



**A Resource
for
Working
with
Interpreters
&
Simultaneous
Interpretation
Equipment**

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A Publication Of



Translation Excellence
BRIDGING HUMAN BEINGS

Writer



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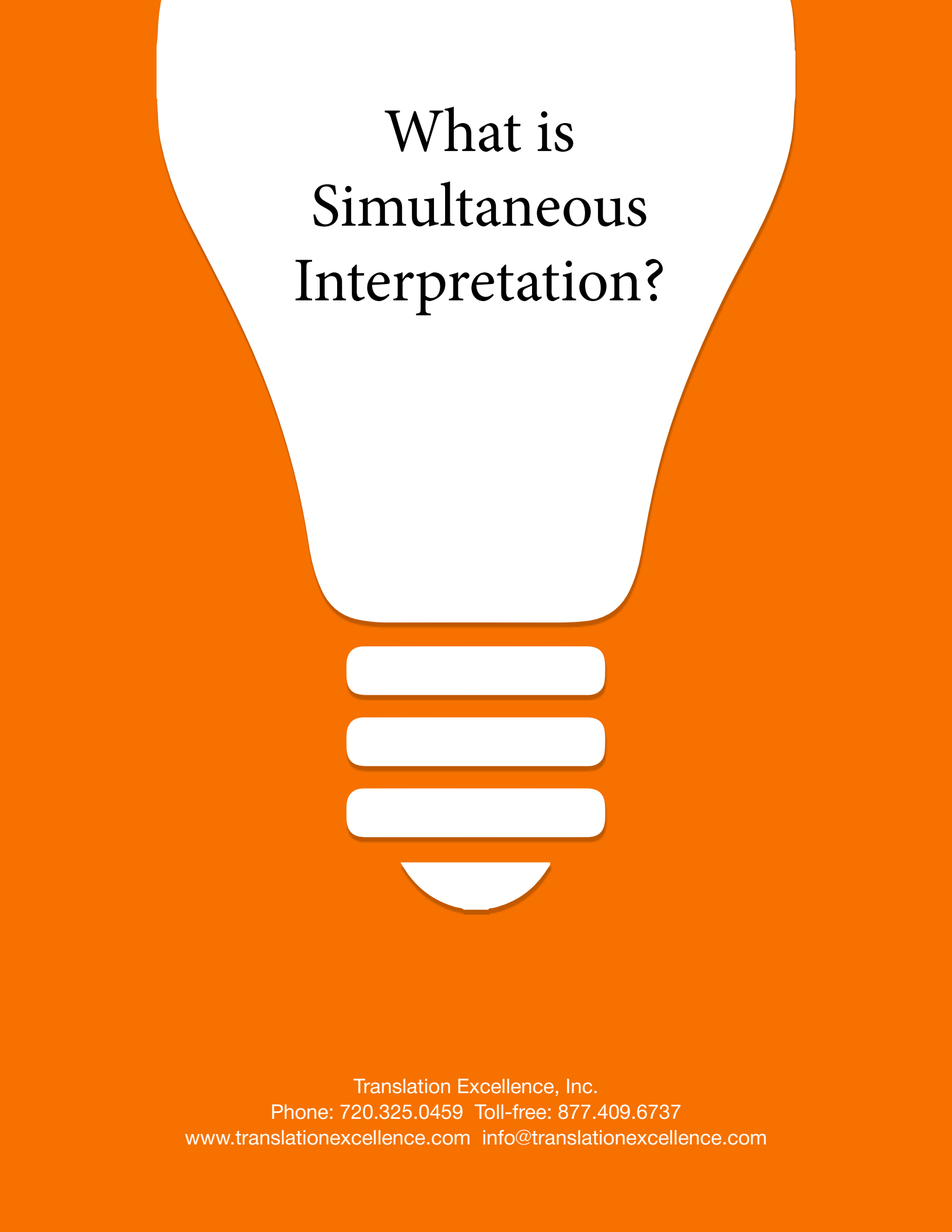
In addition to his role in business development, Harry is a bilingual Spanish<>English translator who received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish from Arkansas State University and his Master of Arts degree in English from Arkansas Tech University.

Reviewer



Nisar Nikzad is the founder and CEO of Translation Excellence.

He steers the company's vision and as a freelance linguist for over 10 years prior to founding Translation Excellence, has a lot of tips to share!



What is Simultaneous Interpretation?

