

Videoconference in French Courtrooms: Its consequences on judicial settings

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The use of videoconference has increased considerably in French courtrooms in order to minimize the costs of extracting defendants from prisons to attend various types of judicial hearings. It is often understood by its promoters in such settings as ‘transparent’ (when it works) on the basis of a dyadic model of communication, in which judicial proceedings would involve one speaker and one listener most of the time. However, ‘multi-party’ situations in which three participants or more are simultaneously relevant visually often occur during courtroom proceedings. This makes salient specific concerns regarding the production of relevant video frames on a moment-by-moment basis. Based on a video recorded corpus of pre-trial hearings involving remote participants connected through a video link, this paper examines the practical and multimodal work required to produce proper mediated frames as the judicial hearing unfolds. The main objective of our approach is to uncover the practical and social consequences of a videoconference system on the organization of the court hearings.

Keywords: conversation analysis, court, judicial setting, justice, sociology, videoconference, workplace studies

1 Introduction

The uses of videoconference systems and media spaces are extensively studied since the 1990s, at a time when there have been extraordinary technological innovations for audio-visual technologies which provide real time access to individuals situated in different geographical places

(Heath & Luff, 1993). The videoconference system has been studied in various settings, such as institutional (Dumoulin & Licoppe, 2011) and informal professional meetings (Fish & al., 1992; Gaver, 1992; Dourish & al., 1996; Heath & Luff, 1992), with a focus on cooperative work. Studies have scrutinized the nature of the setting induced by videoconference, showing the kind of “fractured ecologies” it implies (Luff & Heath, 2003). Scholars have shown how such an interactional artefact as videoconference results in the “fragility of the interaction frame” (de Fornel, 1994). Studies on videoconference offered new insights on the nature of interaction itself. Heath & Luff (1992) have shown, for instance, that audio-visual technology introduces certain asymmetries into interpersonal communication that can transform the impact of visual and vocal conduct.

This paper is based on an ethnographic study about videoconference systems in judicial settings. The opportunity has been given to conduct a research in French courtrooms where videoconference is widely used today. Indeed, since 2007 the Ministry of Justice initiated a program to equip every court and every prison in France with videoconference systems. This program was implemented mainly to reduce the security risks and to cut down on operating costs. Indeed, the prisoners attend the proceedings from the videoconference room in their prison, which considerably cuts down the mobility costs. As a consequence, the videoconference technology was thus used in France as a tool for managerial reform in line with the more general trend, which pushes towards the rationalization of the management of the judicial administrations worldwide, with information and communication technologies as key resources for that change. In practice, if only some judges have implemented it during the work of the hearings they conduct, others are still reluctant to do so. In the court we are currently studying, the judge who conducts the trial - the “Président” as he is officially called - is very favorable to the use of the videoconference system, as we shall see later.

And yet, the uses of videoconference in judicial settings have not been studied from an interactional perspective to this date. At the intersection of sociology of work and conversation analysis along with a situated action perspective, our research attempts to fill in the gap by focusing on user’s behaviors and the social as well as organizational

transformations induced by new technologies of communication. When remote participants are attending the judicial hearing through a video link, it thus becomes a multimedia event. This calls for fine-grained descriptions of the activity at a level of detail in which audio and video recordings are required. We have been able to observe and video-record the public proceedings of the “*Chambre de l’Instruction*” in Rennes, a Court of Appeal in the south west of France. Data collection consisted of fieldwork and extensive video recordings of videoconference settings in the court. Data was collected over a period of one year, which has enabled us to constitute a video corpus of about sixty cases. Our data collection is transcribed and analyzed using conversation analysis framework (Sacks, 1992; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). Video recordings having provided the principal source of materials for examining, our research is therefore based on these cases.

This paper examines the way the President of the court takes the videoconference system into account and the practical and multimodal work required to produce proper mediated frames as the judicial hearing unfolds. We will particularly focus on the interplay between the asymmetries generated by either institutional talk and video mediated interaction. The main objective of our approach is to uncover the practical and social consequences of a videoconference system on the organization of the court hearings.

