

# Practical guide for speakers with simultaneous interpretation

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## Are you a speaker at a conference and have just heard that simultaneous interpretation is being offered?

The success of simultaneous interpretation depends on the interpreter but also to a great extent on the speaker, given that **the speech will be the starting material for the interpreter's work**. Interpreters are the voice of the speaker in another language; in addition, they are an excellent barometer of how comprehensible a presentation is since they are the first to receive the message. Interpreters cannot supply what a speaker does not say; nor can they build a speech that is perfectly weaved and structured in the target language unless the speech is so weaved in the source language. Therefore, in this guide we advocate close cooperation between speakers and interpreters in order to guarantee seamless transmission

of the message and to promote the use of interpreting in conferences and talks. Furthermore, we aim to **encourage professionals from all fields to trust and employ qualified interpreters** so as to spread academic, scientific, humanistic and technical work accurately in other languages and countries.

*"With this guide we make the case for collaboration between speakers and interpreters"*

## 1. Let's start at the beginning: Do I need to do anything before the day of my presentation?

- **Provide the content of your presentation in advance.** It is not a good idea to go into battle unarmed. Even if the interpreters who have been contracted are the most knowledgeable on the subject matter of the conference and prepare themselves properly before the actual conference, they still cannot know absolutely everything that is going to be said, particularly in scientific and technical conferences.
- **Every bit of information is useful,** even if you may think it obvious, and it is better to send a draft paper of the talk or the Power Point presentation in advance rather than nothing at all.

"Confidentiality is always guaranteed"



- **Do not be concerned about confidentiality.** Confidential or delicate information is a factor in many conferences and we understand your concern. As a matter of fact, professional interpreters have an ethical code of conduct which prevents them from divulging confidential information to which they have access through their work. However, should you still have doubts or require guarantees, you

can ask the conference organisers to arrange for the interpreters to sign a confidentiality agreement or consult them about other options in order to guarantee the non-disclosure of information thus enabling you to feel at ease sharing it with them.



"You can speak with the interpreters directly to give them your instructions!"

- If your presentation includes a video that needs to be interpreted, make sure the interpreters receive it beforehand in order to be able to transcribe or prepare it and also ensure that the technical equipment necessary for the sound in the video to reach the interpreting booth/room is in place.

- If you wish to, do go to the interpreting room to say hi! It is always constructive to speak directly with the interpreters so as to be able to give them instructions or any last minute clarifications. **In any case their commitment to your speech is guaranteed.**

## 2. Ok, it's my turn to speak. I approach the microphone. How should I address the public?

Generally speaking, in order for the message of your presentation to be understood perfectly in another language, the same rules apply for oral communication to guarantee the understanding of the message as those that apply when there is no interpretation:

- Rule number 1: **don't read it!** There often is a tendency to prepare speeches in writing and when the time comes to present it we don't look up from the page. This means that we speak faster than usual which in turn means the interpreters will have difficulty to follow the rhythm of our speech. In addition, keep in mind that **the audience needs time to assimilate the information** we would like them to remember.
- **Be concise,** because the information the human brain can retain during a speech is limited. Should you wish to give additional or extensive information (lists of figures, data, dates, etc.) it is better to supply it in writing either during or after the conference.

- **Respect your designated time** so as not to oblige the speakers that follow you to have to speak faster. Remember what was mentioned above about speaking fast. Think about your colleagues and stick to your allocated time (do consider this point when you prepare your presentation!).
- **Explain both the abbreviations** and the proper names that appear in your speech and which are not common knowledge. They may often be used in your own field but ask yourself if a non-specialised audience would fully understand them. Even amongst a specialised audience; the frequent use of abbreviations is often a topic of discussions in meetings. Naturally it is advisable to clarify their meaning too in the documentation provided in advance to the interpreter.

"Speak in your mother tongue whenever the conference allows it"



- Speak in a language you are fluent in (but be truly honest with yourself). **Take the opportunity to speak in your mother tongue** if the conference allows it and interpreters will be infinitely grateful to you. Speakers are less nervous and communicate better in their mother tongue and therefore it will be easier for both interpreters and the audience to understand the message.

- **Breathe!** Breathing is very important for prosody in order to weave the discourse together well and also to communicate naturally.

- Finally, remember that even if the audience in the conference room can hear you without a microphone, interpreters will not be able to do so since they are in an insulated booth. Therefore, if you tend to move about and thus be away from the microphone, it would be advisable to ask the organiser to provide a lapel microphone. Equally, bear in mind that everything that is said on the open microphone will be interpreted: consider turning the microphone on or off as appropriate as you prepare to speak.

