

don't get

lost in interpretation



A guide to hiring professional conference interpreting services
in the United States

This guide can be downloaded from
www.ConferenceInterpreting.info/guide.html

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*A guide to hiring professional conference
interpreting services in the United States*



*Written by conference interpreters for
clients who require and demand quality.*

*Dedicated to interpreter providers
determined to rise to the challenge.*

A photograph of a man in a dark suit standing on the left side of a large conference room, addressing a group of people. The room is filled with people seated at long, curved tables arranged in a semi-circle. The man is holding a small object, possibly a remote or a book. The room has a modern design with light-colored walls and a large screen in the background. The text "THIS BOOKLET IS FOR YOU IF:" is overlaid on the top left of the image.

THIS BOOKLET IS FOR YOU IF:

Your organization is planning a multilingual meeting.

Your success depends on effective communication through simultaneous interpretation.

You are faced with a choice of language service companies and a wide range of prices.

Perhaps this is the first time you are using conference interpreters. Or maybe the last time you did, you were less than impressed.

The next page of this guide sums up all you need to know to ensure the success of every interpreted event.

The rest of the guide will empower you to:

- ✓ recognize a competent conference interpreter provider,
- ✓ judge interpreter credentials,
- ✓ secure the interpreters' best performance.

Read on for a better understanding of the human and technical resources required to achieve real-time, expert-to-expert communication across the language barrier.

THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

To ensure the interpreters you hire convey your message clearly in every language, just follow these three simple steps:

- 1 Recruit qualified interpreters in sufficient numbers.*
- 2 Provide them with the material they need to research the terminology and subject matter.*
- 3 Ensure they use professional-standard simultaneous interpretation equipment operated by a trained technician.*





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Hiring professional conference interpreting services in the United States



"A product is tangible. You can see it and touch it. A service, by contrast, is intangible... If you go to a salon, you cannot see, touch, or try out a haircut before you buy it. You order it. Then you get it".

Harry Beckwith's
Selling The Invisible

Your company is planning an important multilingual meeting. Its international business prospects depend on effective communication through simultaneous interpreters during the event. You have been tasked with hiring the interpretation services.

Faced with widely differing estimates, how do you ensure that you will receive professional, quality interpreting services in the United States?



Recognizing a reliable conference interpreter provider is easy if you know what to look for in the interpreters your provider proposes to hire, and the way he or she intends them to operate.

Recognizing a quality conference interpreter provider

A reliable provider will:

- 1 Recruit qualified interpreters in sufficient numbers.
- 2 Work with you to supply them with the conference material they need to master the terminology and subject matter.
- 3 Ensure they are provided with the levels of sound, visibility, and soundproofing they need by means of specialized equipment operated by a trained technician.

This is the simple formula that ensures effective communication in every multilingual situation, from small two-language workshops to large multilingual conventions.

It is used successfully in thousands of meetings, every day, all over the world.

It's the recipe for success!

You are in good hands if your conference interpreter provider applies it.

The bad news is not all of them even know it.

The good news is you have just learned how to spot the ones who do before you try them!



Things to consider when selecting a conference interpreter provider



A good conference interpreter provider is familiar with conference interpreting standards of practice; works with reliable equipment suppliers; and asks for detailed information on the subject and nature of your meeting to select the interpreters who are most attuned to your requirements.

Query your favorite search engine and it will return scores of conference interpreter providers: consultant interpreters, simultaneous interpretation equipment suppliers, translation agencies, convention centers, hotels, event planners.

Consultant interpreters are themselves conference interpreters. As such, they can personally vouch for the quality of the many colleagues they work with, and that of equipment suppliers.

Consultant interpreters will handpick the interpreters for you personally, as will numerous specialized translation agencies and equipment suppliers. Hotels, convention centers, and all-inclusive event planners will subcontract the interpreting service, as they do the catering, the travel, and the flowers.





Even if you opt for the one stop approach, it is to your advantage to establish direct communication with the conference interpreter provider.

Here is why:

- ✓ You want the interpreter provider to perform a first-hand evaluation of your needs in order to put together a fine-tuned team of professionals to satisfy your language and subject requirements.
- ✓ You want the interpreter provider to assist you in supplying the interpreters with the conference material they need to study, while maintaining its confidentiality.
- ✓ Communicating with the interpreter provider is the only way to ascertain whether he or she has the competency to fulfill your expectations of quality.