2 Video-mediated talk in institutional settings

According to Schutz (1962) participants in interaction presuppose that one environment is commensurate with the other:

I take it for granted, and I assume my fellow-man does the same, that I and my fellow-man would have typically the same experiences of the common world if we changed places, thus transforming my Here into his, and his – now to me a There – into mine. (Schutz, 1962, p. 316)

Participants presuppose reciprocity of perspectives or interchangeability of standpoints in producing their own conduct and in recognizing the actions of their counterparts. However, in video

mediated presence, the participants first discover that their local environment is not entirely accessible to the other within the course of the interaction; secondly, the bodily activity one participant produces is rather different from the object received by the co-participant because the camera and the monitor transform the environments of conduct (Heath & Luff, 1992, 1993; Heath & al., 1995). The conversational resources participants rely on to interact are weakened by the medium and thus, generate an asymmetry of perception of the resources on which speakers ordinarily rely on to coordinate their activities.

The settings we examine are also defined by the kind of asymmetries that characterize institutional talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Heritage & Clayman, 2010), where there is often on the one hand, a direct relation between status and role, and on the other hand discursive rights. Institutional interactions are defined by structured role and by an unequal distribution of knowledge, an access to conversational resources, and even to participation in the interaction (e.g. the relationships and the inequality of participation between speakers as it is the case in the relation between doctors and patients, Heath, 1992). Asymmetries are important between professionals and lay perspectives, and arise from restrictions (1) on the access to the setting, (2) on the participation rights, and (3) on differential access to organizational routines and procedures (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 49).

Therefore the asymmetries implied by either an institutional talk and a video mediated interaction are tremendously significant. We will focus in this paper on the interplay between these two kinds of asymmetries. Therefore we will examine and analyze the way the President of the court takes the videoconference system into account and the asymmetries generated by it.

3 Videconference in the courtroom

Each environment of the participants is not commensurate with the other as there is no equal perceptual access of the environment between the court and the defendant appearing from his prison. On the one hand, the visual access of the court to the room where the defendant is seated is partial: indeed, the image shows a close-up of the defendant (see the picture 3, on the left). On the other hand, the defendant has an even

more partial visual access to the court, as we shall make it clear in this section. The difference lies in the fact that the defendant is not allowed to manipulate the camera and therefore cannot act on the situation, whereas there is a possibility for the people in the courtroom to control the cameras: first, the judges can modify the angle of the camera in the prison as they can manipulate the camera remotely located in the room of the prison or ask a technician present in the prison to do it.¹ They can also use the remote control that allows them to modify the angles of the camera of the courtroom at anytime. As a result, only the court can modify the image displayed for the court itself and for the defendant in the videoconference screen. We will show that the President of the court, who is usually in charge of the remote control during the hearings, while manipulating it, is well aware of these perceptual access asymmetries and tries to overcome them as much as he can while manipulating it.²

3.1 The Setting

The “*Chambre*” where the research took place holds mostly pre-trial hearings in which defendants who are remanded in custody are appealing against the decision passing by the Judge of Liberty and Imprisonment – remember that the preliminary investigation is still in progress and that the defendants are incarcerated while they are waiting for their trial. The “*Chambre*” decides whether to release or not the defendant. The latter appears before a court composed by one President of the court and two other judges. These three judges decide on the sentence. The prosecutor, the defense attorney or the public defender (and also sometimes the prosecution) are also present. There is neither

¹ This situation has never occurred yet. The angle of the camera inside the prison has been pre-programmed and the judges are reluctant to change it. If there is a problem in the image from the prison (e.g. the defendant is too far or appears against the light), the technician is requested to modify the angle of the camera. In practice, we can notice that when there is no technician available, they usually ask the defendant to move about or to move his chair or the table before he is seated.

² We have noticed that the participants have not yet been trained for such camera work. Nevertheless, the behaviour of the President of the court is not an isolated case: similar activities occur 1) when another person is in charge of the remote control during the hearing and 2) in other identical situations in other French courts.

jury nor cross-examination. The passing of sentence is publicly announced the following day of the hearing.

The Court of Appeal of Rennes has jurisdiction over most of Western France, which represents about one sixth of the French territory. As a result the defendants are incarcerated in prisons that are often in a distance of three hundred kilometers away from the Court. It therefore makes sense to rely on the videoconference technology to try to cut down on prison extraction. The government has been pressing the regional courts to apply this policy and use the videoconference as much as possible. Pre-trial hearings, which are short, functional and do not judge the facts of the case have been targeted as one of the main field of application for this technology. It is in this context that the use of videoconference has spread to the "*Chambre*" of Rennes, where its President is in charge of the remote control.

