Introduction to Consecutive Interpreting

Translation and Interpreting

General translation/interpretation is just what you think - the translation or interpretation of non-specific language that does not require any specialized vocabulary or knowledge. However, the best translators and interpreters read extensively in order to be up-to-date with current events and trends so that they are able to do their work to the best of their ability, having knowledge of what they might be asked to convert. In addition, good translators and interpreters make an effort to read about whatever topic they are currently working on. If a translator is asked to translate an article on organic farming, for example, he or she would be well served to read about organic farming in both languages in order to understand the topic and the accepted terms used in each language.

Specialized translation or interpretation refers to domains which require at the very least that the person be extremely well read in the domain. Even better is training in the field (such as a college degree in the subject, or a specialized course in that type of translation or interpretation). Some common types of specialized translation and interpretation are

Financial translation and interpretation

Legal translation and interpretation

Literary translation

Medical translation and interpretation

Scientific translation and interpretation

Technical translation and interpretation
Types of Translation:

*Machine translation*
Also known as automatic translation, this is any translation that is done without human intervention, using software, hand-held translators, online translators such as Babelfish, etc. Machine translation is extremely limited in quality and usefulness - learn more.

*Machine-assisted translation*
Translation that is done with a machine translator and a human working together. For example, to translate "honey," the machine translator might give the options *le miel* and *chéri* so that the person could decide which one makes sense in the context. This is considerably better than machine translation, and some argue that it is more effective than human-only translation.

*Screen translation*
Translation of movies and television programs, including subtitling (where the translation is typed along the bottom of the screen) and dubbing (where the voices of native speakers of the target language are heard in place of the original actors).

*Sight translation*
Document in the source language is explained orally in the target language. This task is performed by interpreters when an article in the source language is not provided with a translation (such as a memo handed out at a meeting).

*Localization*
Adaptation of software or other products to a different culture. Localization includes translation of documents, dialog boxes, etc., as well as linguistic and cultural changes to make the product appropriate to the target country.
Types of Interpretation:

The distinction between the various types presented below is based on the criteria of mode, setting, directionality and language modality.

I. Modes of Interpreting:

1- Consecutive Interpreting: after the speaker is finished.
2- Simultaneous Interpreting: while the delegate is speaking.
3- Whispered Interpreting: whispered simultaneous interpreting.
4- Sight Interpreting: simultaneous interpreting into sign language.

II. Settings:

1- Community Interpreting.
2- Conference Interpreting.
3- Court Interpreting.
4- Escort Interpreting.
5- Media Interpreting.
6- Remote Interpreting.

III. Directionality:

1- Bilateral Interpreting.
2- Retour Interpreting: working from your mother tongue into a foreign language.
3- Relay Interpreting: between two languages via a third.

IV. Language Modality:

In language modality, a distinction is made between ‘spoken-language interpreting’ and ‘signed-language interpreting’.

Consecutive Interpreting

The interpreter takes notes while listening to a speech, then does his or her interpretation during pauses. This is commonly used when there are just two languages at work; for example, if the
American and French presidents were having a discussion. The consecutive interpreter would interpret in both directions, French to English and English to French. Unlike translation and simultaneous interpretation, consecutive interpretation is commonly done into the interpreter's A and B languages.

**Simultaneous interpreting**
The interpreter listens to a speech and simultaneously interprets it, using headphones and a microphone. This is commonly used when there are numerous languages needed, such as in the United Nations. Each target language has an assigned channel, so Spanish speakers might turn to channel one for the Spanish interpretation, French speakers to channel two, etc. Simultaneous interpretation should only be done into one's A language.

**What is the nature of consecutive interpreting practice?**

**Consecutive interpreting** is one of the types of oral translations during which the speaker makes a pause necessary for the interpreter to translate all the above said. Such type of translation is used at the events with a limited number of participants. However the main advantage is the mobility that is the possibility of movement of the discussion group.

Among the difficulties of such kind of translation one could state the following: necessity of adaptation of the source text to make the latter clear for the target audience, taking into consideration all the differences in meanings of phraseological phrases in different languages, inadmissibility to express the interpreter’s own opinion and so on…

One of the most important steps in the consecutive translation is that the interpreter should adhere not only to the norms of the business ethics but to the translation ethics as well. It means the interpreter should be playing the role of a mediator during the negotiations that would not afford rendering the speech deficiencies of the speaker and would conceal the interlocutor’s confusion. Altogether with this the interpreter should never interfere in the discussion as well as exaggerate or underestimate all that was said during the conversation.
In consecutive interpreting (CI), the interpreter speaks after the source-language speaker has finished speaking. The speech is divided into segments, and the interpreter sits or stands beside the source-language speaker, listening and taking notes as the speaker progresses through the message. When the speaker pauses or finishes speaking, the interpreter then renders a portion of the message or the entire message in the target language.

