

# THE CIAP BULLETIN INTERPRETASIA

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## EDITORIAL

**T**he world's attention once again focussed on East Asia this year, when the FIFA World Cup was held in Korea and Japan. Arguably the world's largest sporting event, it was for the first time hosted by two countries.

Thousands of players, their trainers, managers and caretakers held meetings during and around the World Cup requiring interpretation into Korean and Japanese, from their respective languages or from English, the international lingua franca. In addition, the transport and security services needed hundreds of interpreters to get their messages across to the international audience.

In this issue, we have chosen to highlight the role of simultaneous interpretation at the FIFA Congress and related events, through an interview with FIFA's Chief Interpreter. We also look at the social status of conference interpreters in Korea, a country in which this profession has made great strides, and at the intricacies of simultaneous interpretation from Chinese.

We hope you will enjoy this issue and, if you have any comments, please send them in.

*The Editors*

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## INTERPRETATION AT THE FIFA WORLD CUP 2002

*Thomas Binder, Chief Interpreter of FIFA, replies to questions from our editor, Jean-Pierre Allain, at the FIFA Congress.*

**J-P. Allain:** Thomas, what is your role as Chief Interpreter during the FIFA Congress and the World Cup 2002 in Korea and Japan?

**Thomas Binder:** I am a service provider to a premium client. My responsibility is to provide top-quality multilingual communication whenever and wherever required. That means at the congress, committee meetings, press conferences, for public-relations work, private meetings and even personal contacts. All this in either simultaneous, consecutive or whispered interpretation - the whole array of our work. My role is also that of trouble-shooter.

**JPA:** Why does FIFA need simultaneous interpretation for its meetings? Don't all sports people speak English well enough?

**TB:** No, not all of them. And they are grateful that we are around. While many members of the FIFA committees, the Congress participants as well



as the top people in sports are amazingly fluent in English, they gladly rely on top-notch professional interpreters for the ultimate precision in communication. A look at the media over the last few weeks will tell you that interpreting, which leaves not even the shadow of a doubt, has been of paramount importance in this particular context.

**JPA:** What languages are used at the FIFA Congress and related meetings? How many teams of interpreters are needed?

*continued over...*



One of the many beautiful historical temples that dot the city of Seoul.



**TB:** Eight languages are officially used for the Congress: English, German, French, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Portuguese and Arabic. Plus Korean and Japanese for other meetings. This involves some 30 interpreters in up to three teams working at different venues, with anything from two to six languages.

**JPA:** Is it easy to find the interpreters you need for the meetings in Korea and Japan? Can you find them in those two countries?

**TB:** Japanese and Korean, yes, but for the other languages I have to get them from other countries and it is not always easy to find good interpreters at very short notice.

**JPA:** Why is that?

**TB:** We have outstanding AIIC colleagues in this part of the world and several of them are, of course, present. But there are not enough in Asia-Pacific with all the other required language combinations. This event is so big that I have to bring in interpreters from Europe and Australia.

**JPA:** What qualities do you look for in interpreters when you make up a team?

*"We have outstanding AIIC colleagues in this part of the world and several of them are present."*

**TB:** Unquestionably, professional quality ranks first. So I pick interpreters from among the 2,500 members of AIIC throughout the world. Second is team-spirit. It's a bit like football: the better the spirit, the better you perform. And then, of course, I must look for resilience. Colleagues must deliver top intellectual performance even when subject to jet-lag, stress and constantly changing venues and technical conditions. We're lucky to have so many colleagues who cope amazingly well with these challenges.

**JPA:** For how many years have you been the Consultant Interpreter for FIFA? Is it an easy task?

**TB:** It's been seven exciting years - and it is the greatest professional challenge in my life. And I accept it gladly, although there seem to be a myriad of details to remember for an event like the FIFA World

*"They have realised that truly professional interpreting is not a cost but a sound investment in communication."*

Cup 2002. But all this is made easy by the professional attitude of my colleagues and thanks to the outstanding cooperation of FIFA's staff. And, by the way, we occasionally allow ourselves to enjoy the unique adventure of this World Cup - filled with unforgettable memories.