3.1.1 The spatial organization of the courtroom when using videoconference system

When videoconference is being used, the courtroom becomes spatially distributed.



Photo 1 A wide shot of the "Chambre de l'instruction" of Rennes, France: on the left, the prisoner's dock; on the right, the judge's bench where the clerk, the three judges and the prosecutor sit.

Instead of being present in the prisoner's dock (which one can see in this picture above), the defendant appears from his prison, on a screen, which is placed behind the clerk, on the right side of the judge's bench.

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Photo 2 The usher is connecting the videoconference system of the court with the prison.

The picture above shows the placement of the screen in the courtroom. Notice that the videoconference system in the courtroom is composed of a large plasma screen, with a camera on top of it. When the video connection works, as in the picture below, the screen is split in two: on the left, the image from the prison; on the right, the image of the courtroom, which is the one that the defendant is watching in prison.



Photo 3 On the left, the defendant who bends to the microphone, while the court, on the left on the screen in the courtroom, watches and listens to him.

When talking or listening to the defendant or other persons who appear on the screen, the judges of the court have to reorient themselves towards the screen. As shown in the photo 4 and the following one, the judges and the clerk are orienting to the screen while listening to the person talking on the screen as the orientation of their body clearly demonstrates.

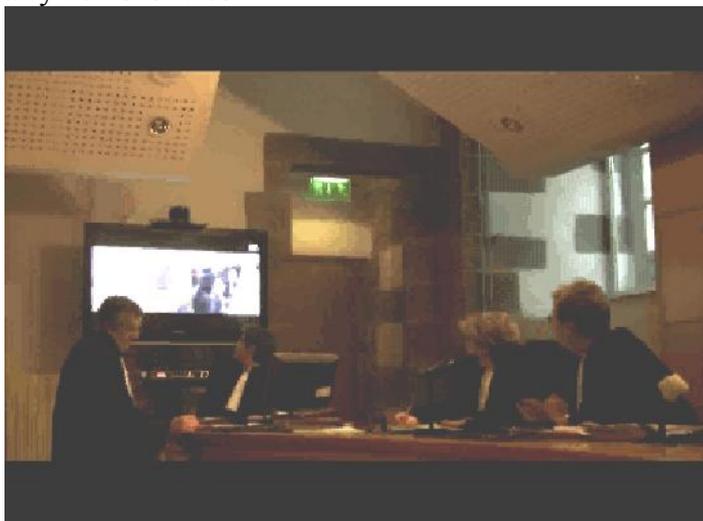


Photo 4 From left to right: the usher, standing, the clerk, one of the two deputy judges and the presiding judge.

When her client appears to the court via the videoconference system, the lawyer has the choice either to come physically in the courtroom or to appear besides the defendant from the prison.

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Photo 5 On the left, the defendant appears alone while his defendant is in the courtroom; on the right, the defendant and his lawyer appear on the screen side by side.

One “deviant” case, with respect to the spatial organization of participants for it happened once during our fieldwork: the defendant is present in the courtroom while her counsels appear from a remote site at their request.



Photo 6 On the left, the view of the courtroom where the defendant (on the right) is standing in front of the court; on the right, the videoconference screen showing the counsels (on the left) and the court (on the right).

This case, even if it is unique, shows that the videoconference technology in the courtroom can become a resource to manage new mobility-related practicalities and produce configuration of spatial distribution in the courtroom which was not really foreseen by the texts of law (Licoppe, Verdier & Dumoulin, 2012). This situation is rare

because most of the time lawyers prefer to come in the courtroom to defend their clients as in the case examined in this article³.

