

## 5 Tips for working with an Interpretation Services Provider



Foreign language interpretation is the process of converting a spoken message from one language to another. Interpretation is a highly complex cognitive activity that requires listening and analyzing in order to fully comprehend the message, and then converting, editing and reproducing that message in the target language, while taking the cultural and social context into account. A qualified interpreter is trained to perform this complex procedure quickly, accurately, and objectively – simply being bilingual is not enough!

There are two basic modes of interpretation: simultaneous and consecutive. In simultaneous interpretation, the conversion happens in real time – the interpreter is speaking at the same time as the speaker, with just a second or two of lag time. Consecutive interpretation is performed in chunks, and therefore takes longer than simultaneous, because the interpreter does not interpret while the speaker is speaking, and vice versa. It's important to recognize that not all interpreters work in both modes. Also, although in some cases either mode is possible, the ideal mode for any given event is generally determined according to the number of languages involved, the setting, and time considerations. Some events require the use of both modes.

The following factors should be considered when requesting interpretation services:

## 1. Setting

When contacting your interpretation services provider, be prepared to specify:

- the domain (health-care, law, public sector agencies, etc.)
- the type of event (press conference, informational interview, live broadcast, etc.)
- the purpose and duration of the event
- the time when interpretation is needed
- the number of people requiring interpretation (large audience, small group, individual)
- any special needs

## 2. Language and Staffing

In order to identify the correct staffing your event will require, your interpretation services provider will need to know:

- all the source and target language combinations that will be required
  - It is important to verify exactly which language(s) the speakers and the listeners will use, including their countries of origin and special dialects, if relevant. Dialects and accents can make comprehension difficult, and cultural factors may also affect communication
- the number of speakers and listeners
- the subject matter of the event
- any linguistic, emotional or other stress factors of which the interpreter should be aware
- whether there is a gender requirement

The provider can then help you to determine the number of interpreters needed and their qualifications, the required mode of interpretation (consecutive or simultaneous) and any technical (equipment) needs.



### 3. Venue

Your interpretation services provider will be able to assist you in evaluating the venue requirements for your event, including:

- appropriate seating for all participants
- adequate lighting to ensure visibility
- adequate space for booths for simultaneous interpretation, if needed
- interpreter-specific needs
  - an unobstructed view of the room
  - adequate working space, including a suitable chair
  - water and a glass
- other considerations



### 4. Technology

Work with your interpretation services provider to make sure that all equipment needs are addressed well before the event. These include:

- use and installation of booths for interpreters
- use of wireless equipment for the audience
- on-site technicians
- pre-event testing of equipment to verify that:
  - there is no sound interference
  - the interpreters do not hear their own voices in their earphones
  - volume and fidelity of the sound is adequate



## 5. Document Preparation

It is very helpful to provide the interpreters with preparatory documents and materials, such as:

- manuscripts
- PowerPoint presentations
- company and product information
- case files

Make arrangements to provide the interpreters with any last-minute documents that will be used. Finally, find out if any translation is necessary for handouts or other supporting materials and contract appropriate translation services.



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For detailed information see the *Standard Guide for Language Interpretation Services*, publication F 2089 – 01, available through ASTM International ([www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org)).

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