a two-pronged analysis that relates to its content and, in particular, to the hybrid mode in which it was delivered.

Like the seminar offered by the second author in 2016 in Rome, the one held in Washington, D.C., focused on research-based knowledge about interpreting, whereas ToT seminars have typically centered on aspects of skills training. More exceptionally, though, the seminar was offered in hybrid mode, allowing participation on-site as well as in remote mode via a videoconference link. Our main purpose, therefore, was to investigate how the physical setup and perceptual conditions influenced participation and interaction and to what extent the hybrid mode permitted a satisfactory learning experience. To answer these research questions, we analyzed participants’ responses to an anonymous online survey administered immediately after the event.

While the focus of our paper is thus on the “How?” of the seminar—that is, how it was experienced and perceived by the participants—the “What?” also requires some discussion. After all, the seminar’s focus on research-based knowledge rather than on hands-on skills training was likely to shape the participants’ ToT seminar experience. Nevertheless, our aim in this article is not a pedagogical evaluation. Rather than the instructional techniques used in the seminar, which are mentioned only in passing, our interest centers on the interactional dynamics in the hybrid-mode seminar, as observed and experienced by a diverse group of experienced interpreter educators and practitioners.

## The Washington Seminar

### Background

Leaving aside the fraught issue of theory courses in the MA-level curriculum for future conference interpreting professionals (see Setton & Dawrant, 2016, pp.466-468), it is now widely accepted that professionals who are called upon to teach need (to develop) pedagogical skills and a theoretical understanding (*knowledge*) of the task and its underlying cognitive, linguistic, and interactional processes (see, e.g., Orlando, 2019; Sawyer, 2019). The former have been the main object of AIIC ToT training seminars, whereas research-based knowledge about interpreting is presumably available through books, journal articles, and reference publications. But availability is not the same as accessibility, at least in epistemic terms. Interpreter trainers typically combining a busy professional agenda with part-time teaching assignments (see Setton & Dawrant, 2016, p.526f.) will find it difficult not only to immerse themselves in highly specialized reading but also to appreciate the relevance of small-scale methodical efforts at developing the state of the art. Some form of knowledge brokering would seem to be required, as reflected in the 2007 AIIC Seminar in Rome, where Ebru Diriker focused on “making interpreting studies research relevant to the classroom” (AIIC Training and Professional Development, 2006). The 2016 Rome seminar by the second author, and its Washington edition, had smaller and greater ambitions: Rather than prioritize the application of research findings to teaching, it sought to offer a panoramic view of knowledge about (conference) interpreting gained through academic study, as brought together in written form in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies* (Pöchhacker, 2015). In short, the seminar made a subtle distinction between “knowledge for training” and “knowledge for trainers.”

In its original form and its subsequent edition in Washington, the seminar's focus on knowledge sharing within a group of professional peers made it a matter of course to adopt a social constructivist approach to learning (see, e.g., Kiraly, 2000). Rather than to provide mere lectures, the goal was to match available epistemic resources to participants' backgrounds and interests as well as to broker understanding and the co-construction of knowledge in a process of collaborative exchange. In this pedagogical approach, two dimensions of the learning process acquired special importance: (a) the characteristics of the participants and (b) the communicative dynamics over some 10 hours of group interaction. It is easy to see how the option of remote participation in the hybrid format would magnify any challenges in these two respects: Joining the seminar online from other parts of the world would make for even greater diversity of cultural backgrounds, experiences, and interests; and interacting via videoconference poses special perceptual, attentional, and proxemic challenges that are likely to affect the interactional dynamics among the group as a whole.

## Course Content and Delivery

The seminar, titled "Interpreting: What We Know and How We Know It," was advertised on the AIIC website as an "overview of research" for "teachers of interpreting." It was described as comprising three main parts—the development of research, models of interpreting, and selected topics (bilingualism, memory, strategies, quality, and technology)—that were to be flexibly distributed over 3 half-days. Similar to the ToT events in Rome, the Washington seminar was offered twice, back to back, over 3 days (October 5-7): Seminar 1 took place all day on Friday and on Saturday morning, and Seminar 2 took place on Saturday afternoon and all day on Sunday. More than the different scheduling, the expectation of a unique mix of participants in each group makes it imprudent to consider these two seminar editions to be "identical." Indeed, despite being essentially similar in content, they turned out to be different with regard to the mix of topics discussed in depth and the interactional dynamics within the groups. This might have had something to do, at least in part, with the key factor that constitutes the focus of our analysis: Seminar 1 comprised 12 participants on-site as well as seven remote participants, whereas Seminar 2 was conducted on-site only, with 14 participants. The main motivation for trialing the hybrid mode for Seminar 1 arose from requests to the organizer from interested colleagues unable to make the trip to Washington. Initially, these were teaching staff at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, the institution co-sponsoring the event by providing its meeting facilities in Washington, D.C. When the hybrid mode of delivery had been decided upon, a subsequent request from AIIC Brazil to allow several interpreter trainers to participate remotely was also accommodated.

