

THE CIAP BULLETIN INTERPRETASIA

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EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

Previous issues of INTERPRETASIA have discussed how to recruit interpreters, their special training and the technical requirements for successful interpretation.

This issue of the CIAP Bulletin looks into professionalism and the cost of professional conference interpretation services at a meeting.

We hope it will prove useful to you and wish you good reading!

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DO YOU REALLY NEED PROFESSIONALS?

"If language is not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success."

Confucius

Sometimes we are asked by conference organisers or other clients "What are the benefits of using AIIC conference interpreters? What services do you provide that other interpreters do not provide equally well?" and, more importantly, "How much will it cost to use AIIC interpreters?"

The answer is simple: AIIC conference interpreters are professionals. They have the qualifications and experience to provide a professional service and they charge professional fees, just like any dentist or lawyer. Yet they are often cheaper than interpreters provided by agencies acting as intermediaries.

An important international conference calls for a professional multilingual communication service that allows participants to

speak unconstrained in their own languages and cultural contexts, comfortable in the knowledge that language barriers are being overcome for them. It is this -- not simply transposing words as fast as possible -- that is the job of the professional conference interpreter.

How can an organiser be sure of getting real professional conference interpreters? Professionalism implies knowledge and expertise acquired over many years of training and practice -- precisely what is required to become a member of AIIC (the International Association of Conference Interpreters).

A professional multilingual communication service allows participants to speak unconstrained in their own languages.



There is no easy or instant test in advance of an event. For instance, most conference organisers would be hard put to judge the proficiency of a presumed interpreter in the

various different language combinations. But a few basic criteria can help as a useful checklist.

Training

It is worth checking on the professional qualifications and credentials of the teams of interpreters you plan to use.

There are only a few reputable graduate schools of interpreting in the world that offer training for conference interpreters (see INTERPRETASIA # 2, June 1994). Graduate courses lasting from six months to three years, depending on the background of students, provide professional training equivalent to MA level or above. A degree from one of these

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schools is the minimum professional qualification that any conference interpreter must nowadays have in order to work at the international level. All AIIC interpreters possess either such training, or, in the case of senior colleagues who entered the profession over 30 years ago, thousands of days of experience. A second test for AIIC candidates is the stringent peer review system -- well-known as a check on competence in various professions and in academic publishing -- in which they are vetted by senior colleagues, including their direct competitors.

Many people believe that if you are bilingual you can interpret ... that's about as true as saying that because you have two hands you must be a concert pianist.

Beware of agencies claiming to run so-called "in-house" training courses for interpreters. These are usually cursory affairs and are no substitute for full training and experience. Similarly, academic achievements, however impressive, are no indication of qualification as an interpreter.

Membership of a Professional Body

Membership of a professional association is indicative of the professional attitude adopted by the interpreter towards his profession.

AIIC is the only worldwide association that sets standards for the profession which are recognised by the United Nations, the European Union and almost all inter-governmental organisations. Membership in AIIC is granted after rigorous vetting, on the basis of linguistic ability, professional competence and integrity. It denotes a high level of language competence, proper training in the techniques of interpreting, experience, a commitment to professionalism and a pledge to abide by AIIC's Code of Ethics. Furthermore, membership of AIIC is the only international certification of

interpreting ability. It is, for instance, the only accreditation recognised by the Australian National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) as their highest level of accreditation (Level 5) for conference interpreters.

Interpreting Experience

Members of AIIC provide services all over the world: to the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, Interpol, the World Bank, the World Health Organisation, governments and Heads of State, as well as to corporate and academic conferences. In the Asia Pacific Region, AIIC interpreters often work for UN organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Bank, the UNDP, the World Meteorological Organisation, the World Tourism Organisation and others. Many organisations based in

Relay Interpreting

In a multilingual conference it is important to minimise the risk of misunderstandings by using interpreters who can understand speakers directly, instead of translating another interpreter's version of the speaker. The latter is technically known as "relay interpreting" and should be avoided.

Membership of AIIC is the only international certification of interpreting ability.

Most professional interpreters have at least one active language and two passive languages in their combination (except in the case of Asian and some rare languages) [See *INTERPRETASIA # 1, August 1993, for Language Classification*]. It is useful to ascertain whether the team of interpreters you are being offered can meet this requirement.