Advancements in Cataract Technology ~ October 4-6, AGENDA

Thursday, October 4

19:00 – 21:00 Welcome Reception

Friday, October 5

08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast

09:00 – 09:10 Welcome and Introduction

09:10 – 10:25 Module I – Prophylaxis and Aspheric IOLs
Moderator: Dr. Virgilio Centurión

09:10 Managing Current IOL Choices to Improve Patient Outcomes
Dr. Virgilio Centurión

09:25 Aspheric IOLs and Improved Functional Vision
Dr. Eduardo Chaves

09:40 Quality of Vision with AcrySof IQ

Friday, October 5 (continued)

13:30 – 14:45 Module III – Torsional Phacoemulsification
Moderator: Dr. Robert Kafer

13:30 Evolution of Phaco and Fluidics, The Last 10 Years
Mikhail Bouchoy, PhD

13:45 Shifting Paradigms with Torsional Phacoemulsification
Dr. Richard Popperman

14:00 Enhancing Phaco Procedure Outcomes
Dr. Fernando Arzuffi

14:15 Panel Discussion & Questions and Answers

14:45 – 15:00 Break

15:00 – 16:30 Module IV – Refractive IOLs
Moderator: Dr. William Noll

Saturday, October 6

08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast

09:00 – 10:30 Module V – Aspheric Presbyopia-Cor
Moderator: Dr. José Luis Rincón

09:00 Quality of Vision improvements with ReSTOR
Dr. José Luis Rincón

09:15 Enhancing Outcomes with Bilateral ReSTOR
Dr. Robert Kafer

09:30 ReSTOR Aspheric Initial Clinical Results
Dr. Enrique Sudner

09:45 ReSTOR Future Developments
Paul Seng, PhD

10:00 Panel Discussion & Questions and Answers

The difference between failure...

A multinational company convened a last-minute press conference in the run-up to a major product launch. The CEO chose to address the journalists in his native German, in an attempt to reach out to the German media that had been rumoring less than rosy prospects for the new product line.

Interpretation into English was provided for the international press. Five minutes into the Q&A session that followed the CEO's address, the English-speaking journalists were complaining that what they were hearing through the interpreter was unintelligible.



(Actor simulation)

An internal investigation later established what had gone wrong: the booth had been manned by a translator without much experience in simultaneous interpretation techniques; he had worked for slightly under two hours on his own; had been interpreting from German into English (neither of which was his native language); and had arrived in the booth with no idea of what the meeting was about. He had been subcontracted through a chain of intermediaries.

...and success

A small developer of vision care products in the Southwest has become a global industry leader. One of its most successful strategies has been to invite its international clients to tour its facilities and hold discussions with company scientists in their clients' native language through simultaneous interpretation.

Scientific presentations range in subject matter from retinopathies to intraocular lens implants and phacoemulsification. The company sources interpreters through a California-based consultant interpreter who provides a team of professional conference interpreters recruited from cities throughout the United States.



The company's experienced event planners provide the interpreters with the agenda and PowerPoint presentations, even in draft form, as they become available. In this way, the interpreters are primed to enable the visiting ophthalmologists and the company's product developers to communicate on an expert level.

Priming interpreters to perform their best

The more your interpreters know in advance about the context, subject matter, and terminology of your meeting, the better their performance.

For example, to successfully interpret a discussion on toxic site clean-up, interpreters need to become familiar with current terminology for the chemical treatment of water, effluents, and compounds found in ground pollution. To communicate effectively, they will need to know if they are addressing students, scientists, or regulators.

The following week these same interpreters may be working at a conference for art historians and curators of the Mexican baroque, where they will have to handle religious-historical

references, terminology on sculpture, painting, and architecture, as well as the names of the major artists and patrons of the period. Subsequently they may have to get up to speed on forensic dentistry, oil rigs, shrimp farming, and so on.

Even if the topic "is not going to be technical," interpreters require all available information to provide quality service. For instance, you would not want them mangling the names of your keynote speaker, main sponsor, or CEO!

Informing speakers that they will be interpreted, and that the interpreters need to have their presentations in advance, is essential. What further steps can you take to maximize the return on your interpreting investment?

YPS	Penaeus californiensis	Yellowleg shrimp	Crevette pattes jaunes	Camarón patiamarillo
APS	Penaeus duorarum	Northern pink shrimp	Crevette rose du Nord	Camarón rosado norteño
PNT	Penaeus schmitti	Southern white shrimp	Crevette ligubam du Sud	Langostino blanco sureño
KUP	Penaeus japonicus	Kuruma prawn	Crevette kuruma	Langostino japonés
PNS	Penaeus stylirostris	Blue shrimp	Crevette bleue	Camarón azul
PNV	Penaeus vannamei	Whiteleg shrimp	Crevette pattes blanches	Camarón patiblanco
GIT	Penaeus monodon	Giant tiger prawn	Crevette géante tigrée	Langostino jumbo
PNP	Penaeus plebejus	Eastern king prawn	Crevette royale orientale	Langostino real oriental
FLP	Penaeus chinensis	Fleshy prawn	Crevette charnue	Langostino carnosó
TGS	Penaeus kerathurus	Caramote prawn	Caramote	Langostino
PNJ	Penaeus marginatus	Aloha prawn	Crevette aloha	Camarón aloha

To ensure that the interpreters become well versed in the topics and terminology of your meeting, work with your conference interpreter provider to:

- Supply interpreters in advance with the program, agenda, written speeches, Power Point presentations (with speakers' notes), video scripts, participants list, and speakers' biographies. If available, lists of acronyms and multilingual company terminology are a welcome bonus. For background information, provide web site links.
- Schedule briefings between interpreters and speakers when the subject matter is highly technical.
- Include interpreters in practice sessions at big-production sales and marketing events with videos, film-clips, and other media-rich presentations. Professional recordings, unlike spontaneous speech, must be prepared by the interpreters in advance.