**JPA:** What do your clients, FIFA and others, expect to get from you as a Consultant Interpreter?

**TB:** There is a clear tendency to outsource highly specialised services like ours. This means that my clients entrust me with worldwide planning and coordination. This saves them a lot of hassle - and manpower too. They have realised that truly professional interpreting is not a cost but a sound investment in communication. And my teams must live up to that mission, day after day.

*Thanks !*

## Conference Interpreters in Korea

*Professor Jungwba S. Choi, Hangeuk University, Seoul*

The status of interpreters, as is the case of other professions, depends on the society in which they live. In multilingual countries like Switzerland or on a continent like Europe, the need for interpreters is clearly recognised and conference interpretation has long been an established profession.

In contrast, in countries such as the United States and South Korea, interpretation does not enjoy high recognition. While both countries are monolingual, the status of interpreters is influenced by the role each country plays in the international community. The United States, for example, expects other nations to speak English. In contrast, Korea needs interpretation professionals who can help the country to accurately absorb information from abroad and to communicate with the international community. Nevertheless, Korean translators and interpreters do not receive the recognition they deserve or desire, but at least they receive more than their U.S. counterparts.



*Jade Lim, a top-notch Korean interpreter, with colleague Luigi Luccarelli at work during a conference in Seoul.*



It was the Gulf War that introduced simultaneous interpretation to ordinary citizens in Korea. The nature of war demands immediacy, and unlike CNN, Korean networks were unable to report the rapid developments of the Gulf War on a 24-hour basis. The Korean networks therefore opted to carry CNN broadcasts live and hired conference interpreters to provide simultaneous translation on the air. Initially, it was a process of trial and error because the networks made no distinction between professional interpreters and people who were merely fluent in English. There were almost comical instances of so-called 'interpreters' on TV who were incapable of interpreting even a few sentences. On the other hand, when bona fide conference interpreters did have a chance to work, some viewers, accustomed to the scripted commentary of television announcers, complained that the interpreters lacked finesse in their presentations. However, after a few broadcasts, most viewers came to appreciate that the interpreters were

***"The status of interpreters, as is the case of other professions, depends on the society in which they live."***

delivering the core message. The interpreters' performance also improved as they became accustomed to the way in which the news was presented on CNN.

In the early eighties, when the demand for conference interpretation in Korea grew, the financial rewards for interpreters were substantial. At that time, interpreters could earn in a single day, what a factory worker would earn in a month. Needless to say, some clients balked at paying fees that they perceived as outrageous, but others accepted them, just as they would high legal or medical bills.

Even today, social acceptance in a society deeply rooted in Confucianism like Korea, is not on a par with the economic recompense. Interpretation is viewed merely as a service provided for a client, and many interpreters find that after a few years - in spite of the financial rewards, especially for those who have Korean-English as their language combination and are viewed as 'master' English-speakers - they are still thought to be professional inferiors. To some extent, the

profession is still perceived as something that young females might indulge in temporarily, with considerable financial compensation, but not as a lifetime profession. As a result, few male interpreters have entered the field and even fewer remain. In fact, both males and females tend to leave the profession early. This explains, in part, why the average conference interpreter in Korea is so young - from the early to mid-thirties - whereas according to an AIIC survey, the world average age of conference interpreters is in the fifties.

One trend that might rectify the situation is that more competent interpreters are choosing to work as in-house interpreters for one to two years before moving on to the freelance market. In the past, any interpreter worth his/her salt would freelance upon graduation. But now, even the top graduates choose to work in-house. This not only eases them into the demanding world of interpretation, but also helps them to learn more about a specific field, providing a firm foundation for their work as freelance interpreters.

## ***Is that where they work?***

Most congresses and other meetings in Asia-Pacific are held in hotel ballrooms and other multi-purpose rooms, which do not have built-in interpretation booths. Therefore, interpreters usually work in mobile booths. A recent scientific study on work-related stress among interpreters found that the most common complaint they had about mobile booths is that they did not provide enough fresh air. The amount of air (oxygen) in a booth depends on its size and on ventilation. These and other characteristics of mobile booths are prescribed by ISO standard No. 4043.