Cost

Recruiting the best interpreters directly or through an AIIC consultant is likely to be cheaper than going through an intermediary (e.g. a translation or tour agency) in addition to providing a guarantee of the team's qualifications. [See article on *The Cost of a Professional Service* in this issue.]

Finally, when recruiting interpreters, do not be tempted to skimp. Hire the best professionals available. Book well ahead; good interpreters are much in demand. As an experienced conference organiser once said "*The most expensive meetings are those ruined by bad interpretation.*"

Remember, better no service at all than poor or unreliable interpretation.

Manuel Pastor

1. This article deals only with "conference interpreters", i.e. those professionals who work at conferences transposing simultaneously the message of a speaker into another language and cultural setting for listeners who do not understand the speaker. It does not deal with other types of interpreters, such as community interpreters or escort interpreters, nor with translators.

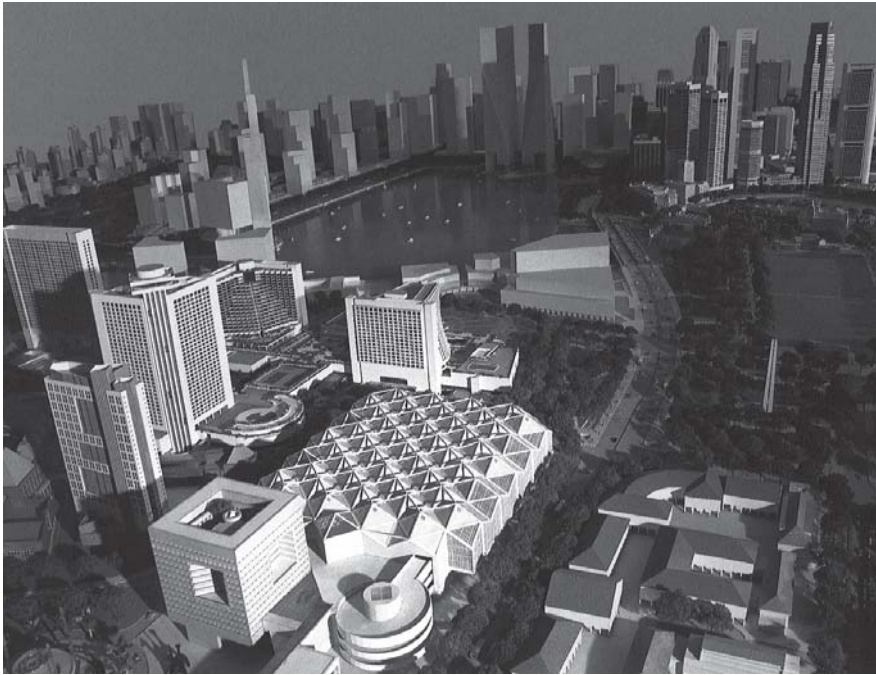


A satisfied user of simultaneous conference interpretation.

Europe and elsewhere hold congresses and assemblies in Asia Pacific and use the services of AIIC interpreters. It is worth checking whether your interpreters have worked for such organisations lately and have experience in a variety of fields.

The ability to interpret is a skill many claim but few truly possess.

CONFERENCE VENUES



The Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre enjoys a downtown location and is close to the civic, financial and business districts of Singapore

SINGAPORE: INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION MECCA

Southeast Asia and particularly Singapore have emerged in the past decade as major players on the world economic scene. Singapore has many advantages to offer. Its Changi Airport is the region's largest aviation hub, serving 59 airlines from all parts of the world. Its busy and efficient port is among the best. Singapore has been ranked Asia's leading convention city and one of the top ten in the world.

As a convention venue, Singapore offers an ideal location in a booming region and advanced infrastructure: satellite telecommunications, excellent transport and hotels, and modern convention centres. The latest of these is the Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre, part of Suntec City, located in the heart of the financial district, surrounded by prestigious hotels.

The Singapore Tourism Promotion Board provides information material and many services to conference organisers, advising, and coordinating bids for the successful staging of events in Singapore.

In 1995, Singapore launched a "Meet in Singapore 95" Year, attracting many conventions and meetings with benefits and incentives.

Multilingual Conference Venues in Singapore

The new **Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre (SICEC)** is the first purpose-built convention and exhibition facility in Singapore. The huge \$650 million building, with its striking modern architecture, is one of the largest convention and exhibition venues in the world. It is within minutes of more than 5,000 hotel rooms. Suntec City is on Singapore's efficient and clean Mass Railway Transport (MRT) system and has a direct link to Changi Airport only 20 minutes away.

