

Interpretation – How to Provide Interpreters with the Proper Environment for Success

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For Speakers

1. Written Text/Notes

If you have any written notes for your speech such as an agenda, abstract, PowerPoint presentation, etc., please make sure that the interpreters have a copy-- ideally one to two weeks before your presentation. These notes are important tools in helping the interpreter familiarize themselves with your subject and terminology. Remember, these notes are just *tools*: once your presentation begins the interpreter will interpret what you say, not what's written in your notes.

2. Terminology

If your presentation contains technical terminology, it would be helpful to the interpreter to at least provide a glossary beforehand. You may even consider asking the conference organizer to arrange a briefing with the interpreters to go over your subject matter/terminology. However, when at all possible, try to avoid using copious amounts of initials and abbreviations which can confuse international audience members.

3. Visual Aids

Interpreters are often situated far away from whatever visual aids you plan on presenting (DVDs, slides, films, videos, transparencies, etc.) and cannot easily see the screen. Plan on providing the interpreters with copies of your visual aids and scripts whenever possible.

4. Do's and Don'ts During Your Presentation

- “Do”
 - Speak as clearly as possible.
 - Pace your presentation. Try to keep a pace of around 3 minutes for every 40 lines of text and be sure to include frequent pauses.
 - Repeat questions from un-mic'd audience members so everyone else can hear the question.
 - Go over your presentation beforehand to make sure that your material is “culturally sensitive”.
- “Don't”
 - Engage in conversations with the people in the first few rows – remember, those people don't have microphones.
 - Go off on tangents.
 - Use puns and if you must make jokes, keep them to a minimum. Often puns and jokes can be difficult to interpret accurately.

5. The Microphone

- Make sure your microphone is switched on but *don't* test the microphone by blowing into it or by tapping it; those time honored traditions will be amplified and picked up by the interpreter's headset. Instead, just say a few introductory words like, "Good afternoon" to your audience.
- If you are using a cabled microphone, try not to hit/tap/kick the cable as it can cause an even worse noise than tapping or blowing on the microphone.
- Try not to speak too closely to the microphone. Also remember that you will be wearing a receiver so that you can hear interpretation of other languages; make sure that your receiver is far enough from the microphone as to avoid causing feed-back whistling.
- If you need to move away from the stationary microphone, make sure that you use a neck, lapel, or wireless microphone. Otherwise the interpreters won't be able to hear you.
- And the obvious: make sure that you've said everything you wanted to say prior to everyone turning in their receivers. Without the equipment, the interpreter will not be able to interpret on your behalf.

For conference organizers

1. Reference Material

Any information related to the conference and speakers would be helpful to the interpreter. Examples include:

- Speaker list – a list of speakers who will be presenting at the conference
- Speaker bios – background information on each speaker
- Attendee list – a list of people attending the conference and what countries/areas they are from
- Latest agenda
- Conference papers or glossaries

2. The Venue

- Technical equipment – if requesting simultaneous interpretation, make sure that the number of booths, channels, and receivers are appropriate for the presentation.
- If films, slides, or transparencies are to be shown, make sure that the interpreters can see the screen clearly. Also, don't let audience members block the interpreter's view!
- The sound quality of videos should be clear and crisp in order for the interpreters to accurately render their interpretation.
- Be sure to provide a script or copy of any slides to the interpreters beforehand.

Excerpts taken from: "Welcome to the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) Meeting" and from articles on the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) website.