CIAP will be happy to send you the ISO standards for mobile and built-in booths on request. Just send a message to [info@ciap.net](mailto:info@ciap.net).



*Modern ISO 4043 mobile booths provided by HOSO Service in Japan, in use at a conference in Yokohama, November 2001. In the booth, Andrea S. Bateman and Manuel Pastor, CIAP associates.*



# Simultaneous Interpretation with Chinese

Professor Emily Her, National Taiwan Normal University

Since the introduction of interpretation training in Asia in the 70s and 80s, Asian teachers and researchers of conference interpretation have absorbed and adopted theories developed mostly by European scholars based on interpretation between Indo-European languages. Interpretation into and from Asian languages such as Chinese, Korean and Japanese, however, comprises some prominent differences. Some of these confirm and others contradict generally accepted interpretation theories, such as the models of Daniza Seleskovitch<sup>1</sup> and Daniel Gile.<sup>2</sup>

**"Interpretation deals with the message in its entirety instead of separate words."**

## A. Interpretation from Chinese into English

The most notable difference between Chinese and English is the difference between 'topic-comment' structure and 'subject-predicate' structure. Chinese sentences do not require a grammatical subject if the subject can be inferred from the context. In keeping with Seleskovitch's theory, the interpreter must therefore go beyond the words to make sense of the 'comment', which is then expressed in a 'subject-predicate' structure in English. Secondly, Chinese characters - which are actually words, not letters - are monosyllabic. Therefore, a Chinese sentence can be spoken relatively faster than an English one. This means that brief summaries are often required when interpreting from Chinese into English. These two key features of Chinese make it necessary for the interpreter to process the message very carefully and not rely merely on words.

In addition, Chinese verbs do not carry markers (tense, person or number); neither does Chinese make any distinction between the definite and indefinite articles. The interpreter must therefore add these when rendering a Chinese sentence into English. Furthermore, nominalisation (noun, verb or adjective written with the same character) is

a common Chinese feature that requires some effort in interpretation. Finally, the interpreter must adapt to the difference in modifiers between the two languages, because English is generally considered 'right-branching' (subject-verb-object) while Chinese is 'left-branching'. The long wait that this implies during interpretation creates a memory burden on the interpreter. According to Gile's Effort Model, the advantage of easy and accurate comprehension of the source text by the Chinese interpreter is thus offset by the attention that needs to be paid to these specific features in English.

To my knowledge, no formal research has been done on the advantages of the pictorial nature of Chinese characters for interpretation. An informal survey of Chinese interpreters' experiences has failed to confirm any such advantage. As it is, not all Chinese characters are pictorial in nature. Moreover, interpretation deals with the message in its entirety instead of separate words. Therefore, visualisation of words may not help in comprehending or retaining the message. However, these findings need to be validated by formal research.

## B. Interpretation from English into Chinese

An interpreter whose first language is Chinese usually needs to pay more attention to the comprehension of English. A literal word-for-word interpretation is frequent by beginners and even by more experienced interpreters for speeches with high information-density. This often results in unnatural Chinese. A case in point is the abundant use in English of the passive voice, whereas the passive voice is normally used only with a negative proposition in standard Chinese speech.

**"Compound-complex sentences, though not very common in speeches, can be a headache for interpreters."**

Compound-complex sentences (including at least one subordinate clause and one dependent clause), though not very common in speeches, can be a headache for interpreters. Nevertheless, the 'topic-comments' structure (or topic-prominent feature) of Chinese provides a convenient solution. The flexibility of placing 'comments' in several possible positions in a sentence, without having to follow a rigid 'subject-predicate' structure allows an interpreter to interpret smaller segments of English speech immediately, and then link them up in a sensible, logical manner based on the comprehension of the 'comments'. Thus, the interpreter doesn't have to make an effort to store sentence segments in short-term memory while re-organising them into a new sentence. Professor Bao Chuan-Yuen of the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California gave this example in a recent paper: The interpreter can begin with any of the four segments of the following sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence or affecting its understanding. "San Diego is the last destination / during my trip to California, / so I look forward to the opportunity / to talk with you there". This flexibility of the 'topic-comments' structure of Chinese is particularly helpful in dealing with complicated structures in simultaneous interpretation, reducing stress and enhancing performance.

