

INTERPRETASIA

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EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

People are often surprised to learn that conference interpreters are not just gifted linguists, but actually undergo professional training equivalent to a Master's Degree. The article on "Training Conference Interpreters" in this issue will give you a much better idea of what is required to be able to interpret at a meeting, be it an informal business meeting, a high-level political discussion or a scientific or technical conference.

We hope you will enjoy this second issue of INTERPRETASIA - the CIAP Bulletin and we welcome any comments.

The Editor

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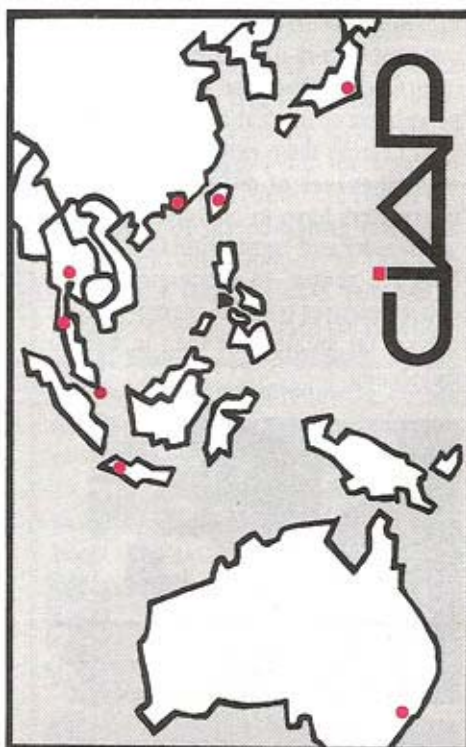
TRAINING CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

An international conference is the result of months of painstaking effort to bring together a group of people unique in their expertise, providing a brief opportunity for a concentrated exchange of opinions and information and often for vital decisions to be taken.

The interpreters responsible for communicating these concentrated messages in real time naturally need to know their languages thoroughly, but to be really 'tuned in' and understand everything that is said, language ability is not enough. Time is precious; participants often refer in abbreviated or implicit form to past meetings, agreements, current issues and so on. To follow them, interpreters must have an equivalent level of education and general knowledge and must be up-to-date with current affairs, as well as knowing enough about the specific business of the conference to make sense of the proceedings.

Conference participants from different cultures and speaking different languages present information and opinions in different ways. To make communication possible and comfortable, interpreters have to reconcile these differences in real time. Their special skill is in analysing and storing very different incoming messages and repackaging them so that not only information, but also emphasis, and style if possible, are conveyed in the target language with its own words and syntax, and its own culturally specific ways of debating, informing, convincing, praising or recommending.

In other words, an interpreter's professional competence is made up of three components: language, knowledge and rapid processing skills. Conference organisers



have realised that neither the amateur polyglot, however gifted, nor the in-house expert untrained in interpretation skills can be expected to provide the smooth service required. As a result, international organisations and a few universities have developed special training programs for conference interpreters. The few good courses screen applicants carefully and certify professionals at M.A. level, after special training lasting from six months to two years.

Selecting trainees

The first challenge to interpreter trainers is selection. Every year, hundreds of candidates apply to a handful of recognised schools. A dozen or so schools are recognised by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (aiic). Most of the candidates are graduates from language departments of universities and colleges, but some come from other professions.

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Trainees must declare their 'working languages' at the outset. They must have an undisputed and confident mother tongue and at least one fluent and accurate second language. Schools try to attract mature students who have working experience or a background in law, economics or the sciences, or who come from bilingual or culturally mixed families.

The syllabus

Students are first put through various exercises in handling language and information, such as same-language paraphrase or translating texts 'at sight' after hearing them read once. Working with languages of different structures, interpreters have to be very agile with word-order and 'syntacrobatics' of this kind are central to processing skills. Other exercises train the memory which plays a far greater role than in written translation.



Students practising in a booth

These exercises lead up to training in **consecutive interpretation**. Trainees practice interpreting short, chatty speeches by fellow students or invited speakers, commenting on each other's versions, and begin to grow familiar with the workings of their own memories. Many people can remember and recount a joke, even an elaborate story several days later. But when subject matter is unfamiliar, or is arranged in an unexpected way, most of the information fades almost immediately. The stuff of international meetings is a mixture: some parts are easily visualised and remembered, while others - details, names, numbers, rhetorical effects or unexpected turns of logic - need to be recorded 'on the fly' in brief notes. After a few months of practice on mock speeches or videotapes, and guidance on how to divide attention between listen-

ing and note-taking, students are eventually able to render complex speeches lasting several minutes.

