

INTERPRETASIA

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EDITORIAL

Let the games begin!

This summer, athletes and sports officials from practically all over the world will descend upon Sydney for the Millennium Olympic Games. Joining them will be a small group of professional conference interpreters. In this issue of *INTERPRETASIA* we tell you how the interpreters will prepare for the world's most prestigious and largest sports event featuring 28 different disciplines.

In a related context, we also tell you how PCOs find professional interpreters for multilingual events.

The conference industry in Asia is picking up as the Asian economies recover. As a result, the need for trained conference interpreters is growing and will be met by the different translation and interpretation schools in the region which are presented in this issue. CIAP hopes to contribute to the greater success of this service industry in the Asia-Pacific region.

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

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PREPARING FOR THE GAMES

A Matter of Interpretation

Interpreting services for the Sydney Summer Olympics will be provided by more than 60 professional conference interpreters, about 55 consecutive interpreters, and literally hundreds of volunteer language specialists. The professional conference interpreters will provide interpretation for meetings, congresses, press conferences and media interviews prior to and during the games. What does this involve in a practical sense? How do professional interpreters prepare for a mega-conference like the Sydney Olympic Games, where 28 different sports will be contested by over 10,000 athletes?

In previous issues of *INTERPRETASIA* we have discussed the interpretation process and the training of professional conference interpreters. In simple terms, we have said that interpretation is a three-stage communication process that involves (a) understanding an incoming message, (b) processing the message and (c) transferring the message into another language. Professional conference interpreters acquire these skills after many years of training and practical experience, but the secret to their success lies in **preparing** every conference that requires their highly specialized services.

In *Interpreting for International Conferences*, which has arguably become the "bible" for all conference interpreters, Danica Seleskovitch states that "The first challenge faced by the interpreter is to acquire sufficient knowledge of the subject matter to be able to intelligently analyze the discussion that takes place... Interpreters are intelligent generalists who can organize the information originated by specialists in a rational manner".

Knowledge of Sports

"Interpreters must have an inborn curiosity and must have the ability to take an interest in each and every area of human activity". (Seleskovitch, 1978)

"Interpreters must have 'a sea of knowledge one inch deep', or preferably, one fathom deep."

Generalists or Specialists?

With very few exceptions, interpreters are generalists. Their level of knowledge need not be identical to that of the specialists, but they do need a comparable



To prepare for the Olympics, interpreters must not only become familiar with the rules and regulations of every Olympic sport, but must also possess a high level of understanding of each individual sport. Thus, when preparing for a press conference after a volleyball match, for example, the interpreter must know the rules of the game, recent changes to the scoring system, the role of the newly created "Libero" position, and any other relevant information that will assist the interpreter to assimilate the basic and complex concepts of this particular sport.

Months before the Games, interpreters will obtain this information by accessing the web pages of every Olympic sports association, reading relevant publications, watching different sporting events and, in general, becoming familiar with every possible aspect of the various Olympic sports (previous medal winners, favourites, athletes' bio-data, etc.).

level of intelligence and analytical ability. In other words, interpreters must have "a sea of knowledge one inch deep", or preferably, one fathom deep.

In preparing for the Olympics, interpreters must not only concentrate on the sports they practice, they enjoy or are experts in. They must master the ins and outs of 28 different sports and over 400 different disciplines of these sports. From the rules of Olympic Basketball to the point scoring system of Olympic Boxing, interpreters should have that "one-fathom-deep" knowledge of every sport stored in their passive memory. Then, when called upon to interpret, they must transfer the information stored in their passive memory to their active memory for the duration of a specific assignment.

Specialized Terminology

The acquisition of terminology is an ongoing, never-ending process for all interpreters. Prior to the Games they must consult different sources of terminology, including the official glossaries published by the different sporting organizations. The terminology source for a particular sport may

be monolingual, but this may be more helpful than a bi-lingual glossary, as it allows the interpreter to see the words placed in a meaningful context.

However, neither glossaries nor terminology obtained through monolingual documents are appropriate substitutes to the information that must be obtained by interpreters during the Games.

Sometimes the words found in dictionaries or glossaries are not those used by the delegates, coaches or athletes, or the general public. In soccer, for example, the English word "penalty" appears in some Spanish-English dictionaries as "*falta máxima dentro del área*" (maximum foul inside the area – quite a mouthful), an expression definitely not used by Spanish speakers who prefer the English transfer "*penal*" or "*penalti*".