## Facilities and Technical Setup

### *On-site*

The on-site meeting facilities used for both seminars consisted of a spacious conference room (21 ft x 38 ft / 798 ft<sup>2</sup>) equipped with a digital projector and screen for slide presentation, a 60-inch wall-mounted flat-screen monitor, a wall-mounted Polycom Eagle Eye pan tilt zoom camera, and ceiling-mounted omnidirectional microphones (see Figure 1). The instructor wore a wireless lavalier microphone that provided sound to the videoconferencing platform. A second video feed of the on-site participants was provided by a tripod-mounted video camera (Canon Vixia HF R82) connected to Zoom through an Epiphan AVio HD video grabber and laptop computer operated by the seminar organizer, who also served as moderator. This camera provided a wide-angle view as well as close-up shots of the participants when they made comments or asked questions.

The room was also equipped with a public address system consisting of ceiling-mounted speakers, which allowed all on-site participants to hear comments from the online participants. The ceiling-mounted microphones made it possible for all online participants to hear clearly any comments or questions from the on-site seminar participants.

The wall-mounted flat-screen monitor was used to show the individual video feeds of the remote participants to the instructor and the on-site participants in an effort to encourage connection and interaction between the two groups. This monitor was to the right of the instructor and easily visible to on-site attendees. The monitor location was not the most convenient for the instructor, who had to turn his head away from the participants in the room to see the remote participants.

**Figure 1***Physical and Technical Setup*

*Note:* Background (left to right): tripod-mounted camera to capture video of participants; slide projection screen; instructor; wall-mounted monitor to show remote attendees. Foreground: on-site participants in semicircle.

## Off-site

All remote participants connected to the seminar by using the Zoom web conferencing platform (Zoom Video Communications, Inc.). Remote participants were responsible for their own technical setup. However, all remote participants received a list of recommendations for remote participation in the seminar. These included

- a stable broadband Internet connection (minimum of 5 Mbps download and 5 Mbps upload),
- a computer or tablet with a webcam,
- a comfortable headset (headphones and microphone) connected to the computer or tablet, and
- a quiet place where the remote attendee could participate in the seminar without interruption.

Remote participants were able to see the video feed of the instructor, a second video feed of the on-site participants, and each of the individual video feeds from the other remote participants. They could choose between “speaker view,” which would display only the video feed of the person speaking on the entire screen, or the “gallery view” of all video feeds arranged in grid form.



**Figure 2**  
Remote Participation Gallery View



*Note.* The room's second wall-mounted screen, visible in the video-feed image at top right, was not used in the seminar.

The presenter's slides were provided to the remote participants in an email attachment so they could follow along at their own pace. Remote participants also had access to the chat feature on Zoom, which was used throughout the seminar to communicate with the organizer and among the remote participants. Unlike a traditional webinar in which remote attendees are often limited to passively listening to a lecture or presentation, this seminar provided full participation and interaction opportunities between remote and on-site participants.

## Evaluation

Given the novelty of the initiative, participants were informed at the beginning of the seminar that their feedback on content as well as course delivery would be solicited via an anonymous online survey after the event. While a more comprehensive evaluation would comprise a number of different data collection activities, as outlined, for instance, in the model proposed by Cook and Ellaway (2015), the survey instrument described below was designed to cover at least some of the suggested dimensions, including an account of decisions, an observation of implementation, and an assessment of participants' experience and satisfaction.

The following section describes the content and administration of the survey instrument(s) and presents the main findings, particularly for Seminar 1.

## Material and Methods

### Questionnaire

Three versions of a questionnaire were drafted by the second author and finalized with input from the first. The basic version, for participants in Seminar 2 (on-site only), comprised 16 questions, many of which contained multiple rating items. The first block of five questions elicited background information on participants' professional and teaching experience as well as educational achievements. The next question focused on personal expectations for the seminar, and respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of eight items on a 4-point ordinal scale (see the Appendix).

Moving on to evaluation, a 5-point scale with verbal end-points (from 1 = *very poor* to 5 = *very good*) was used to assess the extent to which participants were satisfied with practical arrangements (such as meeting facilities, acoustics,

and visibility). Feedback on the degree of coverage of nine major topics was sought through a 3-point rating scale (*not enough, about right, and too much*), with an additional open-ended question about “other” topics that participants would have liked to see covered.