3.1.2 The production of relevant angles for an adequate institutional frame

Most of the time, the President in charge of the Chambre de l'Instruction chairs the debates and handles the remote control at the same time. When he is not chairing and the deputies who replace him do not want to manage the video, this task is taken up by the usher. The camera is mobile but in a way in which it can only record one part of the room. For instance it is unable to show a good part of the public attending the hearing and can only film part of the defense counsels' bench. Therefore, during the hearings, the President moves the camera and chooses the angle according to what he considers to be most important for the participant(s) in the remote site. Thus, in moving the camera according to what is currently going on, the President provides different successive views of the courtroom:

- a) He provides either a broad view of the bench when opening or closing the hearing, and also during the Questions/Answers episodes (see picture (a1)); the view can be narrower showing only the judges of the bench (see picture (a2));
- b) He focuses on the judge who is reporting the facts of the case (see picture (b));
- c) He focuses on the prosecutor when she is making her accusatory statement (see picture (c));
- d) He focuses on the lawyer of the defendant when he is in the courtroom (see picture (d)).

³ The fact that lawyers prefer to come in the courtroom can be notably explained by the fact that they can transmit files and information more easily than when they interact via videoconference.

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(a1) Prison view Courtroom view



Photo 7 The defendant is being shown the bench at the beginning of the hearing (including the prosecutor).

(a2) Prison view Courtroom view



Photo 8 The defendant is being shown the bench at the beginning of the hearing (only the three judges of the court).

(b) Prison view

Courtroom view



Photo 9 One of the judge, reporting the facts of the case, is shown on the screen.

(c) Prison view

Courtroom view



Photo 10 The prosecutor who is speaking in the courtroom is shown to the defendant and his counsel who are watching from the prison.

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(d) Prison view

Courtroom view



Photo 11 The counsel who is speaking in the courtroom is shown to his client.

We will examine in detail the latter case in the following section to show that the fact that the camera cannot film the room all at once, but only part of it, has some crucial consequences on the setting. Since the camera of the videoconference system in the courtroom can be moved with the remote control and zoomed, it constitutes a resource for the President to show various features of the courtroom, and particularly various persons attending the hearing. As one may have noticed, the angles chosen by the President are linked to the phases of the hearing, the activity of the court being divided into a number of subparts, or episodes. The episodes of the hearing and their relevant angles can be summarized as follows:

Episodes Of The Hearing	Relevant Angle Of The Camera Chosen By The President Of The Court
Opening of the hearing: it includes a greeting from the President to the defendant (and also to the police escort or the prison guard) who appears on the screen.	Wide angle on the bench (which can include or not Prosecutor).
Presentation of the different persons involved in the hearing (the judges counsel, the counsels, the Prosecutor).	Wide angle on the bench and a short camera motion in the courtroom to show the counsel on the screen.
The statement of the case by the President or one of the two judges counsel.	Smaller angle on the bench, showing only the judge or wider with the three judges.
Questions-answers (1) between the President of the court (and the judge reporting the facts) and the defendant.	Wide or smaller angle on the bench.
The pleading of the defendant's counsel (and the pleading of the victim's lawyer if needed).	Focus on the defendant's counsel (and the victim's lawyer).
The charge of the public Prosecutor.	Focus on the public Prosecutor.
Questions-answers (2) between the President of the court and the defendant.	Wide or smaller angle on the bench (which can include or not the Prosecutor).
Closing of the hearing.	Wide angle on the bench (which can include or not the Prosecutor).

This summary shows that the videoconference system constrains the President (or any other person in charge of the remote control) to perform constantly the settlement for two different participants' stances: the defendant who can only deal with *the reception* of the

images on the one hand, and the court who can deal with *the production* of the images and their *reception* on the other hand. We will show in the next section that substantial additional work is required of the President, due to the fact that in addition to his regular work he has to take into account the reception of the images he produces.

4 The interactional work of the judge

We will now present an extract of an interaction that took place at the beginning of a hearing. You will notice in this example that the President in charge is chairing the debates and handling the remote control of the camera at the same time, which is usually the case. We have explained previously that the camera is mobile but in a way that it can only record part of the courtroom. Recent evolutions of video communication systems have made the issue of camera motion more central. In everyday settings, it is possible to re-orient the camera with little effort because of the mobility and the portability of the video devices (laptops and webcams in Skype interactions, mobile phone in mobile video calls), thus making relevant the question of what to show at any time themselves (Licoppe & Morel, 2009). In professional systems and telepresence rooms, the devices are much less easily moved, but the camera can usually be oriented within a rather large solid angle, and a discrete set of interesting camera orientation can be pre-programmed on the remote control, which is particularly interesting in multi-party settings such as the one we will study here.

