Understanding Interpretation and Translation
People commonly use the words “Interpretation” and “Translation” interchangeably. However, these are two very different activities, requiring different skills and experiences from the Interpreter or Translator.

“Interpretation” is the act of rendering the spoken or signed language into another spoken or signed language. Therefore, interpreters are used whenever the message is spoken.

“Translation”, in contrast to interpretation, is the act of rendering written language into another written language. Here, translators are used whenever a message is written, regardless of the written media (i.e., text, books, written briefs, websites, etc.). Note that audio recordings may also be translated.

Interpretation → Spoken Messages
Translation → Written Messages
Interpretation is a complex practice that requires the interpreter to fully understand, analyze, and process spoken or signed messages. The interpreter, after processing this information, renders the message into another language.

It is useful to understand the modes of interpreting, the areas of interpreting and some of the qualifications that are required in interpreting.
Consecutive Interpreting requires highly specialized interpretation skill. A consecutive interpreter renders the speaker’s message into another language when the speaker pauses to allow interpretation.

Simultaneous Interpreting also requires highly specialized interpretation skill. However, a simultaneous interpreter renders the speakers’ message into another language while the speaker continues to speak.
Areas of Interpreting

The areas of interpreting may require unique skills and experiences from the interpreter to properly render the source message into the target language. A few of the leading types of interpretation are described here:

- **Diplomatic** – interpretation that facilitates communication between government and/or international organizations; may be simultaneous or consecutive depending on the context.
- **Liaison** – also known as “escort interpreting” -- consecutive interpreting while accompanying visiting individuals or groups to a location.
- **Conference** – Interpreting for the benefit of people attending congresses, conventions, summits, or other meetings. It is most often performed in the simultaneous mode, but may be performed consecutively. The best example of this occurs when the U.N. is in session where each delegation has a simultaneous interpreter.
Areas of Interpreting (cont’d)

• **Legal** – interpreting in settings that are related to the administration of justice. This area encompasses a wide variety of legal settings, within court settings, out-of-court settings, and quasi-judicial proceedings.

• **Conflict Zone/Disaster Interpreting** – supports individuals affected by conflict, disaster or other emergency situations. These may include humanitarian and military interpreting, depending on the context.

• **Community and others** – there are a number of other interpreting settings for social services, community support, education and healthcare activities.
Interpreters need more than language proficiency in order to be effective. They need a broad education to handle a number of topics and specific knowledge of subject matter for highly technical information.

**Additional Skills & Abilities**

- Concentration
- Analytical Skills
- Short Term Memory
- Note-Taking Skills
- Clear Delivery
- Interpersonal Skills
- Cultural Awareness
- Flexibility
Determining the Interpretation Requirements

To better understand your needs, your Requirements Liaison will ask you a number of questions to help determine your needs. Some of these include:

Event Characteristics
In order to recommend the best number of interpreters and their work schedule, your Requirements Liaison will ask you for details about the setting, venue, meeting times, and any outside functions that the interpreter is likely to attend.

Interpretation Characteristics
Your Requirements Liaison will discuss with you any mode of interpretation (i.e., consecutive or simultaneous), area of interpretation, specific linguistic background information and any specialized knowledge that the interpreter may need.
Determining the Interpretation Requirements (Cont’d)

Language Pairs

In most cases, the language pairs will be English-to-Target Language. However, in some cases, it may be necessary to interpret between two non-English languages or from Target Language-to-English.

Security Clearance Requirements

Please discuss any security clearance requirements with your Requirements Liaison.
Estimating and Planning

Planning for the best number of interpreters and appropriate breaks is ESSENTIAL to minimize interpreter fatigue and maximize accuracy and efficiency. In addition, adequate time must be allowed for interpreter preparation. Deviating from the recommended times will affect the interpreters’ performance. The Guidelines reflect the recommendations by the ASTM® Standard Practice for Language Interpretation (F430100).

Interpreter Preparation

- Must have access to or be briefed on pertinent materials to be discussed
- Must have adequate time to research the subject matter
- Must have adequate time to test and use the Technical Equipment
Planning for Consecutive Interpretation

Consecutive Interpretation

- Two interpreters are recommended for meetings lasting more than two hours or meetings that are complex and highly technical
- If only one interpreter is used, breaks should be allowed at the Interpreter’s discretion
Simultaneous Interpretation

- Two interpreters are required per language pair for any event lasting more than one hour
- Three interpreters are recommended for bi-directional interpreting events
- Interpreters are expected to switch off every 15 to 20 minutes – so this should be considered in advance
Translation

*Translation* is often used to describe a variety of steps in a process that renders the written message in a source language to the target message.

It is useful to understand the types of finished products available in translation, the main steps in the translation process, and the qualifications necessary for a translator.
Translation Uses

While there are countless ways of defining the use of translations, some other common uses of the translation product may require less rigorous formatting and quality controls. Some of these include:

- **Gisting and Abstraction** – Summarizing abstracts of the source material.
- **Informational Use** – Translating documents, emails, and other text for personal use and understanding.
- **Extraction of Information** – Reviewing target language materials for answers to specific questions.
- **Final Translated Copy** – Translating materials for use in briefings, meetings, conferences where high-quality text is required without artistic, graphical or literary editing.
- **Polished Translation** – Editing materials to be published or used publically in finished products like marketing documents, books, websites, etc.
Process of Rendering a Polished Translation

Delivering “Polished Translation” requires many steps, many people with specialized skills, and a long turn-around time.

1. Requirements Specification
2. Identifying Key Terminology from the Requestor and with Assistance from Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
3. Translation by Translator(s)
4. Editing by Bilingual Editor
5. Final Formatting, Compilation by Web Designers, Graphic Designers and Others Depending on the Project
6. Proofing, Verification, Quality Control by Translation Reviewers, Monolingual Editors, Third Party Reviewers and Others as Needed
7. Delivery to Client
The NLSC’s simplified process allows for accuracy and efficiency in the final translation copy to fulfill gap or surge requirements.

- Requirements Specification with Requirements Liaison
- Identifying Key Terminology from the Requestor
- Translation by Translator(s)
- QC Review and Editing of Translation Copy
- Delivery to Client

With Assistance from Subject Matter Expert
Translator’s Qualifications

In addition to general education skills and language proficiency, there are a number of areas that factor into a translator’s experience. These may include:

• Certification from a Translation Association
• A Degree in Translation from a Recognized Institute of Higher Learning
• Experience
• References
• Sample Translations
• Subject Field Competence
Translation Requirements Specification

Your Requirements Liaison will ask you a number of questions that will help determine your translation needs. These may include:

- Source and Target Languages (Including Dialects)
- The Use of the Final Translation Product
- Number of Source Words
- Document Type (Word, PPT, etc.)
- Deadlines for Materials and Completed Product
- Complexity of Materials
  - Technical Terminology
  - Subject Matter
  - Graphic Design

*Please note: If the translation product is used for an interpretation event, it is recommended to use different individuals for the interpretation and translation phases of the project when feasible. The skills sets are highly specialized for each type of activity.
Conclusion

• Translation and interpretation are separate and unique activities. While some individuals are capable of both, most professionals specialize in one or the other.

• For translation and interpretation to be most successful, clients need to determine their specific requirements and the purpose(s) underlying these requirements.

• Working in cooperation with the Requirements Liaison and providing a POC to answer interpreter and translator questions enhances the level of accuracy and efficiency.
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