The three main questions designed to provide a detailed assessment of the seminar were based on sets of statements to be rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). The various rating items came under the three main headings of structure and presentation (five items), modes of interaction and learning (seven items), and outcome variables (10 items). This was followed by a summary rating of the seminar experience as a whole on a 5-point ordinal scale (from *very bad* to *very good*) and two open-ended questions asking what respondents had liked best about the seminar and what they saw as its main weak points, as well as space for “any other comments.”

The questionnaire for on-site participants in Seminar 1 (hybrid mode) was nearly identical to the one described above but contained four additional questions. Most importantly, respondents were presented with an additional Likert-type rating question and asked to express the extent of their agreement or disagreement with nine items relating to various aspects of the hybrid mode of delivery. Two open-ended questions toward the end asked what participants had liked most, and least, specifically about the hybrid-mode format. The last extra item asked whether, having experienced this seminar delivered in hybrid mode, they would recommend participation to their colleagues.

Finally, the questionnaire for remote participants contained the same 20 questions as the version for on-site participants in Seminar 1, with appropriate minor adjustments (e.g., *attending the seminar online* vs. *attending the seminar with the inclusion of online participants*; *interact with on-site participants* vs. *interact with online participants*). The three additional questions were an open-ended item, early on, asking about respondents’ main motivation for attending the seminar online; an item asking about the extent of online participation (*throughout, more than 50 percent of the time, and less than 50 percent of the time*); and a yes/no question asking whether the seminar had provided “good value for the time and resources invested.” Excerpts from the questionnaire version for online participants can be found in the Appendix.

## **Implementation**

The three versions of the questionnaire were generated by using the open-source online survey tool LimeSurvey, a version of which (3.15.3 at the time) is hosted on a server of Vienna University’s Center for Translation Studies. In each case, questions were organized into the same seven groups: “Background and Motivation,” “Arrangements and Facilities,” “Content and Presentation,” “Interaction,” “Personal Learning Outcomes,” “Overall Satisfaction and Comments,” and “Final Comments.”

None of the questions in any of the three versions was made mandatory. While this choice posed the risk of missing values, it was believed that participants would have sufficient motivation, right after the seminar, to complete the questionnaire even in the absence of coercive settings.

Participants’ email addresses, available from the registration procedure, were loaded into the survey administration tool, and a total of 28 invitations to participate were sent out on October 7, immediately after the end of Seminar 2. The survey invitations took the form of short email messages containing a link with a personalized access key to prevent multiple completions or sharing of the survey link. The fact that the survey was strictly anonymous was made very clear on the title page, which explained that access information would be used only to monitor completion and could not be matched with responses, which were stored in a separate database.

Most participants completed the questionnaire in the days following the event, but eight required a reminder, which was sent 11 days after the initial invitation. Only one participant (in Seminar 2) failed to complete the survey despite the reminder.

The three sets of survey responses were exported to SPSS Statistics (version 25) for descriptive analysis. Results, focusing largely on Seminar 1, are presented in the following section.

## **Results**

Response rates for the feedback surveys were gratifyingly high. All 19 participants in Seminar 1 completed and submitted the questionnaire. Because one (on-site) participant answered only the background items, results reported for the on-site group of Seminar 1 were based on 11 valid responses. For Seminar 2 (all on-site), nine completed questionnaires were available for analysis.

## Participants' Backgrounds and Motivations.

The professional profile of participants in Seminar 1 was relatively homogeneous. As one would expect in an AIIC seminar, their professional work was mostly—*often* or (*almost*) *always*—in conference settings (75% in the on-site group, 100% in the online group). Nevertheless, most respondents also worked *sometimes* in other settings, including diplomatic, legal, health care, and educational. The picture was similar for Seminar 2, with four out of nine respondents working (*almost*) *always* in conference settings, but some also specializing in diplomatic or legal settings. Working languages included Afrikaans, American Sign Language, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian.

Participants had an impressive amount of professional experience: The mean number of years worked as an interpreter was 20 (min. 10, max. 34) for both groups of on-site participants, and 16 for the online participants in Seminar 1. Most of these experienced interpreters were also experienced trainers, particularly in Seminar 1: Six out of the seven online participants had at least *considerable*, if not *extensive* experience teaching interpreting, with a larger spread in the on-site group of Seminar 1 (from *very limited* to *very extensive*). With only one or two exceptions, all 28 seminar participants had themselves completed a higher-education course (master's, graduate, diploma) in interpreting.

