



Tips for an Interpreter-Friendly Presentation

By Ewandro Magalhães

As much as we hate to admit it, interpreters make mistakes. Yet, holding interpreters solely responsible for successful communication and betting on their infallibility is a utopian dream. Ultimately, speakers should be equally accountable for the clarity and translatability of the ideas and words that make up their discourse. In fact, interpreting quality will improve greatly if some basic precautions are taken and all parties involved are aware of the necessity for an interpreter. The following is a document I used to share with speakers prior to their conferences to help them focus on some important yet commonly overlooked details. Feel free to pass it along to prospective speakers in those circumstances where you have been cleared to approach them directly. Do not contact speakers unless you have permission, especially if you are interpreting meetings

through an international organization or an agency.

Dear guest speaker:

Your presentation will be interpreted simultaneously for the benefit of participants who are not proficient in your language. The success of your presentation will depend greatly on the job done by the interpreters. While they have been trained to follow rather demanding and technically complex speeches, the quality of their rendering will be increased significantly if you care to follow some of the recommendations listed below. The idea is to enhance the impact of your communication while minimizing content loss. Please take a minute to review the list of simple things that you can do before, during, and after your lecture to make

sure your presentation is interpreted to the best of the interpreters' ability.

Before the Conference

- E-mail the event organizers or one of the chief interpreters copies of all materials you intend to use (texts, PowerPoint files, etc.). It does not have to be the latest version.
- Ask your host to disclose your e-mail or contact information to the chief interpreter in charge of the conference.
- Try to reduce, or eliminate altogether, the use of acronyms and abbreviations in your presentation. Depending on the target language, they may not make sense or be nonexistent.

- When preparing your visual aids, make sure to use fonts, shapes, and colors that are legible and clear even for someone in the very back of the room. In most cases, this is where the interpreters will be.
- Make sure to take a hard copy of your presentation and biography with you to the event.
- Save the latest version of your presentation and reference material on a flash drive that you can share with the interpreters.

On the Day of the Conference

- Make yourself available to the interpreters before the event so you can cover the most important points of your presentation and update them on any last-minute changes. This meeting need not take more than a few minutes.
- Point out any terms that must be kept in the original language.
- Try to summarize, in a few simple words, the overall objective of your lecture and the conclusions you hope to reach.
- Leave any printed material you will be reading during your presentation with the interpreters. This is particularly important in the case of quotations and literary texts (poetry and/or prose), but please see the next item.
- Keep the amount of quotations to the absolute minimum. Poetry should be avoided altogether, unless the text has been submitted in advance.

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- Let your interpreters preview any videos you plan to use in your presentation.
- Talk to the interpreters about any jokes or humorous remarks you plan to make. Jokes do not lend themselves very easily to interpretation, especially if they involve puns and regional sayings.

During the Presentation

- Speak clearly and audibly at all times. If possible, run a sound check to make sure the interpreters can hear you satisfactorily.
- Avoid overly long sentences.
- Be particularly careful when pronouncing Latin names or words in a language that is foreign to you. Have your interpreters proof in advance anything you may want to say in the audience's language.
- Make sure to leave any slides or transparencies on-screen a few seconds longer than usual before moving on to the next. This should allow the interpreters time to finish reading any relevant information.
- Get used to a longer-than-usual delay in audience response. Interpreters are often a few words behind the speaker. Also note that those in the audience who do not need the

services of an interpreter may react to your words earlier.

- Always speak into the microphone, even if you are addressing a specific person in the audience. Remember that this person may be relying on the interpreters and can only hear what you say through the interpreters.
- If somebody in the audience asks you a question or offers a comment in your own language, please make sure to allow enough time for the interpreters to interpret it for the rest of the audience. Do not bother to repeat questions or comments heard in your own language for the benefit of others in the audience. The interpreters will do this for you.
- Always turn off a lapel mic when you leave the room, especially if you plan to go to the restroom.

After the Conference

- Talk to the interpreters and give them your impressions of the job they performed. Pinpoint any difficulties encountered and call their attention to any misinterpretation of which you are aware.
- Invite the interpreters to provide feedback regarding your presentation. See what could be done to help improve the interpretation in the future.

Tips for an Interpreter-Friendly Presentation Continued

- Write a brief statement on the quality of the interpreting provided. Your criticisms will help the interpreters identify and correct any shortcomings. Your praise will encourage them to keep up the good work.

Please keep in mind that these recommendations are mere reminders. Follow as many as you can without compromising your natural presenting style. The interpreters, and the audience, thank you for your cooperation.

TMI?

Speakers may not always adhere to the above, in whole or in part. More experienced speakers may tend to look upon the above as an overkill or TMI (too much information). Some interpreters argue that the tips may sound a bit overzealous and risk making us look unnecessarily vulnerable. In my experience, however, these guidelines have been mostly welcomed by speakers. If anything, sharing them makes you stand out as a conscientious and professional interpreter with a true desire to serve. It

may require you to push your ego aside for a moment, but it will make you a better interpreter, guaranteed.

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What devices can I use?

You can use any iPhone, iPad, BlackBerry, and Android phone or tablet, as well as any smartphone with web-enabled browser capability.

What if I don't have a smartphone?

No problem. The app can be viewed through the web browser of any computer.

Who has access to this app?

No registered attendees will have access. When the app is ready for downloading, attendees will receive the required username and password.

New for 2012!

ATA 53rd Annual Conference *Mobile App*

This FREE app will put the entire conference (and SO much more) at your fingertips. It is also an exciting tool you can use to connect with other attendees.

Here are just SOME of the features

Sessions: Browse schedule, abstracts, and bios easily . Create a personal schedule . View handouts and slides . Submit evaluations instantly . Contact speakers with follow-up questions

Networking: Connect instantly with your fellow attendees . Click to call or e-mail for a meeting or lunch date . View attendee résumés, bios, and websites . Check in with Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn—all integrated within the app to help you stay in touch

Exhibitors/Sponsors: Create your own list of booths to visit . Use interactive floor plans to locate booths . View company descriptions and contact information . Click to call, e-mail, or visit a company's website

More Features: Receive schedule updates and alerts as they happen . Create meetings or activities and add them to your personal schedule . Find places to eat or visit and view contact information and map location . Use keywords to search the entire app

What's the BEST part? The app will be available BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER the conference. The app should be available by mid-September.

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