Many interpretation scholars in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Japan and Korea have carried out research on the problems encountered when interpreting between Chinese and other languages. While the findings of the research into interpretation between non-Indo-European and Indo-European languages seem to confirm the principles outlined by both the Seleskovitch and the Gile models, further investigation is warranted into the details, such as the cognitive process.

1. Seleskovitch, D (1978). *Language and cognition*. In D. Gerver & H. W. Sinako (eds.), *Language Interpretation and Communication*, 333-341. New York & London: Plenum Press.

2. Gile, D. (1991). *The processing capacity issue in conference interpretation*, *Meta*, 20-2, 15-27.



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A group of interpreters leaving the conference hall after a busy day at the INCOSAI Congress in Seoul.

## INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP

### 2002

BANGKOK	July	Herbalife - Asian Extravaganza 2002
SEOUL	May	Metropolis 2002: 7th World Congress
SHANGHAI	May	ADB - Asian Development Bank Institute seminar
BEIJING	May	WSBI - World Savings Bank Institute: 9th G. Assembly & Postal Savings Forum
HONG KONG	May	IPBA - Inter Pacific Bar Association: 12th Annual meeting and conference
MACAU	April	Public Prosecutor's Office: Conference on Criminal Judicial Cooperation
SEATTLE	April	Microsoft Government Leaders Conference
MACAU	April	Herbalife: Millionaire Training 2002 Seminar
BEIJING	April	World Economic Forum (WEF) - Business Meeting
TOKYO	March	International Conference on the State and Governance in Africa
HONG KONG	January	FATF - Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering: XIII Plenary Meeting

### 2001

TOKYO	December	TICAD II: Tokyo International Conference on African Development
HONG KONG	November	ASAF - Asian Securities Analyst Federation: ASAF 2001 Conference
BANGKOK	November	ICEM - Mining Section and Jewellery Section conferences
HONG KONG	October	World Economic Forum (WEF) - Europe - East Asia Economic Forum
SEOUL	October	INCOSAI - Intl. Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions: XVII Congress
HONG KONG	October	UITP - Intl. Union of Public Transport: Metropolitan Railways Division Assembly
DELHI	October	WMA - World Medical Association: Congress (cancelled)
SEOUL	October	ICMIF - International Cooperative Mutual Insurance Federation Conference
SHANGHAI	October	YPO - Young Presidents' Organisation University
BANGKOK	October	FAO Codex Alimentarius: 34th Committee on Food Hygiene

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## WHAT IS AIIC?

**F**ounded in 1953, AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters) is the only worldwide association of professional conference interpreters. AIIC has over 2,600 members in 80 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, the European Union and many business organisations as the only representative of professional conference interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpretation.

AIIC sets professional standards and working conditions accepted worldwide. Together with the International Organisation for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical and Health Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpretation and ISO 4043 for mobile booths for use in conference rooms without built-in facilities.

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## WHAT IS CIAP?

**C**onference Interpreters Asia Pacific (CIAP) is a network of consultant interpreters, all members of AIIC, who live and work in the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1990, CIAP provides teams of conference interpreters for simultaneous and consecutive interpretation at meetings of all sizes.

Its members advise conference organisers on language requirements, choice of conference venues, technical equipment, seating arrangements and so on, and recruit teams of interpreters suited to the needs of a conference.

CIAP associates can provide simultaneous interpretation teams for English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and other languages.

**CIAP**

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There are CIAP Associates in several cities in Asia-Pacific. For the consultant interpreter nearest to you, please see the list of names and contact numbers provided in this issue.

Website: [www.ciap.net](http://www.ciap.net)