The motivation for participating showed a highly similar pattern across all subgroups (Seminar 1 on-site; Seminar 1 online; Seminar 2 on-site). Participants mainly considered it *rather* or *very important* “to share professional experiences” (92%, 72%, and 100%, respectively) and “to share teaching experiences with colleagues” (92%, 85%, and 66%, respectively) as well as “to satisfy their intellectual curiosity” as professional interpreters (84%, 71%, and 78%, respectively). The latter, in particular, fully matched what had been advertised, while the strong motivation to exchange experiences with colleagues highlights the importance of group interaction rather than presentational instruction in these seminars. Given the high level of experience, it is unsurprising that few participants attended to earn professional development credits or to prepare for teaching a new course, although many considered it to be a (rather or very) important motivation to refine their current teaching, especially in Seminar 1 (75% on-site group, 85% online group).

Online participants in Seminar 1 were asked (in an open-ended question) to indicate their main motivation for attending remotely, and their responses ranged from cost issues and a lack of opportunity to travel all the way to a fondness for webinars as “an optimal solution for less practical/hands-on professional development courses” (#6).

## Arrangements and Facilities.

Asked to rate various aspects of the practical arrangements on a 5-point scale (*1 = very poor, 5 = very good*), all participants in Seminar 1 were very satisfied with the seminar description and schedule (mean 4.6) but evidently divided over issues of visibility. Whereas on-site participants, who found the meeting facilities very comfortable (4.64), were unanimous about the very good (5.0) visibility of the presentation slides, remote participants found this the least satisfactory (2.57) of all practical arrangements. Conversely, online participants were happier with their visual access to fellow participants (4.14), provided by the second (tripod-mounted) camera, than were the on-site participants (3.64), who were also not entirely happy (3.82) with the seating arrangement (i.e., two rows in a semicircle; see Figure 1). On the other hand, sound quality was deemed somewhat less satisfactory (3.86) by the remote participants than were the acoustics by participants on-site (4.73). (An item about the audibility of remote participants was included later in the questionnaire and revealed no problems; see Table 2.) In short, the on-site group had better listening conditions and full access to the slide projection, whereas remote participants had a better view of the other participants, both on-site and online (see Figure 2).

## Content and Delivery.

Participants were invited to assess the structure of the seminar and the clarity and pace of the oral and visual presentation by indicating their level of agreement with five statements on a 4-point Likert-type scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). In the on-site group of Seminar 1, there was no disagreement that “the content of presentations was easy to follow,” that “the slides were clear and helpful,” and that “the oral delivery was clear” (82% *strongly agree*). One participant each rather disagreed with the statement that “the overall structure of seminar content was clear” and that “the presentations were well paced within the allotted time.” In the online group, one participant each *rather disagreed* with the statements about easy-to-follow content, well-paced presentations, and clear/helpful slides, with all other responses indicating agreement. There was no disagreement about clearly structured content, and 100% *strongly agreed* that “the oral delivery was clear,” which also indicates that acoustic perception via videoconference was satisfactory (as supported by the high sound-quality rating reported above).



Responses to the question seeking to ascertain whether the various seminar topics had received adequate coverage yielded a very clear pattern. For eight of the nine topics, most if not all respondents (as in the case of “Theory/Models” in the on-site group and “Memory” in the online group) believed that coverage had been *about right*. Typically, a majority (of between 55% and 85%) took this middle position, with the respective minority indicating a preference for more (*not enough*). Three topics received a single vote of *too much* in the on-site group, and two did in the online group. These coincided only on the topic of “Bilingualism,” which a majority in both groups nevertheless considered adequately covered. The only clear-cut exception to this favorable assessment was “Technology,” a topic that all but one person in each subgroup considered insufficiently covered. Because content delivery catered to the group and therefore varied somewhat between Seminar 1 and Seminar 2, a direct comparison for this questionnaire item does not seem warranted. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the feedback for Seminar 2 matched the prevalent pattern described above also for the topic of technology, which, with the same slide presentation, received the typical 55 to 45 split of responses between *about right* and *not enough*.

The open-ended question regarding other topics that participants would have liked to see covered drew few responses. In the on-site group, mention was made of teaching strategies (#4, #11) and curricular issues (#10), as opposed to cultural studies (#2), new technologies (#3), and testing (#7) in the online group.

### Interaction.

The issue of interactional dynamics, which is at the heart of this evaluation, was addressed through rating items by using a 4-point Likert-type scale (see the Appendix). As a prerequisite, remote participants were asked to indicate their level of attendance, and five out of the seven confirmed that they were remotely present *throughout the seminar*. Another online attendee participated *more than 50% of the time*.

The first of two multi-item questions about participation in the hybrid-mode seminar contained seven identical items for on-site as well as remote participants. Responses to the first two assertions, which stand in opposition to each other, indicated that everyone had ample opportunity to participate without causing too much interruption (see Table 1). It is noteworthy, however, that the level of agreement or disagreement differed somewhat in the online group. Although the difference is small, it could plausibly reflect the difficulty for remote participants to signal their wish to take the floor. (As documented in Figure 1, the screen showing the remote participants was not in the seminar leader’s view.)