Simultaneous interpretation

Perhaps ninety per cent of conference interpretation is now done in 'SI' mode, through microphones and headsets. The first challenge to trainees is simply to acquire the unnatural habit of talking while continuing to listen attentively to the speaker. To get accustomed to this, they do simple neutral tasks like counting aloud, forwards or backwards, in the same or another language while listening, and must then come out and report on what the speaker was saying; or they paraphrase the speaker, summarising every few sentences 'on-line' without losing the thread of the speech.

Now the real challenges appear: the speech comes in linear form, but the two language structures are different, so that bits have to be stored and recast in a different order; some can be remembered for several seconds, like descriptions or arguments and opinions, while other items, like names and numbers, may not stick and so have to be uttered immediately. And all the while, the incoming language is tempting the interpreter to imitate its structures and forms: if he is to produce a correct and elegant version in the target language, he must resist this, constantly monitoring his own speech. Finally, after months of practice - like flying hours for a pilot - successful trainees can produce a fair version of fast spontaneous speech.

Speakers at conferences often read from prepared texts, a painful exercise when the original is tightly drafted and read in a monotone. If the text is supplied, a good interpreter can follow, within certain speed limits, but only if he has learned to 'stand away' from the written word and be ready to summarise in order not to lag behind, as the speaker may add or omit material without warning.

Special Knowledge

Scientists, lawyers and others are sometimes sceptical about interpreters' ability to understand the vocabulary, the concepts, or what is really at stake, to be of any use at their conferences. How do interpreters do this? Knowledge of all kinds is part of an interpreter's stock-in-trade. Schools offer supplementary courses, such as basic concepts in economics, business and law, the anatomy of international

organisations, the drafting of resolutions and treaties, voting procedures, initiation into medical or scientific jargon, and even exposure to various non-standard accents.



Conference interpretation for examinations

Trainees learn to keep abreast of events in politics, business, science and technology. University environments provide a pool of experts and lecturers invited to simulate debates on various topics and in various languages, and 'audiences' may also be arranged.

But the real trade secret lies in **preparation**. However much knowledge or vocabulary interpreters may accumulate, they cannot have all of it available at all times. Interpreters must seek out and assemble relevant material for a conference, marshalling and activating half-forgotten knowledge, and get indispensable topical documentation from the organiser, in order to absorb the expressions, the issues and finally, the vocabulary specific to the event at hand.

After it is all over, the details are quickly forgotten to make room for the next assignment; but a substrate of knowledge builds up, and many interpreters gradually acquire a good grounding in areas like medicine or finance. The seasoned interpreter knows that the key to excellence lies in knowledge, and in topical information about the event, the issues, and the people, rather than the linguistic dimension, which fades in importance with the years, the concern with language 'equivalent' becoming at most a secondary reflex, even, as many would have it, an irrelevance or an illusion.

Robin Setton

The author, member of aiic, is Director of the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation Studies (GITIS), Fu Jen University, Taipei.



Aerial view of the Bali International Convention Centre and Nusa Indah Resort

BALI with its excellent and growing business facilities, is all set to cater to the convention and incentive boom. Famous for its palm-fringed beaches and vibrant culture, Bali has drawn visitors to her shores from time immemorial, but has been largely overlooked as a viable convention destination.

The situation is changing, however, particularly with the development of the Nusa Dua area on the southern tip of the island, dedicated to providing top class accommodation and meeting facilities. Slightly removed from the rest of Bali, Nusa Dua was conceived by the Ministry of Tourism as an up-market haven with over 3,000 first-class hotel and resort rooms to cater to large conventions and other major events.

The Bali International Convention Centre (BICC), managed by ITT Sheraton, provides a high-tech, state-of-the-art facility which aims to position Bali as one of the leading convention destinations in Asia-Pacific. The twin properties of Sheraton Nusa Indah Resort and Sheraton Lagoon Nusa Dua, adjacent to the BICC, offer a total of 700 rooms.

The BICC has a proven track record of conventions and incentive meetings. Its 13 soundproofed rooms of various sizes, ranging from 200 to

2500 seats, a fully-staffed reception area, a large tiered auditorium are geared for flexibility and convenience. First class catering services complement top-quality technical facilities, including fully integrated satellite telecommunications and media systems, professional in-house staging, 8-languages built-in infra-red simultaneous interpretation system in several rooms, AV equipment and closed circuit TV. The BICC Convention Manager ensures single-point contact for planning, bookings, logistics and technical arrangements.