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Simultaneous interpretation is used during United Nations gatherings, presidential speeches, and large international conferences. It is the process in which an interpreter interprets what a presenter is saying at the same time as they are speaking so that listeners receive the interpretation without delay. If the interpreter pauses, it is usually no more than a couple of words behind the speaker, and it is done in order to give the interpreter time to both process the speech and provide the interpretation. For more detailed explanation, read our 6-part blog series on Simultaneous interpretation.



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A Demanding Profession

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Simultaneous interpretation is demanding. It is without a doubt one of the most difficult language skills to acquire. Just because someone is fluent in two languages does not mean that person will be able to render the nuances correctly in such a fast-paced environment. Simultaneous interpretation doesn't allow time to search through a dictionary for unfamiliar expressions, and gives no chance to consider how to best reinterpret unknown words or phrases. The interpreter must therefore be confident in thinking and speaking on the fly. Being able to quickly improvise is an essential skill. It is also extremely important that the interpreter is completely comfortable living and working within both cultures and able to convey the nuances of each of them in word, tone, and expression. In other words, it is not enough for them to merely restate a foreign language equivalent; they must assume the role of an actor who is able to convey the speaker's words perfectly. Since body language differs among cultures, the interpreter must also be comfortable in understanding and conveying physical gestures to communicate meaning between cultures.



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Why Use More
Than One
Interpreter?

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Since it is such a mentally demanding task, lengthy meetings and technical material will cause a single interpreter to tire and the quality of the interpretation to suffer. It is important to remember that for international meetings and conferences, interpreters are the voice of the one speaking. For an audience who does not understand the speaker's language, they take every word the interpreter utters to be true and accurate. If the quality declines as the interpreter tires, listeners may not receive the full impact of the original speaker's words. For this reason, it is common industry practice to use at least two interpreters for simultaneous interpretation assignments. By switching off every 15-30 minutes, interpreters can stay fresh and avoid costly misinterpretations.



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A Rewarding Career

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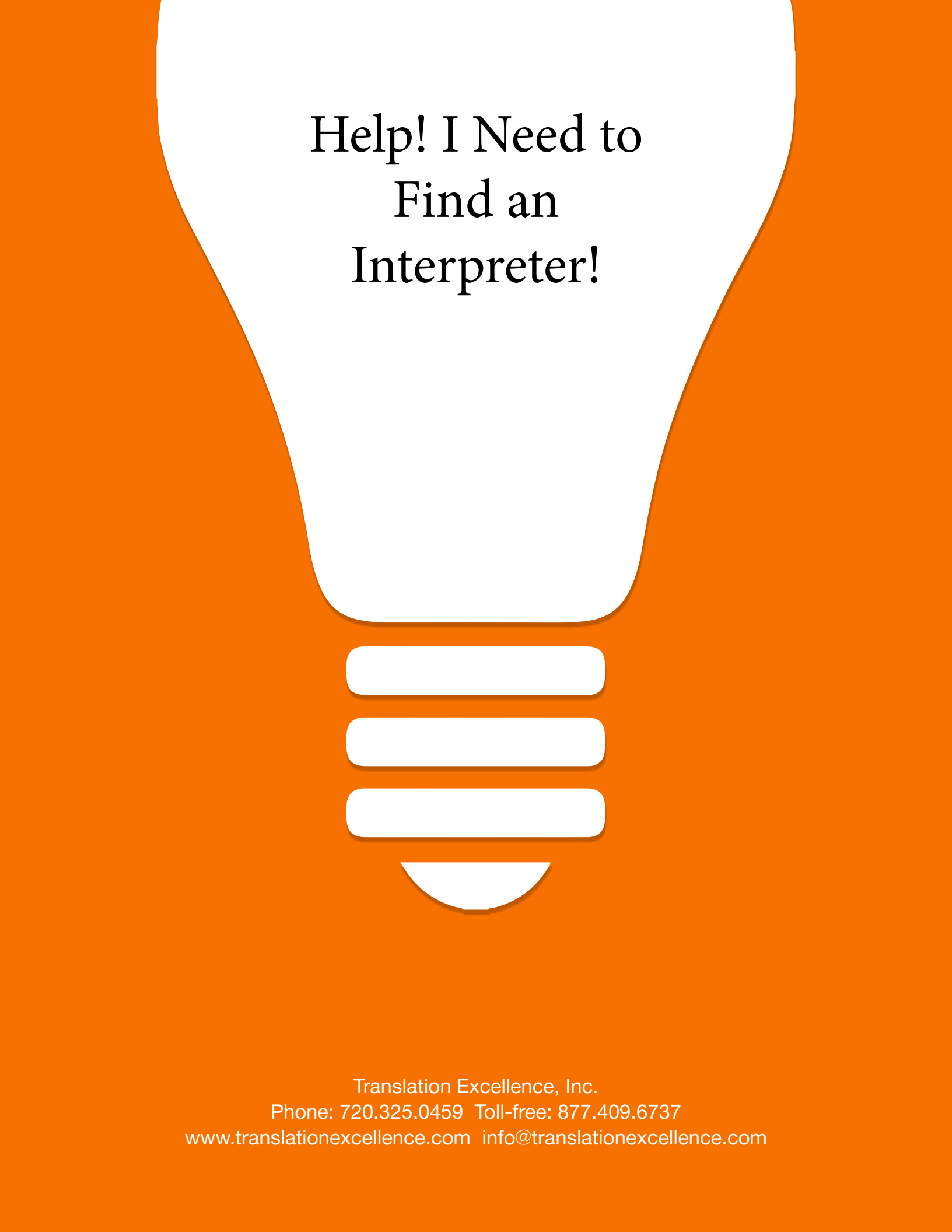
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Simultaneous interpretation can be both personally and financially rewarding. The interpreter is exposed to a great variety of situations, people, and materials, and has an opportunity to help bridge gaps in communication and spread ideas. Language professionals, whether translators or interpreters, have an opportunity to facilitate communication and increase understanding and tolerance. Simultaneous interpreters are able to instantly help people communicate across languages and cultures. Financially, simultaneous interpreters often make more than translators or consecutive interpreters, due to the demanding nature of their work and the skill required to do the job well.