Final Thought

Preparing for an interpreting assignment such as the Olympic Games, or for that matter

"The acquisition of terminology is an ongoing, never-ending process for all interpreters."

any major conference, involves hard work over a period of many months. Nevertheless, it is also a very rewarding and truly enjoyable experience. The provision of language services for an event of this magnitude requires a real team effort from a group of

dedicated professionals who love their work and do their utmost to ensure that they contribute to the success of the event.

Let the games begin!

Manuel Pastor



Hiring Interpreters: A PCO's Roadmap

Most international conferences are planned by an organising committee from the institution or organisation that hosts the conference. This committee often entrusts a professional conference organiser (PCO) with the logistical aspects of the conference. When simultaneous interpretation in several languages is needed, the PCO is faced with the task of finding and choosing the right interpreters.

Interpreters are independent freelance professionals, like architects, dentists, psychologists or lawyers. Each interpreter has a particular language combination, background and experience, and sets her or his fees and conditions. For a conference you need a team of interpreters, not just one interpreter. Finding the right ones, understanding how the language combinations work and negotiating the details with each one of them is a complicated and lengthy business. Usually, therefore, the PCO will approach a consultant interpreter to set up a team. A consultant interpreter is a professional interpreter who not only interprets at conferences but also organises teams of interpreters and advises

A consultant interpreter is a professional interpreter who not only interprets at conferences but also organises teams of interpreters and advises clients on the best way to make use of the team and its language abilities.



The team of interpreters at the WCIT 2000 Information Technology Congress, Taipei, June 2000

clients on the best way to make use of the team and its language abilities.

To find a consultant interpreter – there are not many – a PCO may contact someone he has dealt with before, he may consult people who have organised other conferences or ask an interpreter he knows, or he may search on the Internet. Once he has identified consultant interpreters, he will ask them to provide a quote for the simultaneous interpretation services

required.

At this point, the consultant interpreter needs to ascertain from the PCO:

- (a) the exact dates that interpretation will be needed, which may not be the same as the total conference days – e.g. the first day may be for registration only, the last for field trips;
- (b) the languages spoken at the conference and languages into which interpretation is required, which may not be necessarily the same, e.g. English, French and Japanese are spoken, but only interpretation into Japanese and English is needed;
- (c) what proportion of delegates will be speaking each language – this influences team composition;

(d) the subject of the conference (some interpreters are better at certain subjects, some prefer to work only on specific subjects); if the conference is very technical, a briefing day for the interpreters may be needed;

(e) the conference venue;

(f) the provisional programme and schedule of meetings – to estimate the work load and check for days during the conference when there are no meetings, e.g. those set aside for excursions;

(g) the conference format: mainly presentations from the rostrum or debates among all participants – a string of presentations rapidly read for a whole day is much more tiring;

(h) how many meetings with interpretation will be running concurrently – this determines whether the conference needs one or several teams of interpreters.

Now the consultant interpreter must prepare a cost estimate based on the information obtained. (S)he makes a roster of the interpreters whose qualifications fit the conference requirements. (S)he will then send out an enquiry of availability to the interpreters, specifying the subject of the conference, the dates, fees and other conditions that will be included in the quote. This will involve lengthy correspondence between the consultant interpreter and the potential team members until a full team is constituted. Only then can a quote be prepared for the PCO.

Since there are very few professional conference interpreters in most Asian cities, some will have to be imported for almost all conferences. This entails travel costs, fees for the days spent travelling during which the interpreter is unable to accept another assignment, hotel accommodation plus meals and incidentals. All these need to be included in the quotation.

The consultant interpreter will submit the quotation to the PCO, who will compare it to quotations from other providers. This can prove difficult, since the quotations may not actually be comparable. There are

a number of intermediaries, agencies, SI equipment suppliers and others who claim to be able to provide a team of interpreters. Most of them know very little about simultaneous interpretation and how difficult it is. Some will claim to have a team of interpreters, when in fact they have none. And some will contact people who speak two languages or more but are not conference interpreters. Thus, a lower quotation may, in fact, be for something totally different from the service and quality being offered by the professional consultant interpreter. It amounts to comparing apples with oranges, or more concretely professional interpreters and charlatans.

A competent PCO, however, will choose the professional consultant interpreter who is a trained conference interpreter and works only with professional colleagues. (S)he will negotiate the terms and perhaps try to reduce some parts of the quotation. But usually, a good PCO recognizes that quality professional interpretation is relatively expensive – not because interpreters' fees are high, but because a team of 4, 6, 8 or more interpreters is required. Actually, interpreters' fees are modest, given their qualifications and the work they do.