As we will see it in the excerpt, it has thus become a ritual for the President to mention the presence of the defendant's counsel at the beginning of the hearing, and to show the counsel onscreen at the same time, so that the latter becomes visible to his client. How are such sequences accomplished, and what does their organization tell us about the use of videoconference technology in the courtroom?

4.1 Showing the counsel onscreen: excerpt⁴

⁴ To transcript this excerpt, we use the transcription conventions of conversation analysis, with two supplementary markers. Star signs * are used to mark the beginning of camera motions and place them with respect to the conversation, and double star signs ** the moments where these

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5. President : hein je vous montre à
l'image
uh I am showing you on
screen
6. President : £ donc euh*:: (0.3)
votreuh::** (0.5) *excellent
so e::r*
your e::r ** (.) *excellent
£ ((brief look towards
counsel and back to screen))
7. Cam : *((pans to the right))
*((resumes
8. P : conseil Maître Martin** a:: a fait
l'déplacement depuis Nantes hein
counsel Maître Martin** ha::s has done
the trip to come from Nantes uh
9. Cam : panning towards counsel))
10. (.)
11. P : i:: il vous salue sous *notre
regard** puisque *bien entendu** (.) euh
he:: he greets you *under our
gaze* since *of course (.) **
12. Cam : *((correction))
*-----**
13. P: >*vous l'avez** compris<
>*you have ** understood it<
14. vous êtes en *dans la salle**d'audience
you are * in the courtroom*
15. Cam:*-----**
*-----**

Before the judge starts to move the camera towards the counsel, the control image of the court shows, on the right, the image of the court, which is also visible from the prison; on the other half of that screen figures on the left the image from the prison. Then, the President is handling the remote control (Line 5), ready to modify the angle of the camera (Line 7).



Photo 13 The President is handling the remote control (L1).

The camera is moving to the counsel while the President announced to the defendant that his lawyer is in the room, “counsel Maître Martin has done the trip to come from Nantes” (Line 6-9).



Photo 14 The President is moving the camera to show the counsel onscreen (L6-9).

Then the President, while still talking to the defendant, adjusts the angle of the camera twice, first while saying (Line 11) “under our gaze”, then while saying “since of course”.



Photo 15 The President adjusts the angle of the camera while saying "he greets you under our gaze" (L11).



Photo 16 The President continues to adjust the angle of the camera while saying "since of course" (L11).

Then, he moves the angle of the camera to focus more closely the angle to the specific zone of the lawyer (Lines 13-14). The counsel is now on screen and can be seen by the defendant.



Photo 17 Images onscreen after the multiple frame adjustments, which provide a larger and closer view of the standing counsel (L15).

When the introduction of the lawyer is over, the President reorients himself to the next phase of the hearing, namely the statement of the case, moving the angle of the camera again. Thus he displays a wide view of the judges of the court, as it was the case before the presentation of the counsel onscreen.

4.2 Showing the counsel onscreen: a multimedia performance and a multimodal accomplishment

The actual visual appearance of the lawyer constitutes a multimodal accomplishment and a mundane multimedia performance which interweaves the design of turns-at-talk and camera motions. The greeting in line 1 was preceded by the audio and video connection and various preliminary exchanges, some involving the warden, and during which the defendant was already present. The greeting itself is meant to be heard as moving the interaction forward with respect to this particular type of institutional meeting. Then the President prefaces a

camera motion by announcing he will show someone (Line 5). The announcement is immediately followed by a rapid camera rotation towards the defendant's counsel (Line 7), and conversationally by hesitation markers, a possessive with a lengthening of its end (which may also count as a hesitation marker), a slight pause, and then only by an explicit nominal reference to the counsel (Lines 6 & 8). Such a temporal organization of the turn suggests that the orientation towards reframing the image and showing the lawyer as a kind of typified and routine action comes first, before the President is actually able to muster the particulars of the situation (*i.e.* here the name of the lawyer). The production of the name of the lawyer is delayed further by a relational reference "your excellent counsel maître Petit") which emphasizes the relationship between the counsel and his client (Line 8). Interestingly the camera motion is done in two separate motions, the first at the start of this turn constructional unit (Line 7) and the second near its end (Line 9). One consequence of this is that the lawyer appears on screen at the precise moment his name is uttered.