Apart from its role as a state-of-the-art exhibition centre, SICEC offers a whole array of meeting facilities in its 28,000 square metres area. Three main halls are especially outfitted for meetings, including the large Convention Hall which can accommodate up to 12,000 delegates and operate with a 12-language simultaneous interpretation system. The multipurpose ballroom has movable acoustic partitions that make it possible to divide it into three rooms. The ballroom has a capacity of 2,000 people and is equipped with simultaneous interpretation booths in each

part. The 600-seat Auditorium is also equipped with booths and simultaneous interpretation system, although the booths, unfortunately, are not well located for their purpose.

All these meeting rooms have been designed for acoustic clarity and are equipped with infrared SI system and facilities for the hearing-impaired. In addition, there are another 26 smaller meeting rooms, some of which can be joined by removing partition walls. In all of them, mobile interpretation booths can be installed when needed.

The **Raffles Convention Centre**, which is somewhat older, has 7,000 square metres of meeting space. It is located in a huge shopping and office mall adjoining the Westin Stamford (1252 rooms) and the Westin Plaza (794 rooms) Hotels and has just undergone extensive renovations. The centre has several meeting rooms: The Raffles Ballroom, in theatre style, with a seating capacity of 3,500 and the Stamford Ballroom with a capacity of 1,000 people, both with simultaneous interpretation and audio-visual facilities. There are an additional 25 meeting rooms, some of which can be subdivided for smaller groups or as offices. Their seating capacity ranges from 25 to 300 people.

The **World Trade Centre**, located just opposite Sentosa Island, is the oldest conference and exhibition venue in Singapore. Now not often used for conferences, it is still a busy exhibition venue. For meetings, the Auditorium has 814 fixed tiered seats, six built-in interpreters' booths and six language channels, while the Conference Hall has a seating capacity of 400 and can be equipped with portable booths.

Hotel convention facilities

Most of the five-star and luxury hotels in Singapore also cater to conventions and other gatherings. For example, the Shangri-la Hotel has hosted prestigious meetings, such as the World Economic Forum which attracted dozens of ministers from all over the world. Multilingual communication was achieved by simultaneous interpretation between English, French, Chinese, Japanese and Russian provided by CIAP, with mobile booths and an infrared simultaneous interpretation system.

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Singapore has 18 hotels that can accommodate meetings of more than 400 delegates; it has 17 hotels with a capacity for meetings of 200 to 400 delegates. Indeed, it is true to say that most meetings take place in hotels. While most meetings take place in hotels, convention centres do provide invaluable services lacking in most hotels, such as sound-proof built-in booths.

Singapore is already preparing for the largest convention ever to be held in Asia, the Rotary International Convention, scheduled to attract up to 30,000 visitors from all parts of the world in the year 2000. Such truly international gatherings will earn Singapore the epithet it aspires to: "The place where the world comes together."

Marie-Christine Streuli

INFORMATION YOUR CONSULTANT INTERPRETER NEEDS

When you ask a consultant interpreter to provide you with a cost estimate for simultaneous interpretation services, he or she will need some information, including some points of special importance to the quality of the service.

- ❖ The **dates** of the conference.
- ❖ The exact conference **venue**.
- ❖ The conference **languages**. Which languages will be spoken and into which languages will interpretation be required?
- ❖ What proportion of speakers will be speaking each language?
- ❖ The daily **schedule of meetings**. Are there any non-working days during the conference? Please send your programme, even if it is provisional.
- ❖ If the meeting is very **technical**, interpreters may need a briefing session with your speakers, in addition to the usual full documentation a few weeks ahead of the event.
- ❖ How many meetings will be going on at the same time? Two or more concurrent meetings will require two or more teams of interpreters.
- ❖ Are there built-in simultaneous interpretation **booths**? Do they conform to international standards? Will you have to hire mobile booths? Do you have an equipment supplier? If necessary, CIAP can recommend or contact one for you.
- ❖ How many participants are expected at your meeting? You will need as many **headsets** as there are participants.
- ❖ Will there be presentations with slides, OHP transparencies, films? If so, you will need a **lapel microphone**.

- ❖ What is the conference budget? Is it enough to provide the number of languages you have planned for? CIAP can advise you on the language requirements adapted to your needs.

