

TIPS FOR INTERPRETERS¶

Only few of us have done interpretation before. So, if this is your first time as an interpreter, don't panic, making mistakes is only human and in our context the listeners are above all happy about your help and less focused on perfection.

To help you with this experience, we'll give you some tips for simultaneous interpretation. Something essential for interpreters is free reformulation. You don't have to stick to the single words or sentences and translate them one by one; you may rephrase freely. The most important part is to be aware of the intention of the speaker and the meaning of what is said and to keep this in your interpretation.

Preparation¶

Inform yourself about the subject of the things you're going to translate and prepare special vocabulary if needed.

Make sure you can see the face of the speaking person from your seat.

Have something to drink and maybe a snack (i.e. a cereal bar or a banana) nearby during interpretation. Simultaneous interpretation burns a lot of calories in your brain!

Have a working pen and paper prepared to take notes.

Make sure to go to the toilet before starting interpretation.

Take some time before the start to calm down and breathe deeply.

Manner of Speaking¶

Talk as quietly, slowly and deeply as possible. This doesn't only make listening easier and more agreeable, but also helps yourself to stay calm and relaxed. If the talking person speaks really quickly or uses very long sentences, you can also shorten sentences or split them into smaller ones. It's important that you give the correct meaning and information of what is being said. Keeping to the style as well can be a goal only if you're more experienced. If you're not sure when to start speaking: It's always good to listen until you can formulate a grammatical sentence. Then you will be less likely to stop in the middle of your sentence and restart. Of course the sentence you have in your head can still be changed over the course of the speech.

Equipment¶

Make sure to have all the equipment you need explained to you before your assignment. If there's something you don't understand, it might be better to ask twice until you feel comfortable with the equipment. Then you can feel more assured and concentrate fully on interpreting. Always put the volume of your headphones as low as possible. If you can still hear your own voice it's easier to talk quietly and to control your formulation. If the sound quality in your headphones is bad (crackling noise, one-sided, ...), don't hesitate to tell us. It can seem manageable at first to interpret with poor sound quality or by listening directly to the speaker, but it will make you tired very fast or even give you a headache.

What if...¶

... I have trouble understanding the speaker?

Try talking to them during a break or after the assignment. The topic barely matters, but it's going to help you to get used to their way of speaking and pronunciation.

... I made a slip of tongue?

Don't panic, stay calm and keep going.

...I don't understand a word/phrase/expression?

You can delay your translation for a few seconds to see if you remember the meaning or if the context helps you. Be careful though, because this means that you have to keep more information in your short term memory. If there is another interpreter next to you who isn't working at the moment, you can also ask them for help. Or, if you still somehow understand or guess the meaning, you can also use this knowledge as a base for your translation. Here you can replace it with a superordinate term or a more general speech segment. I.e.: "the speaker" instead of a name; "mammals" instead of a list of species. Or you can explain or paraphrase it, with your own words. This takes longer but it works as well. And be aware, that, if it was something important you missed, you can express this by saying "a number/name/... that the interpreter didn't catch" or by interrupting the speaking person, if that's an option.

For further reading check: interpreters.free.fr/simultaneous/copin...

... I can't keep up with the speaker?

Don't hesitate to let the speaker know that they are speaking more quickly than you can interpret and ask them to continue slower.

...The speaker stops in the middle of the sentence?

If it's possible, finish your sentence anyway and go on normally after.

...I need to communicate with the speaker

Don't hesitate to use hand signs if these have been set up by the moderation team. The "L" for language problem, the "slow down" sign or the "louder" sign

...The speaker has turned their back to me and can't see my signs?

Tell the people listening to your channel to make signs for you. Make sure that you let them know, that you as the interpreter are asking them to do something now. Or try catching the attention of someone facing the speaker to relay your message. Or try getting the moderation team's attention.

...I have a technical problem with the equipment (no/bad sound in the headphones, microphone falling down, snakes in the transmitter,...)?

Get the attention of someone of the Bla team. Or ask an interpreter sitting next to you who is not working at the moment.