! Rehearsals are crucial for simultaneous interpretation of media productions that have taken dozens of technical writers, producers, and performers many attempts and practice sessions to get right!



When interpreting a Power Point presentation, interpreters require their own copy to exert control over their own screen changes. Otherwise, the speaker will move on to the next slide before the interpreters—who necessarily lag a few seconds behind—have finished interpreting the previous slide.



Recognizing conference interpreter credentials

- **Affiliation with a professional conference interpreter association with rigorous membership requirements:** The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIC) and The American Association of Language Specialists (TAALS) grant membership strictly on the basis of linguistic ability, experience, professional competence, and integrity. AIC and TAALS conference interpreters have passed the scrutiny of their peers and the test of the market.
- **Experience working for international organizations:** Large employers of conference interpreters, such as the United Nations and the European Union, test the interpreters to ensure they meet professional standards prior to hiring them.
- **Experience working for governments at conference-level assignments:** The U.S. State Department assesses interpreter proficiency at increasing levels of skill and performance: escort, seminar, and conference. The Federal Government of Canada also assesses proficiency, but only recognizes conference level interpreters. Holding a contract with these employers is a sign of competence, provided it is at *conference* level.



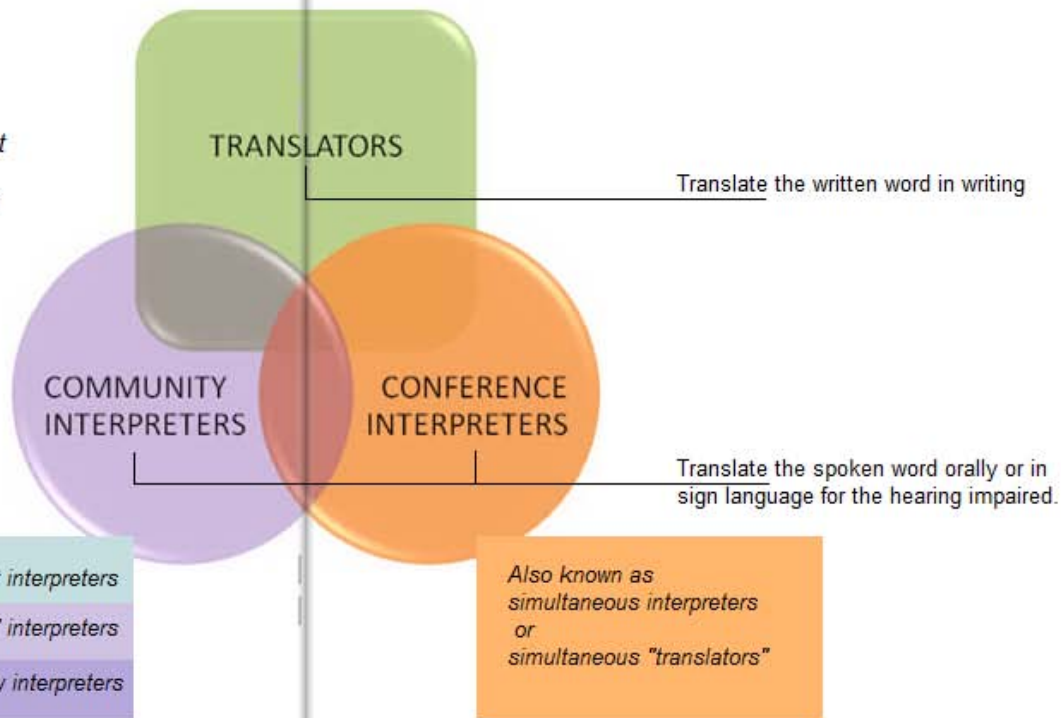
Professional conference interpreters will meet at least one of these criteria.

- **A conference interpreting diploma from an internationally recognized interpreting school:** The Professional Exam Certificate from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, and the Certificate of Proficiency in Conference Interpretation and Translation from the former interpreting training program at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., are recognized by conference interpreter employers worldwide. AIC regularly publishes a Directory of Interpretation Schools around the world that meet the highest training standards and requirements.
- **A detailed resume providing evidence of significant professional experience as a conference interpreter.** This experience should be documented with a list of assignments, employers and professional references.