The panning motion of the camera towards the counsel is achieved in two steps. The image actually freezes in an intermediate position in which the counsel is not yet visible, and in the middle of line 8 at a moment in which the flow of the turn also breaks down (lengthened discourse markers and pause). After this, the President does several successive small corrections to the counsel's video shot (lines 12-15). The start and the end of these video frame adjustments are also associated to pauses, breaks, hesitations and repetitions in the developing turn of the President (for instance in line 11). The production of a proper turn-at-talk is a multimodal accomplishment, which is sensitive to the changing contingencies of the situation in which it unfolds. Here a specific contingency is the fact that the President is engaged into another stream of action, *i.e.* producing a proper video shot while he utters his turn-at-talk. Conversely, the placement of some of these camera moves suggest it is easier or more convenient for the President to initiate them when the immediate constraints on producing a relevant turn-at-talk are in part relaxed, *i.e.* during such pauses and hesitations. Talking while moving the camera is more than just the juxtaposition of two separate courses of action, and

their temporal articulation on a fine time scale testifies to the kind of strain that this particular form of multi-activity generates.

5 Discussion

The judge does some interactional work to shape the potential reception of the images he is producing. For instance he mentions that the counsel's greeting he is "reporting" is "performed" under "our" gaze (Line 11), an ambiguous reference which at this point might mean the court professionals as well as the whole attendance in the courtroom. In all cases the referent group indexed by the use of the first person possessive lies outside of the video image shown at that time. It is the fact that these people are visually unavailable which makes it relevant to state explicitly that the counsel's "greeting" is a public gesture performed in front of an attendance. We add to this that if the President utters the greetings instead of the lawyer (Line 11), it is first of all because the lawyer does not have a microphone, and thus, cannot be properly heard by the defendant⁵. The judge's statements along with his activity with the camera make salient a central interactional property of video-conference setting, *i.e.* that much of one participant's context is visually unavailable to the other and vice versa, thus breaking routine expectations about the reciprocity of perspectives. The judge's utterance acts as a possible reminder of this fundamental source of interactional asymmetries in videoconference settings. It provides an interpretive framing for how this particular video moment is to be read, and more generally a template on how to read the future video images of the hearing which will be made available to the defendant: he should read everything which will happen on screen as performed in front of a partly invisible audience, some of whom may never appear on screen.

How can we explain such a multimodal accomplishment and multimedia performance? And what can we conclude about it? Remember the issue we raised at the beginning: what are the consequences of videoconference system on the organization of the

⁵ If he wants to be considered by his client as performing a greeting, the lawyer has to substitute an ostensive sign for an utterance, for instance waving his hand in the direction of the camera.

hearings? One could notice in the excerpt the asymmetries related to institutional talk such as the access to the conversational resources and even to participation in the interaction. We emphasize that the asymmetries already at work in institutional settings are intensified by the videoconference system. In the usual setting, the courtroom speech exchange system with its pre-allocation system of question and answer constrains the rights to speak of the defendant (Drew, 1992). With the videoconference system as it is salient in the excerpt, new constraints arise that limit the visual and audio access to the setting.

Nevertheless, we notice that the institutional nature of the situation has not been altered by the videoconference system. And for this reason, the President could decide that he and the other judges can accomplish their institutional task ignoring the additional asymmetries generated by videoconference at the interpersonal and intersubjectivity level. In other words, participants could ignore the fact that a part of the debates are mediated. But obviously it is not the case in the situation studied here. As we have explained, because videoconference introduces disruptions and modifies the usual conditions of communication in the setting at the interpersonal level, the President prefers to maintain a certain level of intersubjectivity in order to achieve his institutional tasks. Therefore, to transform this exceptional situation into the usual one, the President of the court develops all kind of practices that allows him to have his usual behaviour, in order to fit the conditions of any judicial setting, and particularly the nature of the co-presence it implies.⁶ These practices imply for him to take into account at the same time the reception and the production sides. Regarding the reception side, namely the visual dimension, the President uses the video and the possibility to move the camera as a resource to orchestrate the visual appearance of the counsel to the defendant. Regarding the production side, namely the audio dimension, the President produces the adequate utterances in a way, which is relevant to the production of proper courtroom participation frames and interactional sequences: this explains why he utters the greetings instead of the lawyer. It is striking to notice that when these new practices work out, then everything is

⁶ His behaviour has not yet been described in any Handbooks and there are no regulations of any sort.

performed (almost) as usual, even if the situation is not at all the usual one.

