

# THE CIAP BULLETIN

# INTERPRETASIA

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## EDITORIAL

**N**owadays kings no longer send explorers to discover lands and negotiate trade agreements, but they themselves travel to different countries to promote trade and goodwill among nations. When royalty speaks, everybody listens; and interpreters make it possible for everybody to understand. CIAP recently had the privilege of providing interpretation for a royal visit in Australia, with a number of political and business meetings.

Language is a reflection of the culture and idiosyncrasies of the people who speak it. In this issue, a Japanese interpreter reflects on the difficulty of transposing Japanese into English. There are many things that Japanese people do not say because they are supposed to be understood.

Information technology, it is sometimes believed, can do the work of translators and interpreters. Some planners dream of the possibility of having a meeting in one place with the interpreters located at another, or even at home! We explore the ways in which IT can help interpreters do a better job, while it cannot replace them.

*The Editors*

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## ROYAL INTERPRETERS

by Manuel Pastor

During the 16th and 17th centuries Spanish explorers sailed to the four corners of the world in search of new trading opportunities in faraway lands. One of these intrepid explorers was Juan Sebastián de Cano (El Cano), a Spanish naval commander, who was sent by King Carlos I of Spain to claim the East Indies for Spain. El Cano was the first man to circumnavigate the globe and was awarded a coat of arms by the king, featuring a globe with the motto: *Primus circumdedisti me* (Latin for: you went around me first), and an annual pension. After being received by the ruler of Brunei, the rich and powerful Sultan Bolkiah, who was revered by the people of Brunei as an earthly God, El Cano wrote in his diary: "All communications with the omnipotent ruler had to be conducted through Royal Interpreters and mediators appointed by the Sultan. No member of our party was even allowed to look at him."

In today's globalized economy kings and presidents no longer send explorers and sailors to negotiate trade agreements, but they themselves travel to different countries to promote trade and goodwill among nations, usually accompanied by an entourage of businessmen and politicians. The latter are then left to work out the details once the travelling dignitaries



have negotiated broad agreements or have simply given a keynote speech pointing out the mutual advantages of such bilateral or multilateral trade agreements. Professional interpreters



Spanish explorer El Cano

for these royal visits are usually contracted for these business meetings and everyone not only gets to see each other, but gets 'up close and personal' with royalty and presidential greats.

The King of Spain, Don Juan Carlos I, recently travelled to Sydney, Australia, to inaugurate the First Australia-Spain Business Forum (25-26 June 2009). The forum brought together businessmen from both countries and provided a space for the negotiation of business deals in the sectors where each country can offer quality products, expertise and services. Although the King speaks fluent Spanish, English and French (as well as Italian and Portuguese), official protocol recommended that some or all of his keynote addresses be given in Spanish. The King, in line with the recommendation, greeted the participants in English and then proceeded to give his keynote speech in the language of Cervantes (Spanish).

Throughout the world, many businessmen who speak several languages also prefer to use their mother tongue to negotiate, as they sound more sincere, comfortable, convincing and reassuring when they speak in their native language and are interpreted by professionals who can not only faithfully translate their speeches, jokes and nuances, but can also transmit the non-verbal sentiments with their tone of voice, pronunciation, stress and know-



King Juan Carlos I speaks during a visit to the Australia-Spain Business Forum on June 26, 2009 in Sydney, Australia.

ledge of the culture and idiosyncrasies of both the speaker's mother tongue and the languages of the different listeners.

Interpreting at these diplomatic and trade-related meetings requires much more than language and interpreting skills. Professional interpreters must have a vast wealth of knowledge, must be very familiar with international affairs, particularly with the political, social and economic situation of the

host country and the countries of the languages they are interpreting from or into. Interpreters often are experts in various areas of human

knowledge, acquired through their pre-interpreting professions (many are doctors, lawyers, economists, etc.), and through their exposure to experts from many specialized fields of endeavour, at conferences where they have interpreted and for which

they have studied different subject matters. Furthermore, security and confidentiality are important components of the ethical standards that interpreters must uphold. These are essential for

diplomatic interpreters, since the information they are privy to sometimes involves issues of security or the economic development of one or more countries.