The different language professions

Translation
Community Interpreting
Conference Interpreting

! *These language professions are not mutually exclusive; but their practitioners are not, without proper training, interchangeable.*



Health-care, judiciary, and conference interpreting

Each of these variants of the interpreting profession requires different interpreting techniques and language proficiency levels.

Health-care, judiciary, other community interpreters:

- are generally booked at short notice;
- are often hired by the hour;
- work in community settings providing service to limited-English proficient persons (e.g., immigrants, linguistic minorities) in their dealings with the public services;
- serve at events such as parent-teacher meetings, medical appointments, court hearings, and depositions.
- interpret predictable field-specific language and enable conversations between unequal partners, such as judge and defendant, teacher and parent, doctor and patient;

Judiciary interpreters also simultaneously interpret highly technical, varied, expert witness testimony. In this situation, they need exactly the same preparation and working conditions required by conference interpreters.

Each one has different staffing requirements, business practices, and even—depending on the specific work setting—ethics.

Conference interpreters:

- are reserved weeks or months in advance;
- generally charge by the day;
- work at international meetings to which participants travel from other countries to debate and present on specialized subjects;
- work at a variety of multilingual meetings, including field trips, press conferences, negotiations, live broadcasts, and training courses.
- interpret lectures, presentations, and speeches on a wide range of technical and scientific topics, ensuring communication at expert-to-expert level;

It is conference interpreters—as opposed to their health-care or judiciary colleagues—who provide service at medical conventions and international court proceedings.

The myth of the "certified," "specialized" conference interpreter

Certifications

Two prestigious certifications available in the U.S. are often mistakenly associated with conference interpreting:

- American Translators Association Certification: Awarded to *translators* who pass a written examination. Demonstrates competence in *written*--as opposed to *oral*--translation.
- Federal Court Interpreter Certification: Required by law to interpret in U.S. District Courts. Currently only court interpreters working in Spanish are offered this certification exam, which attests to interpreting skills in the particular context of the federal courts.

Other entities such as state courts, the FBI, the police, and some companies sometimes "certify" the interpreters they hire. The rigor of such certification tests varies greatly.

! Note that none of the above-mentioned sources tests the level of linguistic and interpreting skills required for conference interpreting. It would therefore be misguided, if not misleading, for a provider to offer to staff your conference with "certified interpreters."

Specialization

Subject matter specialization is another concept that is often incorrectly associated with conference interpreting.

All language professionals require a sound understanding of the material and the terminology they are translating or interpreting. However, due to the diversity of their clients, few conference interpreters operating as independent contractors can limit their work to one particular industry.

Conference interpreters may have earned academic degrees or gained extensive knowledge throughout their careers in one or more fields; but what they truly specialize in is interpreting from certain languages into others (see Language matters).

Conference interpreters generally possess a broad, university level education, and the versatility to master new topics rapidly and thoroughly.



Throughout their careers, interpreters accumulate terminology and subject matter knowledge on a wide range of topics. They supplement it by conducting research and studying the material to be interpreted in preparation for every conference.

Recognizing professional standards of practice...

- Simultaneous interpreters never work alone except at the rare event lasting under 45 minutes. They always work in teams of two or three per language pair, each taking turns.
- Interpreters sit in a ventilated, soundproof booth built to ISO standards, and receive high quality sound through specialized headphones directly from the speaker's microphone. Booths are positioned so that the interpreters have a clear view of the speaker, the audiovisual material, and the audience.
- A technician is present during the entire event to operate the sound equipment.
- A designated interpreter—known as the coordinating interpreter, or team leader—ensures communication between the interpreters and the conference organizers.
- Interpreters obtain conference documents in advance and dedicate time to become steeped in the terminology and subject matter.
- In preparation for the conference, booth-mates distribute the workload based on the meeting agenda and schedule—to focus more specifically on the speeches, lectures, and Power Point presentations that each will actually interpret during his or her shift.

- During the conference, the booth-mate who is not on the air plays a vital supporting role—looking up documents and terminology, or jotting down hard-to-retain names and figures for the “active” interpreter. This support is provided in an unobtrusive manner, to avoid distracting the active interpreter or the audience.

...and ethics

- Professional conference interpreters operate under strict rules of ethics and confidentiality. A non-disclosure clause is a standard provision in contracts between professional conference interpreters and their clients.



These standard operating procedures, coupled with the use of standardized equipment, are what enable a group of independent contractors—who may not even know one another—to “hit the road running” at your conference the moment they come together as a team.

Team strength: how many interpreters?

Rendering a speaker's ideas into another language is a challenging endeavor. In simultaneous mode, interpreting is like sprinting: the effort can be sustained only for so long. To maintain constant interpreting quality, therefore, it is standard practice for simultaneous interpreters to work in pairs, taking turns in shifts of 20 to 30 minutes, or by speaker.

When determining the number of interpreters in a team, the general rule is two interpreters per target language—three in the case of long workdays, heavy workloads, or highly technical meetings, or when the interpreters will be providing *relay* (see [Use of relay](#)), as is often the case at conferences with Asian languages.

