pre-programmed backlight option are essential to avoid filming a mere silhouette. This problem is amplified if the person has dark skin. Although an acceptable result regarding the face can be achieved using this method, this is the least satisfactory orientation.

Shooting 'with the light', i.e. having the light source behind the camera, is generally better but does not necessarily solve this problem. If the speaker is sitting in the sun in front of a light-coloured background, such as the wall of a house, the background will reflect the light and still be brighter than the person being filmed; finding a darker background will make a big difference. Also, if the speaker is facing strong light they may squint, be uneasy, and display unflattering facial shadows.

Filming in the shade helps, but can still be problematic. We once filmed a group of speakers sitting comfortably under a tree, but all around there was coral gravel reflecting the sun such that there was no angle where the camera could have avoided a bright background. Again, in such situations the backlight option or manual exposure helps.

An ideal arrangement would be for the speakers to sit at a 45 degree angle to the light, outdoors (where there is generally more light), and positioned in such a way that bright objects, such as walls, reflect light onto the face but are not directly in the background. However, best positioning for image may not be the same as best positioning for audio. Factors such as wind and other sources of noise are arguably more important (discussed in §§1.2.1.2 and 1.2.2.2(i) above).

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1.3.1.3 Adjusting settings

As with audio recordings, adjusting the available settings of video cameras can make a major difference to the quality of the recording. The auto settings are not necessarily suitable. A camera should allow controlling for focus, exposure/iris, shutter speed, white balance, and audio input levels. Unfortunately this is not always the case, particularly regarding audio control.

(i) Focus

The ubiquitous auto focus function is very convenient but has a drawback: if something passes through the picture in front of the speaker, the focus will automatically switch to the entity in the foreground; when it has disappeared, the focus will switch back to the speaker, causing moments of blur while the camera refocuses. This can be avoided by only using auto focus to choose the right focus and, once that is set (i.e. on the speaker), by locking the focus in that setting. Alternatively, one can simply operate the camera in manual focus. Auto focus can also be unreliable at low light levels with the camera going in and out of focus, 'hunting' for the right target, so again it is better to make a decision and lock the focus.

(ii) Exposure/iris

Setting the exposure correctly is a subjective and to some extent impossible task. Sometimes the amount of light available, and/or the contrast in the scene, will push the camera's sensor to its limits, resulting in areas that are over- or underexposed. The best that can then be done is to ensure that the speaker's face is adequately exposed. Normally one would want to capture facial expressions and movements of the mouth (which can help, e.g. with phonetic transcriptions).

Setting the exposure manually (by adjusting the iris) is again the preferred option. A reliable technique is to zoom in on the face of a speaker so that it fills the screen, adjust and then lock the exposure, and zoom back out to the appropriate frame for recording the scene. This can be done with the camera on standby; there is no need to record it. If the light changes considerably during filming (e.g. because the sun comes out), the locked exposure can become a problem and will need to be redone.