Once the PCO and the consultant interpreter agree, they sign a master contract or agreement, entrusting the consultant interpreter with the task of hiring the team of interpreters and containing a clause of financial liability in case the conference is

"The consultant interpreter remains the link between the conference organiser and the team."

postponed or cancelled. Indeed, once the interpreters are hired, they will have to refuse any other assignment for the dates of the conference and thus lose out on other potential income. The consultant interpreter will prepare

individual contracts for each interpreter and have them signed by the PCO or the chairperson of the organising committee and the respective interpreter. (S)he will also ensure that background documentation about the conference subject is provided to all the interpreters well ahead of the conference, so that they can prepare for it.

The daily fee for conference interpreters covers not only the conference days, but also the days spent preparing for it. Interpreters are generalists, with a vast knowledge of many subjects, but they need to study the subject and prepare glossaries for each specific conference. To interpret you need to understand what is being said, and that depends as much on knowledge of the subject as of the language.

After contracts have been signed and returned to the PCO, the consultant interpreter remains the link between the conference organiser and the team. (S)he ensures that conference documents reach the interpreters, that accommodation is taken care of, that airfares, fees and other dues are paid, that proper simultaneous interpretation booths and equipment are installed and working, and that everything regarding interpretation at the conference runs smoothly.

Jean-Pierre Allain



CIAP and AIIC interpreters and conference staff at the 47th INTOSAI Governing Board Meeting, Seoul, May 2000.

Training Conference Interpreters in East Asia

In Korea, interpretation and translation became established as a discipline in 1988 at the time of the Seoul Olympic Games. The demand for people with knowledge of foreign languages and translation or interpretation skills skyrocketed. During the Gulf War – said to be the first war conducted on television – broadcasts from American networks were interpreted live on Korean national television by conference interpreters. Korean viewers were riveted to the almost constant broadcasts of what was happening half way across the globe and were just as curious about the performance of the interpreters. It was the first time that many of them got to experience conference interpretation.

Founded in 1979, the Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies was the first institution to teach interpretation and translation in Korea. Most students are Korean and master one foreign language, though studies in three-language combinations are offered. Apart from Korean, eight foreign languages are taught: English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic. A two-year program leads to a master's degree in translation or interpretation.

The Ewha Women's University in Seoul established its Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation in 1997. During its first two years, courses were offered in Korean-English only; this year, a Korean-French program has been added. The university hopes to offer other languages later. The program is at M.A. level, similar to that of the GSIT.

Boosted by the overwhelming interest in interpretation and translation and also to revive the floundering liberal arts departments, several colleges in Korea have begun to offer interpretation and translation courses at the undergraduate level. In most cases, however, these courses are no more than fancy versions of language classes.

In Japan, the Asian country with the largest number of conference interpreters, PCO-organized interpreter training courses dominate the scene. Simul Academy offers interpretation courses from Japanese into English, Chinese and French and from those languages into Japanese. Although not to university-degree level, this school trains a large number of the Japanese interpreters. At the introductory level, consecutive interpretation skills are taught for 19 weeks

(twice a week), while the basic programme offers simultaneous interpretation training for so-called "in-house interpreters" for a similar period. The highest-level course teaches simultaneous interpretation for freelance conference interpreters.

Among other well-known courses are those offered by ISS (English, Korean, and Spanish), Inter School (English, Chinese, French and Korean), Congress Institute (English, Korean and Spanish), and International Education Centre (English). The NHK Bi-Lingual Centre offers courses in broadcast interpreter training, broadcast interpreting having become a major sub-sector in Japan (as well as in London at the BBC).

There are some thirty universities throughout the country where under-graduate level interpreter training is offered, many of which, however, find themselves emphasizing language skills rather than interpreting skills as such. Daito Bunka University in Tokyo has a small programme for interpretation. However, although Japanese is extensively used at bilingual meetings and conferences in Japan, no university, to our knowledge, offers separate master's degree courses in translation and interpretation.

"The School of Interpretation and Translation at the Beijing Foreign Studies University has taken over the training courses that were started several years ago by the United Nations."

In Taiwan, the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation Studies at the Fu Jen Catholic University was founded in 1988 and specializes in translation and interpretation from and into Mandarin Chinese. The combinations available are with Japanese (for translation and interpretation) and French and German (for translation only) for a programme in one or two specializations: translation and conference interpretation with translation. In 1996 the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation opened at the National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei. It too offers an M.A. degree in translation and interpretation from English and French into and from Chinese.