The next two statements, about insights derived from the discussion rather than the presentations, clearly demonstrated participants’ high appreciation for the contributions of their colleagues and, somewhat less, for the seminar leader’s responses to questions and comments. As can be seen in Table 1, there was no strong sense among participants in Seminar 1 that “the level of participation was highly uneven” or that “there was not enough interaction between participants.” It is worth noting that remote participants disagreed more clearly with these observations than did the on-site group.

Finally, the suggestion that “participants should have been engaged in group work” did not find favor. Respondents were uniformly against this option, not only for the hybrid-mode format (Seminar 1) but equally for Seminar 2.

**Table 1**  
*Assessment of participation*

	ON-SITE (n = 11)		ONLINE (n = 7)		SEM. 2 (n = 9)	
	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree
All had opportunity to speak*	- 9	36 55	- 14	43 29	- -	22 78
Too many questions/comments	36 27	36 -	- 57	29 -	78 11	- 11
Responses gave more insights	18 9	55 9	- 57	43 -	11 22	11 33
Insights from participants	9 -	45 45	- 14	71 14	- 11	22 67
Level of participation uneven	9 36	18 36	- 86	14 -	56 33	- -
Not enough interaction between people	18 36	27 18	14 71	14 -	67 11	- 11
Should have done group work	55 27	18 -	29 43	29 -	67 22	- -

\*Note. Items are listed in abbreviated form. For exact wording, see questionnaire excerpts in the Appendix.

The impact of the hybrid mode on interaction during Seminar 1 was probed more thoroughly in the second rating task, which had two items for on-site participants only in addition to seven matching assertions for both subgroups, with adjusted wording (see Table 2). On-site participants were quite clear in their disagreement with four statements about negative features of the hybrid format. They did not feel apprehensive about attending a seminar with online participants (73% *strongly disagree*), nor would they have preferred all participants to be on-site (64% *strongly disagree*). They did not see technical difficulties taking up valuable time (64% *strongly disagree*) and were even more adamant that having remote participants did not detract from their learning experience. The online group showed a similar pattern of responses, but with less clear-cut (dis)agreement. In other words, they had been slightly more concerned about attending online (29% *agree*) and seemed less certain that remote participation would enable them to fully focus on the material presented.

Somewhat surprisingly, on-site participants proved more doubtful about being “able to interact well” and to “interact easily” with remote participants (55% *rather disagree*) than the other way around. Indeed, remote participants mostly agreed with the former assertion (57% *rather agree*), even though they were undecided about this being “easy.”

Unanimous agreement was found in both groups for the statement that “the seminar with a mix of on-site and online participants was an enriching experience.” Similarly, with only one person doubting in each group, both on-site and remote participants in Seminar 1 expressed an interest in attending future seminars online.

**Table 2**  
*Impact of blended format*

	ON-SITE (n = 11)		ONLINE (n = 7)		SEM. 2 (n = 9)	
	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree
All had opportunity to speak*	- 9	36 55	- 14	43 29	- -	22 78
Too many questions/comments	36 27	36 -	- 57	29 -	78 11	- 11
Responses gave more insights	18 9	55 9	- 57	43 -	11 22	11 33
Insights from participants	9 -	45 45	- 14	71 14	- 11	22 67
Level of participation uneven	9 36	18 36	- 86	14 -	56 33	- -
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**Table 2**  
*Impact of blended format*

	ON-SITE ( <i>n</i> = 11)		ONLINE ( <i>n</i> = 7)					
	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree				
Apprehensive about blended format/attending online	73	9	18	-	29	29	14	14
Able to interact well with online/on-site participants	9	55	27	9	-	29	57	14
Easy to interact with online/on-site participants	-	55	36	9	14	29	29	14
Remote participation distracting/difficult to focus	82	9	-	-	29	57	14	-
Technical difficulties with VC took up valuable time	64	36	-	-	29	71	-	-
Blended seminar was an enriching experience	-	-	64	36	-	-	71	29
Interested in attending future online seminars	9	-	18	73	-	14	29	57
Would prefer having all participants present on-site	64	27	9	-				
Sound quality of remote participants was adequate	-	-	55	45				

### Outcome/Satisfaction.

To evaluate the overall outcome of the seminar, participants were asked to express the level of their (dis)agreement with 10 statements relating to their learning experience (see the Appendix), using the same symmetrical 4-point scale as for the previous items.