Another determining factor is the frequency with which the various languages are going to be used from the floor. For example: a full-day two-language conference requiring simultaneous interpretation from and into the two languages in equal measure requires a minimum of three interpreters, and preferably four.

A different situation is the two-language seminar where one language is dominant—a common training course scenario in the United States. Here the primary requirement is one-way interpretation from the instructor's language (normally English) into that of the participants, who take the floor only briefly and sporadically.

In the case of the two-language seminar where one language is dominant, the team may consist of only two interpreters. Three, however, is still recommended when the topic is complex or the working day is expected to exceed eight hours.



Team strength for simultaneous interpretation

One-way interpretation:	2 interpreters
Two-way (i.e., bilingual) booth:	3 interpreters
From 2 languages into 2:	3 interpreters
From 3 languages into 3:	5 (or 6) interpreters
For 4 or more languages:	2 interpreters per booth


In practice, 3 interpreters are required in booths with a particularly heavy work load at scientific and technical meetings, or in booths providing relay (see [Use of relay](#)), or for meetings of 4 or more languages. [Full team-strength table](#).

Recognizing quality simultaneous interpretation equipment

Interpreters need to see, hear, and concentrate to do their job. These are not just ideal conditions, but *essential requirements*.

Interpreters need a level of volume higher than ordinary listeners, since they are speaking at the same time as they are listening.



 *Treble, bass, and volume control* are key features of good simultaneous interpretation equipment.

Interpreters work in ventilated, soundproof structures known as booths, placed in direct view of the speakers.

Fixed or permanent booths are dedicated cubicles normally found in convention centers, corporate conference rooms, and training facilities where interpretation is used frequently.

Portable or mobile booths are rented and set up for the duration of a single meeting.



Professionally designed booths conform to the following internationally agreed standards, which guarantee sufficient soundproofing, space, ventilation, and lighting:

- Permanent booths: [ISO Standard 2603](#)
- Mobile booths: [ISO Standard 4043](#)



Whether permanent or mobile, booths are positioned to give the interpreters a clear view of the speakers, their presentations, and the audience.

Each booth houses two or more interpreters. As a general rule, one booth is needed per target language, but for a two-language meeting one booth may suffice.





Each booth contains:

- at least one console with individual controls for each interpreter,
- at least one microphone that can be turned on and off by the interpreters,
- a headset for each interpreter to receive the speaker's voice directly, and
- one small reading lamp per interpreter.

Providing an Internet connection in the booth is increasingly becoming a necessity.

The sound system

The sound system conforms to International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) Standard 60914 on electrical and audio requirements for conference systems.

The interpreter's headset receives high-grade sound directly from the speaker's microphone. The sound is clear, without interference, and within a range of 125 to 12,500 Hz.

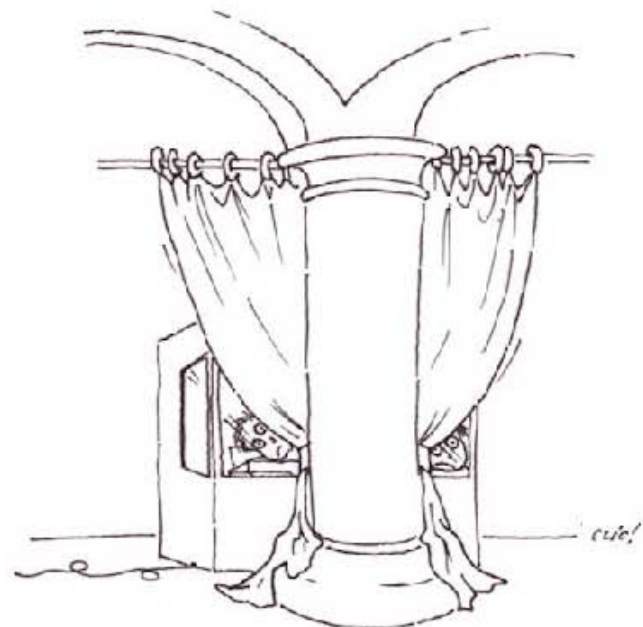
! By comparison, an ordinary telephone line has a range of 0 to 3,400 Hz, which means it is not suitable for conference interpreting.

- The equipment supplier's trained technician stays throughout the conference to operate the sound system.
- There are sufficient microphones and receivers for all speakers and listeners.

- All meeting room microphones have an on/off switch and are monitored by the technician.
- A lapel or lavalier microphone enables speakers to move away from the podium.



Extra tips on simultaneous interpretation equipment



Meeting rooms need to be large enough to accommodate the required number of booths.

Booths for two interpreters built to International Organization for Standardization (ISO) specifications measure 6'-3" wide, 6'-3" deep, and 6'-6" high. Booths for three interpreters measure 9'-3" wide, 6'-3" deep, and 6'-6" high.

