



INTERPRETATION FAQs

What is the difference between simultaneous and consecutive interpreting?

The main difference lies in the time lag between the original speech and the interpretation into the foreign language. Simultaneous is "continuous flow" whereas consecutive has a "stop and go" rhythm.

Simultaneous is real-time interpreting: speakers talk as they normally would, without pause, as the interpreter listens to one language and speaks in another, all at the same time, with the voices overlapping (though the speaker's voice is dominant and the interpreter whispers into a microphone). It is also known as U.N.-style interpreting. Simultaneous interpretation calls for concentration, mental flexibility, and wide-ranging vocabulary in both languages. Research has shown that 23 cognitive skills are involved in simultaneous interpreting.

Consecutive interpreting involves a pause between language conversions: first the interpreter listens to the entire original phrase or passage, and then interprets it into the other language. This mode is used for Q & A of non-English speaking witnesses and requires more waiting time. Consecutive interpreting calls for excellent short-term and long-term memory, note-taking skills, a grasp of subtle nuances in both languages, and a mastery of speaking styles so as to preserve the "flavor" of a witness

Why do interpreters work in teams of two during day long conferences?

Interpreting, whether done simultaneously or consecutively, is mentally taxing and requires much more concentration than that required for ordinary speaking. One research panel likened the stress level to greater than that experienced by a neurosurgeon while operating. Studies also show that significant errors in meaning tend to occur after 30-45 minutes on task in simultaneous interpretation. For this reason, all international agencies (United Nations, European Commission, etc.) follow a policy of providing for rotation of interpreters every 30 minutes.

What are the fees involved?

The fees are made up of the following:

- Interpreting fee: this compensates the interpreters for his/her time and skills. The fee is usually an hourly rate, or a daily rate when the hours worked is greater than 5 and overtime hourly rate will apply in case the interpreter works more than 8 hours.
- Travel expenses for interpreters and technician
- Equipment rental fee
- Shipping fee for the equipment to your location ; we partner with local providers as much as feasible
- Technician labor fee: for full-system equipment, a technician is on-site for the proper configuration and ensures that the equipment is working properly during the conference.

The fee structure also should cover a cancellation policy. Pasted below is a sample of MTM LinguaSoft's cancellation policy for day-long conferences.

Cancellation policy:

- From date of booking until 48 hrs prior to the event date: 25% of fee
- 48 to 24 hrs prior to the event date: 50 % of fee.
- 24hrs or less from the event date: 75% of fee.

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Do we have to use equipment? We thought that the people who need interpretation could sit in the back of the auditorium and the interpreter could sit in the middle and interpret for them like we've seen it done when a foreign delegation visits the President. They don't use equipment and these are very high-level people.

This is whispering interpretation. This technique is properly used when there are only one or two listeners in a small meeting room and the interpreters sit right next to the speakers. Whispering is only recommended for brief one-on-one meetings. It is not appropriate for a convention setting for several reasons, among others:

1. The sound level at a convention is usually quite loud and it will interfere with the participant's ability to hear the interpretation if it is whispered.
2. On the other hand, if the interpreter speaks loud enough to be heard, it will distract and annoy the participants who do not need interpretation.
3. Although the sound is quite loud, it is not clear enough for purposes of interpretation, since an interpreter needs much clearer sound than a listener.

What are the equipment options?

1. Portable pack:

A portable transmitter is a battery powered, belt-pack unit. It may have a lapel microphone or a headset microphone. Portable equipment is best suited to mobile groups such as tours, but is sometimes used within a meeting room.

There are some limitations with portable gear

- a) There is no special way for the interpreters to hear - they have to listen to the PA in the same way the audience does.
- b) Generally, both languages would be put on the same channel. The only way to separate them on to 2 different channels would be to have 1 interpreter go into French, and the other into English, and give them each their own transmitter.
- c) Similarly, there is no easy way to switch between 2 interpreters (if you have a team of 2). Either, one takes off the headset and hands it to the other. Or, you have 2 transmitters, 1 for each interpreter. But, if they are both on the same channel, the one that is not being used would have to be turned off to avoid interference.
- d) The range is only about 100-150 feet.

2. Full system:

A full system will typically consist of a desktop transmitter with an interpreter control unit and headset microphones for the interpreters. You then have the choice between a table-top both and a full-size cabin. See the "How to choose your equipment" for more details.

For longer conferences, the interpreters really do benefit from having an audio feed in to headsets so that they can concentrate more carefully on simultaneous interpretation. The table top booth is the cheaper option in comparison to the full sound proof booths.