As can be seen in Table 3, several items drew a very clear-cut response in both subgroups of Seminar 1 (and, although not reported here, in Seminar 2). All 18 respondents agreed that their main expectations had been fulfilled, even though the level of agreement was somewhat higher in the on-site group. In line with the considerable importance that the respondents gave to sharing professional and teaching experiences with colleagues as a main motivational factor (see above), most of them agreed that they had “learned a lot from fellow participants in other professional domains.” They were more divided over the tricky claim that “talking to colleagues brings more insights than listening to presentations,” the preponderance of disagreement indicating appreciation for the seminar presentations without disregarding the value of collegial exchange. In fact, respondents were unanimous in agreeing that most of the seminar content was relevant to their professional work as well as to their teaching.

When confronted with potential points of criticism, such as the seminar’s short duration or the diversity of participants, a clear majority of respondents did not share these concerns. Neither did they feel that most of the seminar content had already been familiar to them or that the insights provided “could have been gained equally well by reading.” Thus, in the absence of any major perceived shortcomings, all participants but one (in the on-site group) indicated clearly that they would “recommend this seminar to colleagues with a similar background and motivation.” This was fully reaffirmed in a subsequent questionnaire item that asked whether respondents in the on-site and online groups would recommend the hybrid-mode format (on-site) and remote participation, respectively, to their colleagues (100% yes).

**Table 3**  
*Outcome-Related Items*

	ON-SITE (n = 11)		ONLINE (n = 7)	
	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree	strongly disagree	rather strongly agree
My main expectations have been fulfilled	-	82	-	71
Seminar was too short for any real learning	46	9	43	20
Group was too diverse to permit coherent learning	64	9	29	29
I learned a lot from fellow participants in other dom.	9	46	14	86
Most of seminar content was already familiar to me	46	27	14	7
Most content is relevant to my professional work	-	73	-	43
Most content is relevant to my teaching	-	73	-	29
Insights could have been gained equally by reading	64	-	29	57
Talking to colleagues brings more insights	9	18	29	14
I would recommend this seminar to colleagues	9	82	-	29

This favorable stance was also reflected in respondents’ overall rating of the seminar (on a 5-point scale from 1 = *very bad* to 5 = *very good*): 10 out of the 11 on-site participants in Seminar 1 rated it as *very good* (91%), as did eight out of the nine participants in Seminar 2 (89%). Based on a calculation of means, these ratings correspond to 4.82 (out of 5) for Seminar 1 and 4.89 for Seminar 2. The fact that the ratings by remote participants in Seminar 1 comprised 57% *good* and only 43% *very good* responses indicates a more tempered assessment (4.43 out of 5) that may reflect some of the differences reported for other questionnaire items above.

### Feedback on Hybrid-Mode Seminar.

Beyond their responses to the various rating items, most participants readily commented on their seminar experience in two pairs of open-ended questions in the last part of the questionnaire. The first pair was designed to elicit comments specifically on the hybrid-mode seminar format (“What did you like most/least...?”), whereas the final pair of questions was identical for all participants and concerned best-liked aspects and “main weak points” of the seminar. Some of the comments crossed this distinction and will be considered under the relevant heading. And because our interest here is in feedback on the hybrid-mode seminar format, respondents’ abundant and gratifyingly favorable remarks about the content and delivery of the seminar are not presented in any detail. Suffice it to quote part of a comment by an on-site participant that aptly reflects the prevailing sentiment:

I thought this would be a drier, lecture-type course that would go over my head in many instances, but I found it totally fascinating and engaging, leaving me eager for more of the same. (#4)

Indeed, several comments regarding the seminar’s “main weak points” made reference to its short duration, and a couple of participants would at times have preferred more structure than participant-led discussion.

On-site participants’ views on what they liked most about the hybrid-mode seminar format showed a striking convergence on a single point: the opportunity to link up with colleagues from different parts of the world. This was also phrased as “the ability to network with a variety of colleagues on an international level” (#8) and put most succinctly as “global participants—global perspective” (#6). Another on-site participant emphasized “that we could engage with the remote participants fairly easily” (#11), but this issue also featured prominently among the things that on-site participants liked least about their hybrid-mode seminar experience. Although some believed that “online participants were pretty much a part of the group—except for the coffee breaks, of course” (#10), most found that there was “not enough interaction” with the remote participants (#6), who “tended to remain silent and less engaged” (#5, #7). This was taken up by another on-site participant under “Any other



comments?": "Also I think online participants need to be asked for comments every now and again, because there were several comments from them that they feel awkward interjecting comments" (#1).