The Grand Hyatt Bali Hotel at Nusa Dua also has a convention centre. This beautiful hotel offers 14 meeting rooms, ranging from two boardrooms to the grand ballroom capable of seating 780 persons and a theatre-style auditorium seating 80. Moreover, forty acres of lush tropical gardens abound with venues for theme dinners, barbecues and cultural events.

The Bali Beach Hotel at Sanur Beach has just renovated its own convention hall on a smaller more intimate scale. There is a reliable local simultaneous interpretation system supplier in Denpasar. The Kartika Plaza Beach Hotel in Kuta has six conference rooms, ranging from the Kharisma Ballroom with a capacity for 800 people to meeting rooms for 50 people. It has its own simultaneous interpretation equipment.

Other hotels offer meeting possibilities in their ballrooms and smaller rooms.

INTERPRETATION JARGON

Working languages are those which an interpreter uses professionally. He may know more languages but not well enough to interpret from or into them. Working languages are classified as 'active' and 'passive'. (See INTERPRETASIA # 1 for definitions.)

Relay means interpreting from another booth's interpretation. This is done when an interpreter does not know the speaker's language. It is frequent when Japanese, Chinese or Korean are interpreted into French, Spanish or German and vice versa. Relay should be avoided as much as possible, as it is slower and has a greater risk of errors.

Technicians are the electronics experts who install simultaneous interpretation equipment and operate it during a conference. Interpreters and technicians must work together as a team to ensure the smooth running of a conference.



Lake Goddess Temple, Bedugul

Convention facilities in Bali are priced competitively. Garuda Indonesia and travel agents offer special discounts to Bali, particularly during the low season. The island's unique culture, stunning natural beauty and hospitable people create an atmosphere unrivaled by other destinations.

Dipika Raj and J-P. Allain

Corrigendum: We apologize to the Philippines International Convention Centre for a typing error in our last issue. The capacity of the main hall at PICC is 4,000 not 400 people.

aiic PROMOTES CONVENTIONS IN ASIA-PACIFIC



Three aiic members addressing a seminar in Singapore

The Asia-Pacific region has much to offer for conventions. Most countries have established their own Convention Promotion Board (CPB) to tap the international meetings market. CPBs usually organise training seminars for professional conference organisers (PCOs), hotel staff and travel agencies involved in organising conferences. They teach how to bid for international meetings and how to organise them. This is useful because the conference service industry is a fairly new business in most of the region. Even Singapore, which started hosting international meetings more than twenty years ago, finds that there are always new techniques to be mastered and novel features to learn.

Since 1987, the aiic Asia-Pacific Chapter has joined forces with CPBs and PCOs in the region, such as the Singapore Trade Promotion Board (STPB), the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS), the Thai Incentive and Convention Association (TICA), the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA) and various CPBs in Australia, to explain the specific requirements of multilingual conferences and to demonstrate conference interpretation during the seminar.

Such seminars are appreciated, as few participants realise the complexities of conference interpretation or have ever seen a simultaneous interpretation booth. aiic provides the speaker(s) while the CPB provides the logistics - an ideal collaboration. Seminars are usually held back-to-back with a con-

ference for which aiic interpreters have been recruited, so that a practical demonstration of simultaneous interpretation and a tour of the booths can be arranged. Participants from the convention industry become 'delegates' and don earphones to listen to professional interpreters. aiic provides folders containing checklists for hotel managers, PCOs, technicians, information about the profession and aiic, and a list of interpreters in the region.

Most recently aiic participated in three such events: Brisbane, Australia, in October 1993; Pattaya, Thailand, in October 1993; Singapore, in April 1994. At the Brisbane "Interpreters and Translators

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SKIPPING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

At a recent conference in Bangkok on Women Empowering Communication, one of the delegates wrote the following article on communication difficulties during the workshops:

"Two days of the conference are already over! The presentations have us dreaming of transforming communication into a powerful medium for women's liberation. This is how we feel in the plenary sessions, not only because of the quality of presentations, but also because it is the only time English, French, Spanish and Thai speakers can communicate through simultaneous interpretation. But once the simultaneous interpretation ends, the frustration begins for those of us who don't master English, as we cannot discuss

our experiences or participate fully in the working groups. That's when we wonder if we are really at an international meeting on communication. Can language, our vehicle of communication, insidiously rob us of words, the right to speak?"