All booths require two feet (preferably three feet) of unobstructed space in the back or on either side for door swing and people moving in and out.

It is best for the simultaneous interpretation equipment supplier to provide the entire system, including microphones, amplifiers and headsets, in order to avoid technical hitches.

Hotel and other suppliers' microphones and public address systems may not be appropriate for interpretation and may even be incompatible with the simultaneous interpretation equipment.



Even in a small conference room, speakers need to speak directly into a microphone so that the interpreters can receive their voice.

Two types of speaker microphones are best avoided:

- voice-activated microphones, and
- microphones without an on/off switch that are left permanently on.

In both cases, the open microphones will transmit background noise and side conversations that will prevent the interpreters from adequately concentrating on the speaker.

To ensure adequate sound quality, only one speaker's microphone should be on at a time.



Unintentionally overhearing the interpreters' voices for lack of soundproofing can be as disturbing to participants as listening to someone in the seat behind chatting into a cell phone at a theater.



Desktop booths, which are not soundproof, will not provide a barrier between the sound of the interpreters' voices and the audience. Therefore, enclosed soundproof booths should always be given preference over desktop booths.

! If, in exceptional circumstances, desktop booths cannot be avoided and more than one is required, these must be placed sufficiently far apart from each other to prevent different language interpreters from hearing one another.

Interpreting on the move

Field trips or facility visits can benefit from simultaneous interpretation thanks to portable simultaneous interpretation equipment.

In this itinerant setting, the tour guide speaks into a lavalier microphone; the interpreter, standing among the participants, receives

the guide's voice through a headset, and speaks into another microphone.

The participants can tune into the interpreter and listen to the interpretation through their own headsets.

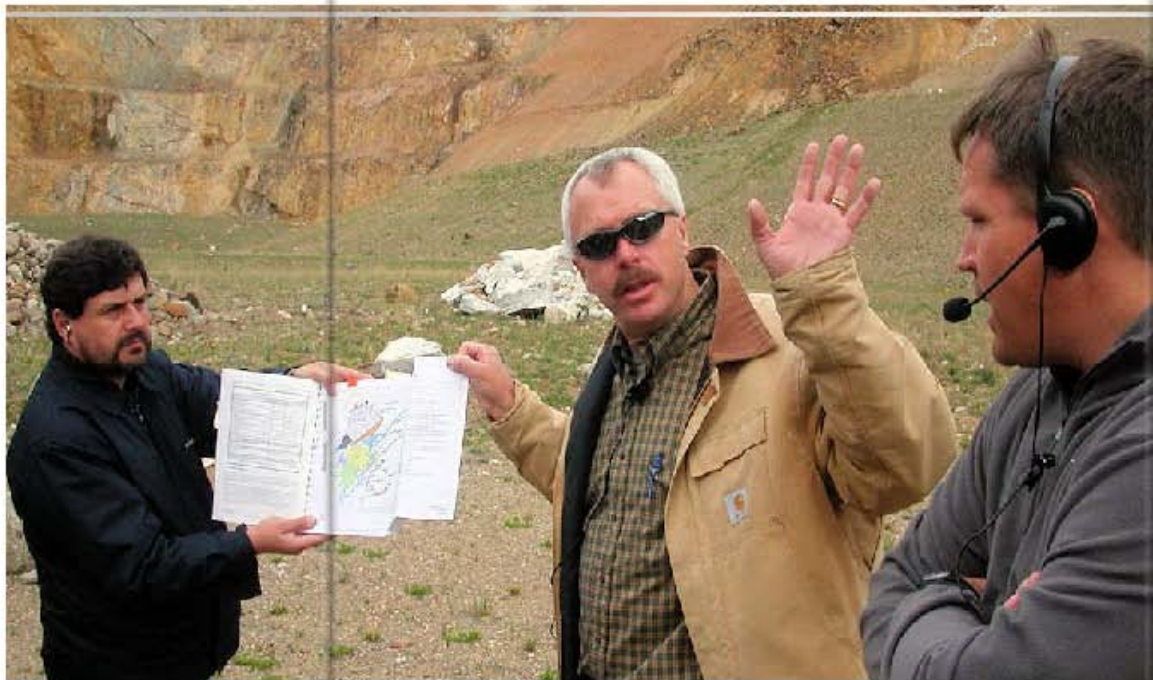




At field trips and facility tours it is imperative that the guide use a microphone to feed the sound directly into the interpreter's headset. Failing that, ambient noise, changes in the guide's position, and the interpreter's own voice will prevent the interpreter from hearing the guide adequately enough for interpreting.

! This "extreme" form of simultaneous interpreting, devoid of the tranquil environment of the booth, should not to be engaged in lightly because of the inherent difficulty in producing the requisite high quality of interpretation.

It is therefore suitable only when unavoidable, i.e., during itinerant visits and associated short meetings (e.g., 2 hours).