"Breathing is very important for prosody"



## 3. Interpreters are there to help you. Cooperate with them.

We have already addressed both preparation and the basis for a good communication. Let's talk now about the specifics of a speech that is interpreted into another language. It is worth bearing in mind a few more tips in order for the message to get to the interpreters correctly and so that they can in turn transmit it faithfully. Professional interpreters are qualified in a wide variety of topics and they usually specialise in several subjects. Moreover, they are trained to adapt to any unforeseen circumstance which may arise when working with a

speech that they are hearing for the first time. They have many resources. **However, they are not machines, luckily! and they work better when they set off under certain terms:**

"Professional interpreters are qualified to work with a wide variety of topics"



- Simultaneous interpretation is not truly simultaneous given that it has a **slight lapse of approximately two seconds** between the intervention of the speaker and that of the interpreter. Therefore, if you are projecting and reading data or figures on a screen keep in mind that the interpreter will repeat them two seconds later

than you. This is particularly relevant if you are reading data or figures and you move on to the next page in a PowerPoint before finishing your sentence as the interpreter will not be able to see the data on the screen and will probably not be able to finish giving the information.

- **Vocalise** proper names clearly if the interpreter does not have them to hand. People, companies, towns, countries, titles... The same applies to figures, dates and numbers in general.



"Try not to merely read your speech"

- We can't emphasize this enough: **try not to read your speech.** The structure of a written text differs greatly from that of an oral text...and those structures normally change substantially from one language to another. Interpreting frequently requires changes to the order of the parts of a sentence in order to adapt them to an order that is logical in the target language so that the foreign listener can understand it immediately. But if the original product is a written text...the interpreter's job gets enormously complicated.

"Understand the complexity of humour"



- Everybody likes laughing and joking. We really like to use set phrases or sayings too. Interpreters enjoy challenges but there are times when **cultural differences and live circumstances** may interfere and not allow the whole audience to understand the sense of humour. It is obviously not a question of ruling out jokes or popular sayings, but it is necessary to understand the complexity they add to communication. Evidently interpreters are resourceful and will endeavour to reflect your sense of humour.

- The previous paragraph applies also to text and book references. The interpreter will not have the necessary means to translate immediately as if in a written text.

- From time to time, **take a look and consider what's going on in the conference room.** There might be a technical problem and you can't be heard.

## ANNEX TELECONFERENCE MEETINGS What if my meeting takes place virtually?

There are situations when it is impossible to organise a face to face event or meeting in spite of which the organisers decide to go ahead with the event either because there is a real need to meet or simply because they don't wish to cancel it. Nowadays there are many platforms that allow us both to speak and to listen from our homes, some of which include an option for simultaneous interpretation called Remote Simultaneous Interpretation or RSI. Below we offer some **basic advice** in order to aim at achieving optimum sound quality for all participants as well as to make the most of this type of meeting. Professional interpreters make sure they have the best internet connection and the most

advanced and professional sound equipment possible in order to guarantee the best possible sound reception for their part. However, sound quality also depends on what the speakers project or emit. **That is why if you are able to we strongly recommend that you:**

- Have a good internet **cable connection** (not wifi).
- Use **headphones with inbuilt microphone.** Keep in mind both that there are languages that are very sensitive to the processing of the sound on videoconference platforms and that any distortion may hinder the understanding of the message not only for the interpreters but also for the other listeners.

- Do a **sound test** before the meeting to make sure everything works well.
- If, in addition to being a speaker you are also an organiser of the meeting or conference, appoint a moderator to coordinate speaking times. The **moderator** will preferably be drawn from the event organisers or the interpretation administrative team. Thus, whenever a technical or connectivity issue appears there will always be someone directly in contact with the technicians, who will address the issue with maximum celerity.
- In order to avoid interference, it is best to keep the **microphone off** and only turn it on when you are actually about to speak. When it is your turn to speak, wait for the moderator to hand over to you and then apply all the advice we have offered in the guide for face to face interpretation events.

- If there are two speakers participating from the same room, wear your headphones **and turn off the loudspeakers** so there is no echo.

- For the duration of your speech or intervention, try to be in a **quiet environment** where there is no disruption. Any sound that might go unheard in face to face events is by contrast amplified in virtual platforms and can eclipse the voice (e.g. mobile ringing, coughing, paper noises or typing). An untimely noise can cause the rest of the listeners and of course the interpreters to miss an important section of the message. It is also worth highlighting that certain noises can cause an **acoustic shock** to any listener who is not using headphones with acoustic protection, so it becomes even more advisable to reduce unnecessary noises as much as possible.



We hope that with this simple guidance you enjoy your experience as a videoconference speaker.

**Now you are fully prepared to take the floor in any language!**



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