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Help! I Need to
Find an
Interpreter!

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Beyond knowing you need an interpreter for your event, you may be at a complete loss on where to locate one. After all, it's a specialized field and not many people know very much about it. If you've ever seen interpreters at work for United Nations conferences or other large gatherings, at first you may assume they only work for government agencies.

Actually, both interpreters and translators normally work as freelancers, in in-house agencies, or both. A useful approach for finding both interpreters and translators is to either ask friends and colleagues if they have used these services in the past, or you can go to your favorite search engine and type "simultaneous interpreters + ZIP" or "translation companies + ZIP," where "ZIP" is the zip code where you want to locate these agencies. Although both translators and interpreters work for language service providers, these language providers are nearly always known generally as "translation agencies" or "translation companies." You can also call Translation Excellence to Request a quote within 30 minutes.

Questions to Ask

What questions should I ask the translation agency when considering hiring an interpreter? Many considerations must be taken into account, including how many people will need interpretation services, how long the event lasts, and what type of material is involved. Often, when you contact agencies, they will ask you most or all of these questions. Again, don't be surprised if two interpreters are needed. With rare exception, two interpreters are ideal to ensure a successful bilingual event.

To determine the quality of the interpreters you will be working with, be sure to ask the agency the following questions. Keep in mind that agencies often can't guarantee the availability of any one interpreter, so the answers you get may be standards they require of all their linguists (requiring at least five years living and working in the country where the second language is spoken, for example):

1. How long has the interpreter performed simultaneous interpretation?
2. What is his or her area of specialization (legal, medical, technical, etc)?
3. How long has the interpreter spoken his or her second language?
4. How long has he or she lived in the country where the second language is spoken?
5. Did he or she get a degree or attend school in the country where the second language is spoken?

Although the availability of a specific interpreter cannot be guaranteed, the quality of an interpreter's work can be judged before meeting him or her by looking at the agency's standards for their linguists and by contacting past clients listed on the agency's testimonial page.

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Equipment and Benefits

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The right equipment is essential to ensuring a successful interpretation. So how does it all work, what do you need, and how much will it cost?

It works like this. As the speaker gives their presentation, the interpreter will hear it through a headset, and speak into a microphone, communicating the speech in a second language. Interpreters work out of a booth to insure they are able to hear every word the speaker says and can convey the interpretation without distraction and with a minimum of outside noise.

The interpreter will control the feed through a console and will broadcast it via a radio transmitter. Each audience member will hear the broadcast through a personal receiver and headphones.

What Equipment is Actually Needed?

Interpreters should make sure they have the following equipment:

- A transmitter and antenna
- A table top or soundproof booth
- Headsets
- Microphones
- Interpreter control console
- XLR cables

The audience receiving the interpretation will need the following:

- A receiver
- An earpiece or headset

If you are in charge of organizing interpretation services for the event, make sure you also have cases to transport the equipment, in addition to batteries and chargers for the receivers (nothing is less pleasant than participants suddenly being unable to hear the interpreter because of non-working batteries). More than likely, however, the agency who supplies the interpreters for your event will also send technicians to set up the equipment and ensure it works correctly. These technicians will also be on hand during the event to make sure the equipment works throughout.

