



# Basic Interpreting Skills

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# Outline

- What is interpreting?
- Types of interpreting
- Skills needed
  - Consecutive interpreting <note taking>
  - Simultaneous interpreting
- How to improve your interpreting skills?
- How to prepare for an interpreting job?

# What is interpreting?

## Interpreting as translation

Translation is “an activity consisting (mainly) in the production of utterances (texts) which are presumed to have a similar meaning and/or effect as previously existing utterances in another language and culture.”

(Pöchhacker, 2004 p.12)

# What is interpreting?



“Interpreting is a form of Translation which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language.” (Ibid, p.11)

**<immediacy>**

# Types of interpreting

## 1. Setting

- Community interpreting (e.g., health-care, social services)
- Court interpreting
- Conference interpreting
- Media interpreting, etc.

# Types of interpreting

## 2. Working mode

- Consecutive interpreting (CI)
- Simultaneous interpreting (SI)
  - SI from the booth with transmission equipment
  - Whispering SI
- Sight translation

# Skills needed

## 1. Consecutive Interpreting

- Language/Translation
  - accuracy, choice of vocabulary, structure, background knowledge
- Note taking
- Delivery <public speaking>
  - clarity of voice, eye-contact, self-control, flow
  - style/register, affect
  - nonverbal features (intonation, hedges, pauses, etc.) <pragmatic impact>



# Note-taking<sup>1</sup>

- How to Note
  - Vertically vs. Horizontally
  - Abbreviate
    - Words (leave out vowels)
      - Govt, cnstrctn, cmprsn
    - Word endings
      - Govt<sup>l</sup>, cnstrc<sup>n</sup>, atrny<sup>s</sup>,
    - Use Acronyms
      - CA, UN, DC, OCCC
    - Numbers



# Note-taking

- How to Note (cont)

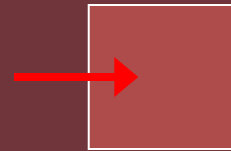
- Symbols

- Mathematics

- “in addition to” +
- “more or less” +/-
- “over 10,000”  $>10$  (a line represents 000)
- argue

- Signs

- Country, room
- import/entered the room
- returned home



- Other (e.g., Kanji) 人 (person/people)

# Note-taking

- How to Note (cont)

- Lists

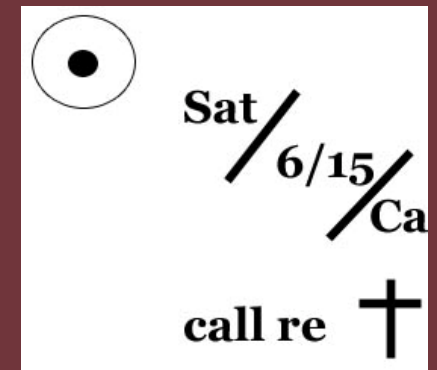
- *I noticed a hat, watch and cel phone were missing.*

I <  
Hat  
Watch  
Cel

- Indentation and '/'

- Showing continuing ideas
    - Showing relationship

- *I was attending a meeting, on Saturday, June 15, in California, when I got the call about his death.*





# Example 1

- Now, drawing your attention to Saturday, November 9, the day of the incident, when the money was allegedly removed from the safe in the office, did you call your employer before or after John told you the \$6,500 was missing?



# Note-taking

Nw  
△ Sat 11/9 (incdnt)

(al \$ rmv<sup>d</sup> ←  / )

Yu call<sup>d</sup> emp<sup>r</sup>

or  
Jhn " u

\$6500  
miss<sup>g</sup>

## Example 2

- Mr. Hernandez, referring to the deposition you gave on September 29, 2006—if you recall giving that deposition in your attorney’s office—I would like to ask you if you remember plaintiff’s counsel asking you the following questions and you giving the following answers.

...

# Note-taking

**H**  
**ref depo 9/29/06**  
**(if rmb A/ofc)**

**?**  
**if U rmb**  
**Plntf A Qs:**  
**U □s:**

# Skills needed

## 2. Simultaneous Interpreting

- Language/Translation
  - accuracy, choice of vocabulary, structure, background knowledge
- Delivery
  - clarity of voice, self-control, flow, nonverbal features
  - style/register, affect
- Listening & speaking simultaneously - lag (multi-tasking)
- Team work

# What makes an interpretation good?

1. **Fidelity: Completeness & Accuracy**  
(no over/under translation, distortion of meaning)
2. **Vocabulary**  
(effective and consistent word choice & usage)
3. **Structure/Naturalness**  
(smooth flow, appropriate style & register, clarity of voice, self-control)
4. **Background knowledge**  
(excellent understanding of subject matter)

# How to improve your interpreting skills?

High level of language proficiency in both source and target languages is required

- Vocabulary – passive/active
- Note-taking (use of symbols, abbreviation, etc.)
- Sight translation (e.g., newspaper articles)
- Shadowing (in both L1 and L2)
  - e.g., Voice of America
  - lag, anticipation
  - output helps to notice the gap

# How to improve your interpreting skills?

- Interpreting practice (use of Internet resources – pod casts, etc.)  
e.g., ABC News (English) & World Eye News (Japanese)  
<improvised versus written speech>
- Record your interpreting & compare it with the source text
- Knowledge about research skills

# How to prepare for an interpreting assignment?

## 1. Prior to the day of interpreting

- Contact the coordinator/speaker
- Ask for an outline or a script of the talk you'll be interpreting (Ask for background information)

<Let them know that preparation is crucial for successful interpreting>

- Study/research materials that are related to the speaker's topic
- Make a vocabulary list, name/title list, etc.

# How to prepare for an interpreting assignment?

## 2. On the day of interpreting

- Always get to the venue early
- Dress appropriately
- Ask speaker/coordinator for any last minute changes (schedule, content of the talk, etc.)
- Check equipments (for SI)



# Other

- Special skills and expertise
- Professionalism
- Flexibility
- Tools - dictionaries, Internet resources, digital-recording device, etc.
- Importance of getting trained - courses offered at CITS (<http://cits.hawaii.edu/>)
- Professional development





One time, One opportunity.

Thank you!





- References

Pöchhacker, F. (2004). *Introducing interpreting studies*. London: Routledge. □

- Notes

1. Note-taking slides were originally developed by Suzanne Zeng for the Basic Orientation Workshop for Hawaii Court Interpreters, 2007.