Consecutive interpretation is rendered as "short CI" or "long CI". In short CI, the interpreter relies on memory, each message segment being brief enough to memorize. In long CI, the interpreter takes notes of the message to aid rendering long passages. These informal divisions are established with the client before the interpretation is effected, depending upon the subject, its complexity, and the purpose of the interpretation.*

Interpreting after the speaker has finished.

The interpreter sits with the delegates, listens to the speech and renders it, at the end, in a different language, generally with the aid of notes. In the modern world consecutive interpreting has been largely replaced by simultaneous, but it remains relevant for certain kinds of meetings (e.g. highly technical meetings, working lunches, small groups, field trips).

Well-trained interpreters can render speeches of 10 minutes or more with great accuracy at the same time.

Consecutive interpretation was the first mode of interpretation widely used at international meetings. Some of the finest moments in consecutive interpreting occurred at the time of the Paris Peace Conference and in the meetings of the League of Nations at the end of the World War I.

The pioneers of this method were Paul Mantoux, Antoine Velleman, founder of the Geneva Interpreters School, Jean Herbert, amongst others. Jean Herbert recruited the first team of interpreters for the first United Nations General Assembly, held in London in 1946.
Although consecutive interpreters vigorously resisted “the offensive” of the new simultaneous mode of interpretation, by the late 1940s they were no longer able to prevent it from becoming the method predominantly used in the meetings of the main bodies of the United Nations.

Today, staff interpreters provide consecutive interpretation for meetings of Heads of State or high government officials with Secretary-General, Presidents of the Security Council and ECOSOC, during consultations on specific political situations, for official missions of the Security Council, human rights Special Rapporteurs, special investigations, press conferences and other special events.

**Note-taking:**

Is key in this type of translation, for note-taking and memory techniques.

(Please visit this link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-_5FheanaY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-_5FheanaY))

Write down only the basic information of the sentence: who? When? How? And why?

Write down the essential connectors, such as “however”, “then”, “if”, etc. (possibly in the margin) for this essential information. These summarize the meaning in your memory. It is much easier to recreate the logic of the speech this way, even if some details are omitted.

If the speaker lists something, for example, “There are a total of five factors: …”, make sure to write down all five, ideally in the form of a list.

Write down who says what.

Develop your own glossary of newly learned words, expressions, idioms, and proverbs.

Be careful not to depend entirely on the notes being taken as you may get lost, better yet to depend on your brain and its memory along with your understanding of the content.

Remember the speaker never cares about how neat or organized your notes are! Rather s/he cares for the quality of the interpretation and delivery of the message.

The interpreter should never interfere in the discussion as well as exaggerate or underestimate all that was said during the conversation. Remember not to include your opinion!

Produce a brief summary at the end of the speech - it helps to clarify conclusions.
Transmit a clear message to the target audience
Enjoy what you are doing.: - ) There won't be a second chance.

Issues and Strategies in the field:

Consecutive interpreting is no doubt an interesting field. Despite it being considered by some as the ‘easier’ mode in interpreting, it still has its own challenges. According to recent studies performed on Interpreting students and interpreters worldwide, a few issues are considered problematic to the interpreter specifically in the consecutive mode; some of which include for example:

- **Memory**: Not remembering the message or key details which might include names, numbers, etc.
- **Note-taking**: taking very few notes or too much notes.
- **Listening**: Concentrating on details instead of the overall message.
- **Fidelity**: Depends on the SL text and the familiarity with the topic and terminology.
- **Unfamiliar topic**: Will result in the translator’s failure to deliver his interpreting with quality and make it difficult to recall the message.
- **Speaker**: Might talk too fast or talk incoherently.
- **Microphone**: Might fail to work.
- **Noise**: Audience talking and chatting making it more stressful for the interpreter to successfully hear and deliver the message.

To combat those issues, following certain strategies is considered to be crucial for any interpreter intending to excel professionally.

- Practice shadowing exercises to enhance short-term memory.
- Learn active listening skills.
• Practice note-taking skills and develop your own system of note-taking while preferably following Rozan’s seven principles¹.

• Prepare for your job assignment by reading about the topic, getting familiarized with the terminology and talking to the speaker in advance.

• Make sure ahead of time that all the equipment you will need (pencils, notepads, speakers, headphones, microphones, etc.) are available and working properly.

• Be confident that it is okay to ask the speaker to repeat what he said if you missed something he mentioned as long as you do not interrupt him.

¹ Refer to “Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting” by Jean Francois Rozan.
References

Coference interpreting explained, Rodrick Jones


Al-Zahran, A. The consecutive conference interpreter as intercultural mediator: a cognitive-pragmatic approach to the interpreter's role


Or visit:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_interpretation#Consecutive
http://www.unlanguage.org/Careers/Interpret/COV/Consecutive/default.aspx
http://lourdesderioja.com/interpretatio/