Many multilingual conference planners are faced with the same difficulty when they have to decide on how to best use the team of interpreters they have contracted, once the plenary splits into four, five or more workshops. Invariably there are more workshops than interpreters and the non-English speaking delegates would like to be able to participate in all of them.

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INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP



1994

Hanoi	Jul	Intl. Conference on Leprosy
Bali	Jun	Intl. Apparel Federation Conference
Bangkok	May	French Regional Seminar on Roads
Bali	Apr	New York Life Intl. Sales Conference
Hong Kong	Mar	Swire Pacific Group Press Conference
Hong Kong	Mar	TRANSDelta Conference
Hong Kong	Mar	Cathay Pacific Press Conference
Bangkok	Feb	WACC Women's Conference

1993

Bangkok	Dec	FAO Advisory Com. on Forestry Education
Hong Kong	Dec	Japan-Hong Kong Trade Consultations
Hong Kong	Dec	Conference on Manufacturing Technology
Kuala Lumpur	Dec	Intl. Seminar on Indigenous Peoples
Macao	Nov	5th Intl. Mayors' Anti-Drug Conference
Hong Kong	Nov	Intl. Wire and Tube Conference
Hong Kong	Oct	12th INTERTOTO Congress
Hong Kong	Oct	Word Economic Forum
Hong Kong	Oct	Christian Dior Press Conference
Bali	Sep	World Energy Council Executive Assembly
Hong Kong	Sep	Intl. Association of New Towns Conference
Bali	Aug	Pacific Rim Forum
Bangkok	Jul	Conference Intl. Catholique du Scoutisme
Bangkok	Jul	33rd World Scout Conference
Hong Kong	Jul	Cathay Pacific Press Conference
Jogjakarta	May	Intl. Fellowship of Former Scouts and Guides
Tokyo	Apr	Metropolitan Governance '93 Conference
Phnom Penh	Apr	UNTAC Conference on Constitution
Tokyo	Mar	PDD Tokyo Special Session
Hong Kong	Mar	Cathay Pacific Press Conference



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aiic promotes conventions

Awareness Day", aiic had an information stand and presented a video on simultaneous interpretation made by the United Nations.

The TICA Convention Promotion seminar in Pattaya covered an entire week-end, with 320 participants attending an exhibition and a conference. Three break-up sessions focussed on "simultaneous interpretation", "meeting the suppliers" and "professional conference organising". Two aiic members and a free-lance Thai interpreter demonstrated the technique to participants. Since 1988, these annual TICA events have contributed to the development of skilled human resources for the convention industry in Thailand.

At the last SACEOS seminar in Singapore, aiic explained the functioning of simultaneous interpretation and the need for professionals to ensure quality, to encourage organisations to return for repeat events.

The aiic Asia-Pacific Chapter would be happy to help other countries boost their skills to compete in the lucrative conference and incentives market.

Interested parties may contact the aiic Asia-Pacific PR Representative, **Salma Tejar-Dang** (see List of Consultant Interpreters).

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Skipping the language barrier

An excellent solution to this problem was found at a recent sales conference in Bali, serviced by CIAP interpreters. The organisers split the workshops into language groups and rotated the moderators and presenters of workshops, each one accompanied by an interpreter. This gave all non-English speaking delegates the opportunity to exchange and discuss experiences with the different moderators and presenters, who spoke English (but they could also have spoken another language), taking full advantage of the team of eight interpreters engaged for the conference.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of multilingual interpretation for your conference, CIAP Consultant Interpreters will be happy to give you their professional advice.

Manuel Pastor

AIR MAIL ✈
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WHAT IS AIIC?

Founded in 1953, **AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters)** is the only world-wide association of professional conference interpreters. AIIC has over 2,500 members in 65 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, the European Community and many business organisations as the only representative of professional interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpreting.

AIIC sets professional standards and working conditions accepted worldwide. Together with the International Organization for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603-1983 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpreting and ISO 4043-1981 for mobile booths for use in conference rooms without built-in facilities.

ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONALE DES
INTERPRÈTES DE CONFÉRENCE

aiic

INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
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WHAT IS CIAP?

Conference Interpreters Asia Pacific (CIAP) is a network of consultant interpreters, all members of AIIC, who live and work in the Asia-Pacific region. CIAP was established in 1990 to provide conference interpretation services to the growing conference industry in the region.

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

CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS ASIA PACIFIC

BANGKOK • HONG KONG • PENANG • SINGAPORE • SYDNEY • TAIPEI • TOKYO

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