CIAP has been selected on two separate occasions to provide interpreting services for the King of Spain's visits, to Thailand in 2006 and to Australia in June 2009. The interpreters assigned to the meetings that take place during such visits and other high level meetings (for example, the G8 Summits, Ministerial Meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement, World Economic Forums, 3R Initiative Ministerial Conference, and others) must have proven their quality and professionalism and pass a rigorous screening process to check security, experience in similar high level meetings and an in-depth know-

ledge of the protocol that is to be followed throughout the meeting. In brief, it is not just about language skills: it is about matching professional experience to the right occasion.

CIAP has provided interpreting services to many international events, from meetings of indigenous peoples' chiefs to interpreting for presidents, ministers and royalty. The title of Royal Interpreter is a thing of the past, but we do like to think of ourselves as VPIs (Very Professional Interpreters). ■

*Businessmen often prefer to use their mother tongue to negotiate, as they sound more sincere, comfortable, convincing and reassuring when they speak in their native language*



Sydney-based CIAP associate **Manuel Pastor** was AIIC Council member for Asia-Pacific from 2003-2006 and is a lecturer at Macquarie University.



## From pariah status, interpreters gain full recognition in Japan' by Masaomi Kondo

For a long time, a general perception of Japan as a homogenous country with one race and one language had been dominant. During the 1980s the Japanese economy was doing very well, growing rapidly and even winning the trade war with America. Then Prime Minister Nakasone attributed Japan's economic success to linguistic and racial homogeneity, implying that a multilingual and multicultural situation would be detrimental, rather than help to enrich the economy and the culture of Japan.

When people, even mistakenly, see themselves as the same people speaking the same language, they come to feel that since they share so much, they can take a great deal for granted. Face to face, they should be able to understand each other without a sea of specifics. When one word is spoken, the rest should be automatically apparent – otherwise you are regarded as a little slow.

If speaking profusely in Japanese is wrong, then speaking English is even worse. Many Francophiles and Germanists are highly respected, but I have been told to my face that I must be stupid since I speak English. Tsurumi Shunsuke, an acknowledged intellectual leader in post-World War II Japan, once wrote that he *intuitively* had *statistical* proof showing English-speaking Japanese to be untrustworthy.

Socio-economic circumstances may be of some relevance here after Japan's defeat by America and China in the Asia-Pacific War in 1945, and the American occupation of a war-devastated, poverty-stricken Japan. Naturally the numerous Japanese who wanted to curry favor with the all-powerful Americans were not looked upon kindly by the more morally upright population, who were perhaps simply devoid of English skills: English had



A picture worth a thousand words: a Japanese garden symbolizing peace and harmony

been banned as an enemy language during the war years.

Some intellectual giants in Japanese history like Amenomori Shuho (1668-1755) and Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) spoke fluent Chinese + Korean and English respectively, and even served as interpreters, but many biographies we read about them today omit this aspect of their lives.

In a fundamental sense interpreters were pariahs in Japan, doing what Japanese culture forbids in order to be of service to society. Nonetheless, over the last 20 years, the interpreting profession has grown and expanded into broadcast interpreting with more Japanese TV programs broadcasting in two languages; into business and in-house interpreting; into community interpreting at courts, police stations, immigration offices and hospitals.

Greater interest has come about in applying interpreting training methods to foreign language teaching, and the profession has become very popular among college students, especially female students, with more colleges and universities crying out for competent instructors. The Ministry of Education also encourages interpreter training, and today, there are some 20 such courses in Japan.

The founding congress of the Japan Association for Interpretation Studies (JAIS), an academic association devoted to the promotion of interpreting studies, took place in Tokyo on September 23, 2000, exactly ten years after the inception of the more informal Interpreting Research Association of Japan (IRAJ). The Science Council of Japan almost immediately recognized JAIS, signaling that it had taken note of the very real achievements of IRAJ during the previous 10 years. Membership now exceeds 320, and submissions of papers to the annual congress far exceed the number of slots available, requiring strict selection. At the annual JAIS congress in September 2008, its name was changed to the Japan Association for Interpretation and Translation Studies (JAITS) to reflect the rising interest in translation studies among members and to create a forum to promote scientific and academic studies of translation. ■

**Masaomi Kondo** was the Founding President of JAITS and is still a Special Advisor to the association. He is also Prof. of Economics & Interpreting Studies at Daito Bunka University in Tokyo.