Remote interpreting

One of the fundamental requirements for conference interpreters to perform effectively is a direct view of the room. At multilingual videoconferences, however, some or all participants and/or interpreters are not in the same room.

Although the interpreters can follow the debate on a screen, they are deprived of the general non-verbal context that enables them to do quality work, however good the picture and sound. Optimum working conditions must therefore prevail in every other way.



The interpreters must have:

- a high-definition picture, synchronized with the sound, of a quality that makes it possible to clearly distinguish the facial expressions and gestures of the speakers and participants;
- access at all times to the same information as the participants, and especially the speeches, presentations and any other conference material; and

- high quality sound, requiring faithful transmission of the 125 - 12500 Hz waveband. This rules out any videoconferencing based on standards that do not provide that range.

- ! The presence of an experienced coordinating interpreter is essential. He or she must participate fully in the preparation of the event, in close cooperation with the video and sound technicians, as well as the conference officers.



Making sense of the **cost**

Your conference interpreting budget will have three components:

- interpreters' fees and expenses (details on the next page);
- simultaneous interpretation equipment rental, and technicians' fees and expenses;
- conference interpreter provider's recruitment and consultancy fees.



Fees and expenses:

Professional fees:

Conference interpreters' fees are on par with those of other professional and consulting services. The exact level is subject to negotiation and typically depends on such factors as rarity of languages and difficulty of subject matter. Fees are generally calculated on a daily basis and normally cover an eight-hour day with a reasonable lunch break.

Travel time: Unless your meeting is being held in a city with a busy multilingual conference market, there is little chance you will find your interpreters locally. It is therefore often necessary to fly interpreters in from other locations. In these cases, travel time charges apply. The interpreter's professional address (city in which the interpreter is based) is taken as the point of departure to calculate travel times.

Travel costs: Travel costs include airfare and related expenses such as ground transportation to and from airports, country entry visas, immunizations, airline surcharges, airport taxes, etc.

Subsistence allowance:

Also known as "per diem," it is intended to cover the expenses incurred by an interpreter working away from his or her home city. It may consist of a flat-fee paid per day or night away home, or involve an arrangement whereby the client pays all or part of the interpreter's accommodation, meals, and incidental expenses.

Cancellation fees: Should a contract be cancelled or shortened, the interpreters require full payment of the dates reserved for the client, for which they may have refused other offers of

employment. Should the interpreters secure another contract, the fees and other dues for the first contract may be reduced accordingly.

Other charges may apply:

Recording fees:

Interpreter services are normally provided solely for direct and immediate use by the listeners. Any re-use of the interpretation, including availability via the Internet, is subject to written agreement and copyright fees.

Adaptation days:

Because conference interpretation is such an intense intellectual activity, interpreters may need one or more rest/adaptation days after a long trip, particularly when crossing several time zones. Adaptation days are also remunerated.

Non-working days:

Days during a contract period when there are no meetings that require interpretation (i.e., the interpreters are off duty) are also charged at a negotiated rate when the interpreters are prevented from accepting another assignment. Also called "retainer days."



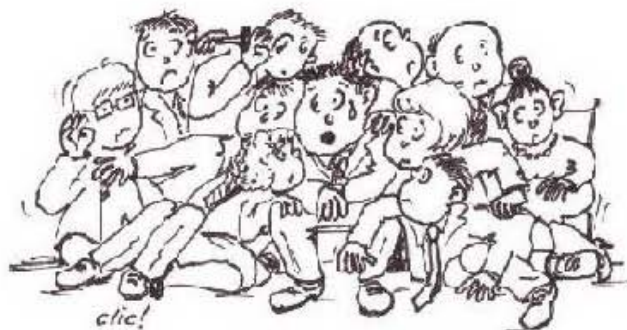
How to lower the cost

- Reserve interpreters and equipment as far in advance as possible, to secure the services of local professionals.
- Determine which parts of your program are critical and must have interpretation.
- Schedule sessions requiring interpretation in the same rooms, on the same day or contiguous days, to make maximum use of the interpreters and simultaneous interpretation equipment.
- Schedule working days with interpretation not to exceed eight hours per day, to avoid incurring team reinforcement expenses or overtime charges on the part of interpreters or simultaneous interpretation equipment technicians.
- Use in-house personnel or volunteers to distribute and collect receivers and headsets, which can be time consuming and more expensive if done by the simultaneous interpretation equipment technicians, particularly when overtime charges apply.
- Ask your provider for tips on distribution and collection procedures that minimize the likelihood of lost units and ensuing replacement costs.

- Book meeting rooms on a 24-hour basis so that equipment can remain in place for the duration of the meeting. This avoids dismantling and set-up costs, particularly when overtime charges apply.

- Request itemized quotations to ensure transparency of costs and to avoid hidden commissions and disproportionate consultancy charges.

