

Conference interpreter

Darinka Veselinova, M.A.

University „Goce Delchev”, Stip, Macedonia

Abstract

In this paper we are going to point out the most important aspects of the conference interpreter's praxis. As an important part of the modern world, the conference interpreter faces every day to different challenges. To fulfill his/her tasks he/she need to possess some knowledge and abilities. The most important knowledge and abilities are following: excellent knowledge of the active (target) and the passive (source) language, university degree, knowledge of current affairs, ability to analyze and construe facts, speed of reaction, power of concentration, above average physical and nervous staying-power, pleasant voice and public-speaking skills, intellectual curiosity, intellectual integrity, tact and diplomacy to deal with difficult situations ets.

Introduction

The increasing globalization of international business, together with further expansion of the European Union has made interpreting services a rapidly growing area with excellent employment opportunities for well-trained interpreters. Language interpretation facilitates the language communication between users of different languages. Interpreting denotes the facilitating of communication from one language form into its equivalent or approximate equivalent in another language form. The end result is an intermediate stage of communication allowing listeners of the target language to experience the message in a way that is as close as possible to the experience of those who understand the original language. In this paper it will be spoken about the

conference interpreter, as an interpreter, who is always present in sales meetings, cross border negotiations, industry and professional association conferences, training seminars and official state visits, where effective communication is always crucial.

Basic types of interpretation

There are more kinds of interpreting: simultaneous, consecutive, whispered, relay²³ and so on, and the most significant and with the greatest usage are the simultaneous and the consecutive ones.

In simultaneous interpretation, the interpreter renders the message in the target-language as quickly as he or she can formulate it from the source language, while the source-language speaker continuously speaks. The simultaneous interpreter sits in a sound-proof booth, speaking into a microphone, while clearly hearing the source-language speaker via earphones. The simultaneous interpretation is rendered to the target-language listeners via their earphones. The first introduction and employment of extempore simultaneous interpreters was on the Nuremberg Trials, with four official working languages.

In consecutive interpreting the interpreter speaks after the source-language speaker has finished speaking. The speech is divided into segments and the interpreter sits or stands beside the source-language speaker, listening and taking notes as the speaker progresses through the message. When the speaker pauses or finishes speaking, the interpreter then transfers the understood message in the target language. Consecutive interpretation can either rely on memory, if each message segment is brief enough to memorize, or take notes of the message if the passages are long. Consecutively-interpreted speeches or segments tend to be short, maximal 10 minutes, because audiences usually do not prefer to sit and listen to long speech they can not understand.

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_interpretation

What is a conference interpreter?

The work of a conference interpreter is an oral intellectual exercise which is quite distinct from written translation and requires different training and qualifications.

An interpreter is a person who converts expressions from a source language into expressions with a comparable meaning in a target language. A conference interpreter is a professional language and communication expert who, at multilingual meetings, conveys the meaning of a speaker's message orally in another language to listeners who would not otherwise understand. A professional and experienced simultaneous or consecutive interpreter will endeavor to interpret every semantic element and every intention and feeling of the message that the source-language speaker is directing to target-language recipients. He/She does not translate words, he/she translates ideas, meanings and feelings. To do this it is of crucial importance to have cultural and subject matter competences.

Which knowledge and abilities does the conference interpreter possess?

There are those who claim that "interpreters are born not made"²⁴. Because the conference interpretation is a demanding, highly skilled craft, used to establish verbal communication among multiple speakers and listeners who do not speak the same languages, each conference interpreter need to possess following knowledge and abilities²⁵:

- complete mastery of the active (target) language, i.e. the language into which the interpreter works;
- complete mastery of the passive (source) language, i.e. language from which the interpreter works;
- university degree or equivalent, although it is important to know that a language degree is not necessarily the best training for interpretation;
- general knowledge and understanding of current affairs;

²⁴ <http://www.aiic.net/en/tips/students/students7.htm>

²⁵ <http://www.aiic.net/en/tips/students/students7.htm>

- ability to analyze and construe facts, ability to analyze information and construe meaning, intuition etc.; interpreters analyze everything that they are hearing and re-express what they have understood for the listeners in another language and another culture;
- speed of reaction and ability to adapt without delay to speakers, situations and subjects; the interpreter often has only limited time to prepare for the meeting, with or without documents;
- power of concentration; the interpreter must be able to sustain this high level of concentration during his/her whole work.
- above average physical and nervous staying-power;
- pleasant voice and public-speaking skills; an interpreter must be a clear and lively speaker, despite working under pressure;
- high degree of intellectual curiosity, which would make him/her be able to follow the participants without difficulty, particularly about current economic, political or social affairs;
- intellectual integrity; under no circumstances does the interpreter depart from the strictest intellectual integrity;
- tact and diplomacy to deal with difficult situations (for example misunderstandings, tension); he/she also need to know how to behave in relation to the delegates.

These qualities are not exercised independently, but come together to constitute a whole, i.e. professional interpretater. A genuine interpreter identifies closely with the speaker and while interpreting adopts the speaker's point of view.

Conclusion

Today, interpreters are an integral part of modern society, thanks to the ever more numerous communication links between them and the growing scientific, technical and economic progress. They are present in the role of mediators in many news and sports shows on television, in various travel and entertainment events with international character, in trials, international meetings, professional conferences, different discussions, educated and training activities.

They can be seen standing behind a politician or other public person in interviews, press conferences or sitting in glass booths and interpreting at major international conferences: negotiations, agreements, summits and conferences. From today's point of view, we can not imagine the world without interpreters. Just for illustration, in just one day the European Union²⁶ engages more than a hundred interpreters, including staff interpreters and freelance interpreters, with even nine languages of work for its meetings.

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²⁶ The European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Court of Justice of the European Union each have an interpretation service.