<sup>1</sup> Adapted with permission from an article posted on *Communicate!* summer 2009

# Can IT help interpreters do a better job?

by Jean-Pierre Allain

Conference interpretation is not merely a linguistic exercise where words are transposed from one language into another automatically. Brain scans of interpreters at work show that simultaneous interpreting is probably one of the most intense cognitive activities that the human brain can engage in. It is a complex intellectual task crucially dependent upon the interpreter having the necessary background information provided by the conscientious conference organiser in good time. Today, this information is usually made available through email and the Internet.

But information technology could also be used in the booth if modern interpreter consoles were equipped with Internet connection capabilities and web browser software. A tactile display screen in the booth would allow interpreters to visualise conference-related material available on the web while they are interpreting. It could feed PowerPoint and slide presentations being used in the meeting room directly to the interpreters' screen.

In light of progress in information technology, some conference organisers are now considering remote interpretation as a possible solution to the problem of accommodating an increasing number of booths in meeting rooms or as a means of reducing interpreter travel and related costs. Remote interpretation occurs when delegates are in one location and interpreters in another. A variant is videoconferences where some of the participants are not at the conference venue and their interventions are beamed into the meeting room, where the interpreters are working, via a video connection.

In both these situations, one of the difficulties in providing good interpretation has been the poor synchronisation of image and sound, as often seen on TV news-casts. Both satellite links and ISDN connections are used for the transmission of audio and video signals. Now the Internet itself can be used as a transmission medium, if the required bandwidth for audio and video transmission is assured. While the cost of satellite links is decreasing, most interest has focused on the use of terrestrial links, most notably ISDN connections. Although ISDN videoconferencing has been constrained by inferior imaging and especially sound quality, that too is changing.

allow for a better view of the whole proceedings.

Tests using remote interpreting reveal that interpreters suffer more stress and fatigue when isolated from the meeting venue, obliged to watch a fixed angle image projected on a screen in front of them depending on the technician's view. They feel alienated from what's going on. That clearly is not good for someone whose role is to be a communicator.

The use of heads-up displays (HUD) i.e. projection on the glass window in front of the interpreter, could at least partly alleviate the problem by providing the illusion of a three-dimensional environment. The use of virtual reality

could permit the interpreter to 'navigate' in the meeting room (e.g. by using a joystick), observing it from various angles. That could improve the situation, at least for the younger generation of more 'wired' interpreters.

IT is already extensively used by today's interpreters to prepare for an assignment, by web-browsing and studying documents before the meeting. IT could be

put to more use by providing better information in the booth during meetings, but it cannot replace the visual information and the feeling of being part of it provided to interpreters by being present in the same room as the delegates. ■



Some conferences already have VDUs set up in the interpreters' booths

## What interpreters think of remote interpreting

A clear image of the speaker, screens and the meeting room is a prerequisite for good interpretation because more than 50 per cent of a message is contained in non-verbal communication (the speaker's face, whom s/he is addressing, the reactions of the listeners in the room, what is being projected on the screen in the room, etc.). This is why interpreter booths are situated in the back or at the side of a meeting room on a slightly higher level to

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He was president of  
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A large team of interpreters is briefed before a meeting by chief interpreter J-P. Allain

## SOME INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY

### 2009

Seoul	Jun	World Economic Forum in East Asia
Tokyo	Apr	3rd Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable Meeting
Kathmandu	Apr	International Land Coalition Assembly
Bangkok	Mar	IASAJ - Legal State and Democracy Conference
Bali	Mar	NOVIB International Meeting on Rights Based Approach
Kuala Lumpur	Jan	Open Forum for Civil Society Organizations' Development Effectiveness

### 2008

Istanbul	Nov	World Economic Forum on Central Asia & the Middle East
Manila	Oct	Global Forum on Migration and Development
Bangkok	Oct	UNAIDS Global Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Training
Hong Kong	Oct	UITP - Intl. Union of Public Transport - Technical Committees
Bangkok	Jul	5th Meeting of the Technological Network on HIV/AIDS



▲ Interpreters ready for a night out

Interpreters relaxing after a day of meetings ▼



Interpreters in discussion during a break ▲

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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 2,800 members in 90 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 interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpretation.

AIIC sets professional standards and its recommended working conditions are 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 requirements and even seating arrangements, and recruit teams of interpreters suited to the needs of a conference. CIAP also provides written translations of conference documents.

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



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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.*

*Web: [www.ciap.net](http://www.ciap.net)*