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Can You See What I'm Saying?: Cochlear Implant Users Experience Unique Listening Challenges in Internet Video Calls

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When we listen to someone speak, our brains automatically balance the information from the sound of their voice with the visual movements of their mouth to best understand what they are saying. When speech is transmitted digitally, like on a Zoom call, these auditory and visual components can become out of sync. While this might be distracting to people with typical hearing, it may be especially challenging for those who use cochlear implants, assistive hearing devices that directly stimulate the auditory nerve. Because the auditory signal generated by these implants can sound very distorted, users likely pay extra visual attention to mouth movements to understand spoken words. Using such visual information in this way might mean that asynchrony between audio and visual speech signals actually interferes with overall speech comprehension. My research examines how accessible platforms like Zoom are to cochlear implant users considering the unique listening challenges they present.