In the People's Republic of China, the School of Interpretation and Translation at the Beijing Foreign Studies University has

taken over the training courses that were started several years ago by the United Nations. It offers a master's degree in translation and interpretation from Mandarin into and from English. Until recently,

interpreters in China were civil servants, fluent in English or another foreign language who would interpret at conferences organised by the ministry to which they were attached. After a few years, they were usually promoted to other posts. Now there are several freelance Chinese professional interpreters based in Beijing, many of whom used to work for United Nations agencies in the United States or Europe.

As for the remaining East Asian countries, the Hong Kong government

runs a training course for its own interpreters in Mandarin, Cantonese and English. In Thailand, three universities have started courses to train interpreters with Thai and a foreign language, but there are no complete degree-courses yet. Thai, Indonesian, Vietnamese and Malay, as conference languages, all face the problem of there not being enough work for professional interpreters with those languages to make a living. Interpretation in those languages is, therefore, usually a sideline to teaching, business or the civil service.

Jungwha S. Choi and Jean-Pierre Allain



Prof. Jungwha S. Choi, member of AIIC, addressing students at the Hankuk University in Seoul on the occasion of a visit by Prof. C. Thierry, Paris and Prof. E. Drozdale, London.

AIIC's Rendezvous with the Millennium

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) held its 23rd Assembly in Dakar, Senegal, from 11 to 14 January 2000. It was a remarkable Assembly in many ways. It was the first to be held on the African continent, the first in the new millennium, the first that completed its agenda almost on the hour scheduled, the first to adopt the Programme and Budget for the next triennium and the corresponding membership dues, without delegating all or part of this task to the Council. It was remarkable also because of the harmonious atmosphere that prevailed throughout which allowed rapid progress on difficult subjects. This was largely thanks to the able leadership of President Malick Sy as well as to the excellent preparation of this Assembly.

The three preceding years had been rough on the Association. It had to fend off a challenge of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) of the United States on its professional standards which took up much time and energy. The lengthy proceedings were also a cause of tension among members. But eventually, common sense and professionalism prevailed: the FTC charges were all dismissed. AIIC's professional standards remain intact and strong, a guarantee of its members' ethical and professional behaviour.

The Assembly elected new officers, a new Council and a new President, Jean-Pierre Allain, from the Asia-Pacific region. Apart

from adopting a simplified procedure for the admission of new members, the Assembly set an ambitious programme of activities for the next three years, which includes:

- Drafting a protocol for video-conference and tele-conference interpretation;
- Developing a programme, the "New Multilingualism Project", for the integration of new languages into conference interpretation as a result of the expansion of the European Union;
- Strengthening links with interpreter schools to seek common standards of admission and graduation;
- Preparing proposals to streamline the structures of the Association;
- Continuing to work on an International Convention for the Definition and Recognition of the Profession of Conference Interpreter;
- Further developing the AIIC website and internal on-line communication.

After successfully negotiating a new agreement on working conditions for all interpreters with the European Union last year, AIIC has negotiated this year with the United Nations System for renewal of its agreement. AIIC is recognized by major partners in the conference industry as *the* representative of all conference interpreters, be they members or not.

Jean-Pierre Allain

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TEAMS OF INTERPRETERS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY

Oct. 1999	Singapore	World Economic Forum
Oct. 1999	Hong Kong	ICF Conference
Oct. 1999	Victoria	Joint Canadian Ombudsman's Association/USOA Ombudsman Conference
Nov. 1999	Hong Kong	International Federation of Oil Manufacturers Associations Congress
Dec. 1999	Hong Kong	Hongkong-Japan Business Cooperation Council Committees Plenary
Mar. 2000	Bali	Panam Life Insurance Seminar
Apr. 2000	Penang	3COM Computer Systems Seminar
Apr. 2000	Seattle	Microsoft Government Leaders' Conference
Apr. 2000	Hong Kong	International Public Procurement Association Conference: Ethics, Corruption and Audit
May 2000	Seoul	International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) - Governing Board Meeting
June 2000	Tokyo	International Industrial Relations Association Conference
June 2000	Tokyo	Hachette-Fujingaho Publishers Trilateral Conference
June 2000	Taipei	WCIT 2000: World Conference on Information Technology
July 2000	Kuala Lumpur	TFNET: Tropical Fruits Network Assembly
Aug. 2000	Kuala Lumpur	IUFRO World Forestry Congress 2000

Visit our website! www.ciap.net

WHAT IS AIIC?

Founded 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 2,500 members in 70 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

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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 • BEIJING • DELHI • HONGKONG • SEOUL • SINGAPORE • SYDNEY • TOKYO • VANCOUVER

*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*