This constraint was indeed reflected in some of the criticisms by participants on the other side of the video link. Apart from the "time difference" (#1, #4) and "too many hours in front of the computer with headphones on" (#6), remote participants disliked the "limited interaction with other participants" (#2). Aside from the more obvious regret that they could not "interact informally face to face" (#3) or "physically" (#4), remote participants confirmed that "taking the floor was not as natural" (#2) and that "it was hard to get people to see we wanted to make a comment" (#5). Taken together, these limitations seemed to create a sense of disconnect that is aptly captured in the following remark about least-liked aspects of remote participation:

Not being able to connect with in-person participants. Among the remote participants, we had some nice little side connections through Chat. That was great. Would have loved to connect with others, but there was no way to do that. (#3)

Although it is difficult to gauge the extent to which these constraints on interaction by remote participants resulted from perceptual conditions, the relationship between perception and interaction is obviously crucial. Aside from two on-site participants who found the audiovisual presence of remote participants somewhat "distracting" (#8, #11), the issue of visual perception was more acutely felt by the online group, some of whom complained that "remote participants had less visibility" (#2) and were "not always able to see/hear participants making comments" (#3).

The "lack of a direct video feed of the presentation slides" (#7), which was compensated for by sending remote participants a pdf copy of the slides via email, was noted as a problem, but also as an advantage. One respondent in the online group even thought it was "fantastic (even better!) getting the decks to follow along...and to be able to annotate" (#3). By the same token, visual access for remote participants was found superior by some thanks to the two video feeds: "great having the two camera views (audience/speaker)" (#3); "I liked that there were multiple cameras that allowed me to see the room from different perspectives" (#5).

Other favorable comments by remote participants also confirmed that they were "able to take part in/listen to the discussions" (#2) and "able to see and interact with everyone during the sessions: in-person participants, remote participants" (#3). In fact, for one respondent, the most-liked feature of remote participation was "equal access to on-site presentation and discussion" (#7). Going beyond perceptual access, though presumably based on it, was the compliment that "[the] course was designed as to allow remote participants to feel encouraged to really join the conversation, ask questions[,] and interact" (#6), and that "the interactive nature of the seminar is what made it possible to stay engaged for such long stretches" (#3).

## Discussion and Conclusions

When the first AIIC ToT seminar to be offered in the United States was held in October 2018, the organizers' decision to enable online participation seemed like a bold move at the frontier of distance learning. More than 2 years later, after some regrettable delays in completing the data-based evaluation, most colleagues in the community of interpreting researchers and trainers will have had ample exposure to distance teaching and online learning as a result of on-site meeting restrictions imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19. While remote participation in a learning event is therefore anything but a novelty, the effort to assess its effectiveness in the context of a seminar catering to experienced interpreter educators is clearly relevant to all stakeholders. Indeed, the evaluation of educational web conferencing constitutes a major line of research. Gegenfurtner and Ebner (2019), for instance, reported a meta-analysis of 12 carefully screened randomized controlled trials, mainly in the medical and health sciences, in which learning outcomes (pretest-posttest) in synchronous webinars were compared to those in face-to-face teaching. Analyzing 15 data sources (involving a total of 1414 participants) with 36 effect sizes, they found webinars to be slightly more effective in promoting student achievement than face-to-face classroom environments.

Compared to such sophisticated quantitative analyses, the present evaluation of the AIIC ToT seminar(s) in Washington, D.C., is little more than a descriptive case study without any claim to generalizable findings. But considering the dearth of solid research on the training of trainers in translation and interpreting studies, which Massey, Kiraly, and Ehrensberger-Dow (2019, p.211) characterized as a "remarkably neglected field of inquiry," the present study should be of some value. What is more, the case that we describe makes a unique contribution to the broader theme of on-site versus online learning, given the seminar's hybrid delivery format with on-site and remote participants sharing the same educational process and environment.

In contrast to a standard webinar or lecture course, the Washington seminar, like previous AIIC ToT seminars, attracted highly experienced professionals whose motivation was as much to exchange experiences with peers as to acquire instructional content from a presenter. With peer-group interaction as a cornerstone of the knowledge-building process, the factors shaping and constraining participant interaction take center stage in the present evaluation.

As highlighted in the description of the technical setup as well as the survey findings, perceptual conditions proved crucially important, not only but mainly for remote participants, whose ability to see and be seen (and hear and be heard) in turn had a decisive impact on the interaction among participants. Although overall satisfaction, including content and delivery as well as meeting facilities, was very high among on-site and online participants (4.82/5 and 4.43/5, respectively), a number of limitations of the remote condition was noted by both groups in their qualitative feedback on the hybrid-mode seminar format. There was a shared sense that remote participants were less able to “connect” and less engaged in the discussion, partly because of reduced “visibility” and partly because of constraints on turn taking arising from acoustic and proxemic conditions, even though the moderator’s efforts to monitor the online chat were gratefully acknowledged.