Does this situation imply that the defendants' rights to talk could be altered, in contradiction to the jurisprudence on this matter? As we have underlined in our introduction, the conversational resources participants rely on to interact are weakened in mediated interaction. It is thus more difficult for the defendant appearing via the videoconference system to take his turn. To this asymmetry of perception can be added the inequality of participation between speakers that characterizes institutional talk such as the one studied here. Nevertheless, we must emphasize that the participants in charge of the debates have a constant preoccupation of maintaining symmetry to the access of the conversation that the judicial setting requires (such as the opportunity for the defendant to utter a last comment before the closing of the hearing by the President).

6 Conclusion and Implications

Our interactional perspective offers significant insights on the use of videoconference in judicial settings by showing the way videoconferences necessarily influence the judicial practices. First, we have focused on the issue of the interactional asymmetries of institutional talk as well as the asymmetries the videoconference system inevitably produces. We have analyzed the strategies deployed by the participants to get over the asymmetries generated by the system: as we have shown, the President has developed the necessary skills in handling the remote control of the camera of the videoconference during the hearings, in order to adapt the communication to the system, or rather, to create an adequate interactional frame.

To demonstrate it, we have presented an excerpt where the President moves the angles of the camera in the courtroom, during distributed courtroom hearings where some parties participate from a remote site by videoconference, to accomplish relevant social actions. We have studied the kind of work, which is accomplished to provide relevant video images on screen. We have shown how this kind of camera work is made possible by and relied on the fact that in most videoconference systems today the camera is mobile and can be

oriented within a relatively large aperture angle. An accurate analysis of this has revealed that showing the counsel onscreen is a multimedia performance and a multimodal accomplishment.

We have then revealed the interplay between institutional and technical asymmetries. The videoconference emphasizes the inequality of participation between speakers in institutional talk. Therefore, it has been significant to show the way the President, while oriented to perceptual access asymmetries, develops all kind of practices that allow him to establish a symmetry of perspective on the setting in order to maintain a usual situation. Thus, the situation, even while implying videoconference, fits the usual conditions the nature of the co-presence the judicial setting implies.

This has tremendous implications on the kind of work that has to be done in the courtroom. Articulating talk-in-interaction and video-in-interaction introduces additional cognitive and interactional burden. We have shown that when the judge handles the camera while he talks, the strain of the subtle adjustment of conversation and video frames to stage the ‘appearance’ of the counsel on the screen is made obvious by the way he produces his ongoing utterance. We stress that many judges are reluctant to handle the remote control themselves because they are aware of the difficulty of managing these new participatory roles and their usual functions at the same time, even if they are nevertheless accountable at the juridical level for the way the hearing proceeds.

The findings from this study need to be confirmed in future research of other types of judicial settings. Thus, it will be of great importance to conduct observations of the introduction of screens and live recording systems in it for high profile trials. Indeed videoconference could change the work led on by the judges, at a cognitive and organizational level. This system introduces additional tasks and competence requirements for the legal professionals involved which puts pressure on their usual routines for managing courtroom proceedings. They have to become ‘videoconference literates’, who must articulate continuously the video images they produce to the unfolding courtroom interaction. And yet, there has been no training for such delicate accomplishments. This is quite striking given the fact that equity in access and participation rights and resources is crucial in

judicial settings. Because judicial hearings will increasingly make use of videoconferencing, research of the kind we have conducted here is particularly useful to identify the relevant phenomena and their organization.

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Appendix: The transcription conventions of conversation analysis (based on the work of Jefferson, 2004)

Characteristics of speech production

[The point of overlap onset.
]	The point at which an utterance/a part of an utterance terminates <i>vis-vis</i> another.
(.)	A gap within or between the utterances.
.	A stopping falls in tone.
,	A continuing intonation.
><	An utterance/part of an utterance speeding up.
::	A prolongation of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound.
<i>((italic))</i>	Description of other things than what was said happening in the setting.

Characteristics of camera motions

.....	Movements of the camera.
*	Beginning of camera motion (placed with respect to the conversation).
**	Indication of a stop in the camera motion.
£	Significant changes in the participants’ embodied conduct.

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