- ! Consider whispered, instead of simultaneous interpretation, to save on equipment, only if there are no more than a couple of listeners who do not speak the language of the meeting!



On a shoestring budget

If on a very tight budget, you could consider consecutive or whispered interpretation for your meeting. Unless the event is very short, you will still need a minimum of two interpreters per language, but you will save the cost of hiring simultaneous interpretation equipment.

Whispered Interpretation

Seated at the conference table, the interpreter whispers an ongoing translation of the proceedings to two or three participants at the most who do not speak the language of the meeting. When they in turn speak, the interpreter gives an interpretation of their statement aloud in consecutive mode to the rest of the group.

Whispering is not recommended when there are more than two listeners or when several interpreters need to work at the same time in the same room, since this creates too much noise and is unpleasant both for the participants and the interpreters.

Consecutive interpretation

Positioned within good hearing distance from the speaker, the interpreter listens to a speech, takes notes and, when the speaker stops, renders the meaning of the speaker's message in another language.

A word about consecutive

In consecutive at *conference* level, interpreting begins only after the speaker completes an entire thought, or even a full statement. It is a totally different technique from the phrase-by-phrase rendering sufficient for most community interpreting situations.

Interpreters manage to accurately recall several minutes of speech to repeat it in another language because they have developed strong analytical skills, a specialized note-taking system, and a trained memory. Not all simultaneous interpreters are trained in consecutive, and some charge a higher daily fee for consecutive than for simultaneous interpretation.

! Consecutive is suitable for meetings with only two or, at the most, three languages. It has the disadvantage that it doubles (and in the case of three languages, triples) the duration of the meeting.



Language matters

Active and passive languages

For a milestone round of free-trade agreement negotiations between the U.S. and various Latin American countries, a novice conference interpreter provider was careful to hire trilingual conference interpreters to staff several parallel sessions in Spanish, English, and (Brazilian) Portuguese.

When the time came to assign the interpreters to the different sessions, the conference interpreter provider was surprised to discover that, although all the interpreters were impeccably fluent in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, few of them would be able to cover every language combination indistinctively. For example, one Spanish language interpreter could easily interpret from English and Portuguese into her mother-tongue Spanish, and from Spanish into English, but not from English or Spanish *into* Portuguese (her "passive" language).

The point is that professional conference interpreters *who work with three or more languages* ensure quality by interpreting only in certain directions, to and from their various languages.

To clearly and precisely state their linguistic qualifications (i.e., their "active" and "passive" languages), conference interpreters use an internationally recognized language classification, whereby they refer to their languages as:

- **A:** their mother tongue, into which they interpret from their B and C languages,
- **B:** a language into which they interpret from their A but not necessarily from their C language; and
- **C:** a language *from* which they interpret into their A language, but *into* which they do not interpret.

To staff meetings appropriately, conference interpreter providers must be familiar with this internationally recognized convention.

! Delivering a speaker's ideas in another language requires *educated* native or near-native command of the target language; during the simultaneous interpreting process there is no time to "fish" for ordinary words and idiomatic expressions: these must come to the interpreter's mind automatically.

The interpreter needs to concentrate on understanding the message, and finding the appropriate specialized terms to deliver it to an expert audience in the target language.



Hence professional conference interpreters work only into their native or quasi-native language(s).

Use of relay

Taking a rendition of a speech provided by another interpreter to put it into another language is called "taking relay." This technique is used at conferences to cover *rare* language combinations, such as Chinese into Spanish.

Consider the following four-language into four-language scenario: the music recording industry convenes a meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, to discuss piracy; presentations will be delivered and interpreted into English, French, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

Now, plenty of free-lance conference interpreters in the U.S. have English, Spanish and French as working languages, but not Mandarin. And there are few Chinese free-lance conference interpreters in the world who work from Mandarin into French or Spanish: most interpret from Mandarin into English and vice versa, and perhaps also from other languages *into* Mandarin.

Going back to our example, when the Chinese delegates take the floor in Mandarin, how will they be interpreted into French and Spanish by French and Spanish speaking interpreters who do not understand Mandarin?

Answer: The interpreters in the Chinese booth will interpret from Mandarin into English. The Spanish and French interpreters will listen to the English interpretation and render it into French and Spanish.

In conference interpreting parlance, the Spanish and French "booths" will "take relay" from their Chinese colleagues. And the Chinese interpreters will be acting as "pivots"—the French term designating the interpreter whose interpretation is "taken on relay" and interpreted into other languages.

! Remember playing "telephone" or "Chinese whispers"? *Direct interpretation is by far the most accurate.* Teams of interpreters must be put together to ensure adequate coverage of all *ordinary* language combinations, to avoid using relay systematically.

! In our previous example, it would be unwise to staff the English, French, and Spanish booths with *bilinguals* who would continuously depend on relay. To provide quality interpreting, the English, Spanish, and French booths would need to be staffed with *trilinguals* covering all three languages.

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