*Marie-Christine Streuli
& Salma Tejpar-Dang*



THE COST OF A PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Why do participants come to a conference? To share with others what they know, to hear what they have to say, in short to *communicate*. To do so, they will of course prefer to speak their own language or at least a language that they feel comfortable speaking. This can be done if there are professional conference interpreters and simultaneous interpretation equipment. Real professional conference interpretation makes true communication between participants of different languages and different cultural backgrounds possible.

How much does this kind of multilingual communication service cost? In relation to the total costs of a conference, probably less than you think.

Take the example of a five-day conference in Bangkok:

An individual **participant's costs** from another Asian country would come to about US\$2,000, allowing US\$750 for airfare, US\$150 per day for hotel accommodation, meals and incidentals and US\$500 for registration. Dividing this by five, a typical participant would be spending about US\$400 per day to attend the conference.

The **collective costs** of organising the conference, such as rental of meeting rooms, tea or coffee breaks, documents, field trips, audiovisual and simultaneous interpretation equipment, are usually financed by delegates' registration fees and sponsorships. The registration fee for a typical conference might be about US\$500 per participant, including the interpretation service in three languages.

Here are some examples of the cost per participant, per day, of providing **professional*** conference interpreters **and** equipment, for meetings of varying sizes and number of languages, calculated on the basis of our example of a five-day conference in Bangkok:

Cost per participant per day, in US dollars:

Partic.	2 langs	3 langs	4 langs
100	36	89	119
200	18	45	60
300	13	30	40
400	10	23	30
500	8	18	24

As these figures reveal, when spread out over the number of participants, the cost of simultaneous interpretation is not high compared to its advantages:

- (a) better communication which, after all, is the purpose of the conference;
- (b) higher attendance, as more participants will come;
- (c) more varied and interesting contributions from different regions and cultures;
- (d) greater prestige for the meeting;
- (e) less frustration resulting from not understanding participants who are forced to speak in a language they do not master.

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True *simultaneous* interpretation is a very difficult job which requires special training and experience, in addition to linguistic abilities. Taking non-professional staff or amateurs for this job, even at a third of the cost, is a waste of money and time, and a sure recipe for trouble at the meeting.

Professional interpretation at a major five-day conference usually costs less than

just one of the traditional banquets or receptions offered. Don't let yourself be tempted to skimp on the cost of interpretation. Take international communication seriously, as we do. You won't regret it.

**Jean-Pierre Allain
& Salma Tejpar-Dang**

* For a definition, see Manuel Pastor's article in this issue.



Indonesian, Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin and Spanish were the languages used during the 3rd New York Life Worldwide Sales Conference held in Rome this year. CIAP Associates Choi Jungwha and Socorro Browning worked together with other AIIC members, on that occasion.

INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY

Hongkong	International Federation of Female Lawyers
Kuala Lumpur	Asian Development Fund Donors' Conference
Sapporo	International Holstein Friesian Conference
Hongkong	International Congress for Infectious Diseases
Beijing	International Federation of Library Associations Congress
Hongkong	International Council of Social Welfare Congress
Kuala Lumpur	International Tropical Fruits Consultation
Hongkong	World Congress on Personnel Management
Bangkok	International Sugar Organisation Council Session
Tokyo	FIABCI - Intl. Federation of Real Estate Agents Assembly
Kuala Lumpur	International Association of Sportswriters Congress
Hongkong	Hong Kong Arts Festival
Bangkok	Regional Symposium on Comparative Law
Bali	ISSA -International Social Security Association Assembly
Seoul	FIATA - Intl. Federation of Shippers' Associations Assembly
Macau	IUFO - International Union of Family Organisations Conference
Yokohama	WVA/WSAVA - World Veterinary Congress
Bali	WMA - World Medical Association Assembly
Seoul	IDU - International Democrat Union Congress
Beijing	ISI - International Statistical Institute Congress
Jakarta	International Civil Engineering Seminar
Singapore	ACER Regional Managers Conference
Bandung	Non-Aligned Movement Summit & 40th Anniversary
Vancouver	World Trampoline Championships Conference 1996

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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 Organisation for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpreting and ISO 4043 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.



CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS ASIA PACIFIC

BANGKOK • DELHI • HONGKONG • PENANG • SEOUL • SINGAPORE • SYDNEY • TOKYO • VANCOUVER

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