Despite these criticisms, however, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants (across all groups) shows that the hybrid mode of delivery not only is feasible for events of this kind but also offers unique advantages. Most obviously, it facilitated participation by colleagues in faraway locations, including the U.S. West Coast and even Brazil. The resulting diversity of cultural and professional backgrounds, working languages, and institutional environments was in turn perceived as one of the assets of the hybrid-mode seminar. As one on-site participant put it, “It connected participants from different locations, whose diversity of experience and insight enriched the learning experience” (#7).

Harnessing a diversity of experience to engage with multiple viewpoints seems a valuable goal, particularly for a seminar that is probing the methodological foundations of research-based knowledge, often revealing its contextual embeddedness and provisional nature. This kind of learning environment, populated by “reflective practitioners” (Schön, 1983) and experienced teachers, lends itself very well to an educational process that relies not so much on the transmission of information as on the interactive co-construction of knowledge. Individual experience, personality, motivation, and group dynamics are thus played out in a specific situational context in which such seemingly trivial matters as screen positions, video feeds, camera angles, and even on-site seating arrangements have an impact on the interaction.

A general lesson to be drawn from this evaluation must surely be that there is no single ideal arrangement for this type of integrated (hybrid) seminar. Aside from the roles of participants and their motivations and preferences (e.g., for peer-group exchange rather than lectures), choices will have to be made between alternative practical arrangements that may be more or less suitable for some but not others. These may include the number of remote participants, the video feeds available to them (e.g., room views vs. slides), microphone placement, and seating arrangements in relation to screen and camera positions. The premises and facilities used for the Washington seminar left little to be desired, and yet some of the practical choices could, with hindsight, have been different. The results of this evaluation reflect this hindsight and can serve others in developing their own hybrid-mode seminar designs. Furthermore, as online communications technologies continue to advance and remote participation becomes more common, technical shortcomings noted by remote and on-site participants (e.g., slide visualization or interjection by remote participants) may well be attenuated or resolved altogether.

As one might expect, the findings from our case study reaffirm the truism that remote participation is not the same as “being there.” (And being present in person may never have been valued more highly than during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.) What an online presence cannot offer is an opportunity to “interact informally face to face around the edges of the sessions and during breaks” (#3). Admittedly, the hybrid-mode seminar format makes this difference even more acutely felt. While remote participants themselves sensed a certain disconnect, they also seemed remote to on-site participants, who found it as difficult to fully engage with the other group as vice versa. It would seem futile, though, to try to measure the added value of an on-site presence as long as the main goal of joint knowledge building is found to be achievable, as has been shown in the present evaluation. Unless such seminars are held in locations with a large catchment area of potential attendees, the fundamental trade-off remains between the need for physical translocation, with all the costs that this implies, and acceptance of a sensory disconnect resulting from the lack of unmediated contact.

As we have tried to show, however, this choice also offers plenty of opportunity, depending on individual needs and circumstances. After all, every one of the 18 respondents thankfully providing feedback on their hybrid-mode seminar experience affirmed that they would recommend this format to their colleagues, as on-site and remote participants alike. We may therefore claim that the hybrid-mode seminar format evaluated in this article is feasible and successful, and we would encourage others to adopt this technology-enhanced approach to the delivery of training of trainers events on future occasions.

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### Appendix

#### Questionnaire Excerpts (Online Group)

##### Motivation

(Please rate the importance of the following options)

	Not important	Less important	Rather important	Very important
Satisfy my intellectual curiosity as a professional interpreter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtain professional development credits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Share professional experiences with colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Share teaching experiences with colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepare for teaching a (new) practical interpreting course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refine current practical teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepare for teaching a (new) theory course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refine current teaching of theory course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Interaction*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Rather disagree	Rather agree	Strongly agree
I was apprehensive about attending the seminar online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to interact well with on-site participants throughout the seminar.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The seminar with a mix of on-site and online participants was an enriching experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending this seminar remotely made it difficult for me to focus on the material being presented.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found it easy to interact with on-site participants.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical difficulties with the videoconferencing took up valuable time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be interested in attending more online training of trainers seminars in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Interaction*

*Impact of hybrid mode of delivery*

*Outcome/Satisfaction*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Rather disagree	Rather agree	Strongly agree
My main expectations for this seminar have been fulfilled.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The seminar was too short for any real learning to take place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The group was too diverse to permit a coherent learning experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned a lot from fellow participants who work in other professional domains.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the seminar content was already familiar to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the seminar content is relevant to my professional work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the seminar content is relevant to my teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The insights provided by this seminar could have been gained equally well by reading.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talking to colleagues brings more insights than listening to presentations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend this seminar to colleagues with a similar background and motivation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>