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Simultaneous Interpretation Benefits

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So what are the benefits of simultaneous interpretation? It has many benefits for both clients and linguists.

Clients:

- Receive the interpretation at the same time as other participants
- Benefit from an uninterrupted meeting/presentation
- The tone, mood, and energy level of the speaker stay the same
- Is the most efficient use of attendees' time, as no more time is required for the interpretation

Linguists:

- Render the most faithful language equivalent by simultaneously interpreting the speaker's words, tone, and non-verbal communication
- Only work for 15-30 minutes at a time so are always prepared to accurately interpret
- Constantly improve mental agility and memory by taking notes and reading about the subject matter beforehand
- Speak with the presenter beforehand so they understand their rate of speech, accent, manner of speaking, and body language

It is clear that both clients and linguists benefit from simultaneous interpretation services. Although clients receive direct and personal benefits, linguists also benefit indirectly and professionally by improving skills, communicating with presenters, and by often providing participants with critical information they would not otherwise have access to.

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Getting Ready for the Event

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Both event organizers and interpreters need to be prepared for the upcoming event. As an event organizer, it is important to consider any written materials that would benefit the interpreter, such as past or present handouts, the presenter's notes, PowerPoints which will be shown during the event, and so forth. It is vital for interpreters to have as much information as possible about any specialized vocabulary, the types of materials, and to generally be familiar with the different elements present (speech, slideshow, handouts, etc).

At the same time you reserve your event venue and space, you should reserve interpretation equipment. Whether you buy or rent will largely depend on your needs, but it is never too early to reserve equipment and make sure interpreters will be available.

Likewise, if written materials are essential to your event or presentation, these should be translated in advance of your event so the interpreter has time to review them as well. The same agency used to book interpreters for your event will also be able to provide document translation services, and it is never too early to ask about translation rates and have your documents prepared.

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Preparing the Interpreter and Presenter

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The presenter is focused on giving a presentation, and the interpreter is focused on making sure the non-English speaking audience understands that presentation. Is there any reason for the two to meet? As mentioned previously, interpreters benefit from understanding the presenter's manner of speaking, nonverbal communication, and rate of speech.

Less understood, however, are the benefits the presenter receives. As an example, it is helpful to let the presenter know that their presentation will be interpreted so they can speak a little slower or speak louder if they think it may be necessary. And although the interpreter can deliver a better presentation by knowing what to expect, nothing says this isn't also true of the presenter. Since interpreters are the presenter to the non-English speaking participants, presenters no doubt feel more at ease understanding who is responsible for conveying their presentation in a second language. Presenters are more confident when they know the interpreter's background, experience, and communication style. It also gives them an opportunity to provide the interpreter with any final presentation notes or final changes to the presentation.

By meeting beforehand, the presenter and the interpreter are better able to work as a team to deliver the presentation to all audience members. Interpreters can explain their role, and the presenter has time to ask questions and receive clarification. If the interpreter has last-minute questions regarding terminology or other concerns, these can be addressed as well.



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After the Interpretation

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Once the interpretation is finished, you should make sure you have made arrangements to pay the agency providing the interpretation service and compensate them for any equipment that may be missing. Although not typical, missing equipment can occasionally occur and represents a financial drain on the translation agency. Therefore, especially at larger conferences, agencies will often request participants to provide their driver's licenses or other forms of identification before loaning out receivers, headsets, or earpieces. Participants' identification is returned once the presentation is over and equipment is returned. At smaller conferences where it is easier to keep track of both participants and equipment, the agency may simply loan out equipment without requiring participants to provide identification.

Evaluation

Do not be surprised if you receive an evaluation from the translation agency after the interpretation service. Agencies often like to receive feedback from clients to understand what they did well, what clients would have preferred they did differently, and as a means of gathering client testimonials.



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Conclusion

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I hope this booklet has helped you feel more prepared to work with interpreters and to know more about interpretation equipment. By knowing what to expect from the experience, you can better prepare yourself, your presenters, or your audience members. Once you are prepared, you can then ensure that each participant receives the greatest possible benefit from the provided language services. This is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to the interpretation field. It is designed to be used in conjunction with searching for an interpreter to help you know what questions to ask and to make sure you know about the most common questions that may be asked.

You may notice we have not discussed price. That is because price is based on such varied factors as language combination, how long you need the service, how many participants you will have, and travel expenses, among other considerations. Language agencies will discuss price with you before you commit, and should always give you the option to ask any questions you have and to call other agencies before committing to the quote they have provided.

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