Name: _____ Date: _____

Interpreting at the Speed of a Speaker

Circle group

At a world meeting, a speaker talks in one language. Listeners wear headsets and hear the same message in another language, just a few seconds later. This is called simultaneous interpreting. It is one of the hardest jobs with language.

An interpreter works with spoken words. A translator works with written words. Interpreters sit in a small soundproof booth. They listen through headphones and speak into a microphone while the speaker keeps going. They cannot stop to look up a word. At the same time, they hear the next sentence, understand this one, and speak the last one.

Good interpreters do not swap words one by one. Many sayings do not carry over. A joke in one language may confuse people in another. So interpreters catch the meaning and tone. Then they pick natural words in the new language.

The effort is so great that interpreters work in pairs and trade places. While one speaks, the partner rests and may write down numbers or names. Interpreters also prepare. Before a meeting, they read the plan and make word lists of special terms.

Another kind is consecutive interpreting. The speaker stops after a few sentences. Then the interpreter gives the message. Both kinds have the same goal. They help people understand each other.

Questions

1. How is an interpreter different from a translator?

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2. Where do simultaneous interpreters sit?

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3. Why do interpreters work in pairs and trade places?

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4. What do interpreters do to get ready before a meeting?

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5. How does consecutive interpreting work?

6. Why might a joke fail if it were swapped word for word into another language?

7. Why do good interpreters catch the meaning and tone?

Words to know

simultaneous: happening at the same time as something else
interpreter: a person who says spoken words in another language
translator: a person who changes written words into another language
tone: the feeling or attitude in the way something is said
consecutive: one after another, not at the same time

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Interpreting at the Speed of a Speaker

Triangle group

At an international conference, a speaker talks in one language while listeners wearing headsets hear the same message in another, with only a few seconds of delay. This is simultaneous interpreting, and it is among the most demanding jobs that involve language.

An interpreter, who works with spoken words, is different from a translator, who works with written ones. Interpreters sit in a small soundproof booth, listen through headphones, and speak into a microphone while the speaker keeps talking. They cannot stop to look up a word. At the same moment, they are listening to the next sentence, understanding the current one, and speaking the one before.

Good interpreters do not swap words one for one. Many expressions do not carry over directly, and a joke or saying that makes sense in one language may confuse listeners in another. Interpreters therefore capture the meaning and tone of what was said and then choose natural words in the new language.

Because the mental effort is so intense, interpreters usually work in pairs and trade places every so often. While one speaks, the partner rests, follows along, and may jot down numbers or names to help. Preparation matters as well. Before a meeting, interpreters read the agenda and build word lists of technical terms so they are not caught by surprise.

Another kind, consecutive interpreting, has the speaker pause after a few sentences so the interpreter can give the message afterward. Either way, the interpreter's goal is the same: to let people understand each other clearly.

Questions

1. How is an interpreter different from a translator?

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2. Where do simultaneous interpreters sit while they work?

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3. Why do interpreters work in pairs and trade places?

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4. What do interpreters do to prepare before a meeting?

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_____

5. How does consecutive interpreting work?

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_____

6. Why might a joke fail if it were swapped word for word into another language?

_____

_____

7. Why do good interpreters focus on meaning and tone?

_____

_____

Words to know

simultaneous: happening at the same time as something else
interpreter: a person who says spoken words in another language
translator: a person who changes written words into another language
tone: the feeling or attitude in the way something is said
consecutive: one after another, not at the same time

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Interpreting at the Speed of a Speaker

Square group

At an international conference, a speaker delivers remarks in one language while listeners wearing headsets hear the very same message in another language, delayed by only a few seconds. This is known as simultaneous interpreting, and it ranks among the most demanding occupations that involve language.

An interpreter, who works with spoken words, is quite different from a translator, who works with written ones. Interpreters sit inside a small soundproof booth, listen through headphones, and speak into a microphone while the speaker continues without pause. They cannot stop to look up an unfamiliar word. At the same moment, they are listening to the upcoming sentence, understanding the present one, and speaking the one that came before.

Skilled interpreters do not exchange words one for one. Many expressions fail to carry over directly, and a joke or saying that makes perfect sense in one language may bewilder listeners in another. Interpreters therefore capture the meaning and tone of what was said and then choose natural, fitting words in the new language.

Because the mental effort is so intense, interpreters generally work in pairs and trade places at regular intervals. While one speaks, the partner rests, follows along, and may jot down numbers or names to help. Preparation matters just as much. Before a meeting, interpreters read the agenda and compile word lists of technical terms so that nothing catches them by surprise.

A second approach, consecutive interpreting, has the speaker pause after a few sentences so that the interpreter can deliver the message afterward. Whichever method is used, the interpreter's goal remains the same: to let people understand one another clearly.

Questions

1. How does an interpreter differ from a translator?

_____

_____

2. Where do simultaneous interpreters sit while they work?

_____

_____

3. Why do interpreters work in pairs and trade places at regular intervals?

_____

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4. What do interpreters do to prepare before a meeting?

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5. How does consecutive interpreting work?

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6. Why might a joke fail if it were exchanged word for word into another language?

_____

_____

7. Why do skilled interpreters concentrate on meaning and tone?

_____

_____

Words to know

simultaneous: happening at the same time as something else
interpreter: a person who says spoken words in another language
translator: a person who changes written words into another language
tone: the feeling or attitude in the way something is said
consecutive: one after another, not at the same time

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Interpreting at the Speed of a Speaker

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Interpreting at the Speed of a Speaker

Easier · 212 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.5

1. An interpreter works with spoken words, and a translator works with written words.
2. In a small soundproof booth.
3. The effort is so great that they need to rest.
4. They read the plan and make word lists of special terms.
5. The speaker stops after a few sentences, and then the interpreter gives the message.
6. Many sayings do not carry over and could confuse the listeners.
7. Natural words that keep the speaker's meaning help people understand better than word swaps.

Triangle: Interpreting at the Speed of a Speaker

This passage · 254 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 10

1. An interpreter works with spoken words, and a translator works with written words.
2. In a small soundproof booth.
3. The mental effort is so intense that they need to rest.
4. They read the agenda and build word lists of technical terms.
5. The speaker pauses after a few sentences so the interpreter can give the message afterward.
6. Many sayings do not carry over directly and could confuse the listeners.
7. Natural words that keep the speaker's meaning help listeners understand better than exact word swaps.

Square: Interpreting at the Speed of a Speaker

Harder · 270 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 11.4

1. An interpreter works with spoken words, while a translator works with written ones.
2. Inside a small soundproof booth.
3. The mental effort is so intense that they need to rest.
4. They read the agenda and compile word lists of technical terms.
5. The speaker pauses after a few sentences so the interpreter can deliver the message afterward.
6. Many expressions fail to carry over directly and could bewilder the listeners.
7. Natural words that preserve the speaker's meaning help listeners understand far better than exact word swaps.