

外教社 翻译硕士专业 (MTI) 系列教材

口译实践指南丛书 ②

James Nolan

Interpretation: Techniques and Exercises

口译：技巧与操练

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INTERPRETING

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导 读

本书作者詹姆斯·诺兰(James Nolan)是位资深口译员,毕业于日内瓦大学翻译学院和纽约法学院,曾在联合国、欧盟、美国政府、加拿大政府以及美国新泽西州法院等担任翻译工作。诺兰博士具有30年职业翻译和培训师的经验。他在联合国口译员培训项目中担任教员,同时还在纽约大学等高等学校内讲授会议口译和法庭口译。

《口译:技巧与操练》是诺兰博士编写的口译训练教科书,是用来在欧洲和美洲的大学和欧洲议会中训练专业口译员的教学用书。正如作者指出的那样,这本书是口译员的实践指导书,可以被用来进行口译训练。但是口译技能的掌握并不能仅凭读本书就可完成了,书本只起着引导的作用。除此之外,本书中的练习选材丰富、形式多样,充分反映了专业口译员面对的各种复杂的情况,是帮助口译学习者进行有效操练的好材料。有规则的操练,循序渐进,持之以恒才能保证真正掌握口译专业技能。应该指出的是,本书所讲的口译主要指会议口译。

由于本书是一本专业口译的教科书,无论是内容和章节的编排,还是作者的笔触都是围绕着专业口译教学来进行的,从对学习口译人员的素质要求,一直到各项口译技能的讲解和操练,无一不在教学范围之内。

随着国际化进程越来越快,专业口译的需求量也越来越大。由于对专业口译不甚了解,口译对很多人来说就有着一定的神秘感。对口译的好奇使得向往学习口译的人日益增加。很多人在开始学习口译前会提出很多问题,特别是对那些已经在一定程度上掌握了一门或一门以上外语的人来说,问题往往与口译工作、技能、素质等相关。比如什么是口译、口译和笔译有何不同、什么是交替传译,什么是同声传译等等。作为有着丰富教学经验的专业口译员,诺兰博士在书的开始就以简明易懂的语言对这些问题一一进行了解答。所以本书的内容从提问开始,以面到点,对技巧的讲授则从普遍到具体。

本书除了引言以外,第一章到第十八章都是讲授口译学习的各个方面,从演讲、译前准备到数字处理和口译笔记。作者将口译过程中所要碰到的具体问题以授课方式分为不同章节,逐个加以处理。每个章节以讲解该部分的

技能开始,往往比较简练,然后进入操练。每一章节的操练部分有相当多的内容和形式。从这精讲多练的形式中,作者充分表达了学习口译重在练习的主题思想。

书中包括学习口译者首先应该掌握的技能,如:演讲能力。作者在第一章“演讲”中对这种能力加以一定的分析,并配以适量的练习供学习者操练。演讲能力对一名学习口译的人来说是非常重要的。口译学习者除了要掌握工作语言外(母语+非常熟练的外语),还必须具备一定程度的演讲能力,因为口译的工作对象是口语,会议口译的工作对象则是会议中的演讲。演讲不是日常交际中的讲话,它必须有主题,有正反不同的论点,有问题,也可能有结论等。学会演讲对学习口译会有很大帮助,对了解、操练和掌握其他技能是必不可少的。

作者在书中还阐述了口译技能以外的十分重要的内容。比如作者在第二章中描述了正式口译员在开始口译前的工作。更具体地说这是专业口译员工作流程的组成部分,也是口译学习者必须学会运用的:译前准备。这类工作对一位口译员来说是帮助其出色完成口译工作的关键。

书中很多笔墨是用来讲解口译员在口译工作中会碰到的各类难题,如复杂句、长句、词序以及比喻、选词、数字等的处理方法。除此之外,作者还在书中分析讲解了政务和商务类的语篇形式和操练方法。这些处理语言的技巧对很多口译员来说都是必不可少的,特别是在国际组织中和在外交外事场合。

不过应该指出的是作者并没有按照我们通常理解的口译流程(理解、分析、整理、记忆、重述)来讲授口译,而更多的是从口译过程中遇到的具体语言现象等方面来进行讲解和练习。我们从一些章节的题目名称就可以略知一二了,譬如“比喻”、“幽默”等。另外,作者也没有把交替传译和同声传译分开讲授和操练,交替传译中使用的口译笔记也只在最后章节中简单地作了描述。口译笔记怎样同理解分析以及信息整理和记忆结合起来,在记录中信息块之间的节点怎样处理等都没有详细讲解和操练。书中只对可能被用来记录的符号和缩写等作了少量的解释,但对记什么、如何记等问题没有作解答。所有这些对一位初学口译的学员来说会形成一定的困难。

为了使读者能够进一步学习口译和相关知识,作者在本书的末尾附上了非常详细并且经过分类的参考书目。书目包括了口译专业书籍和论文、工具书、讲稿、期刊和杂志等。可能是考虑到现代社会的发展和人们咨询的途径,作者在书中还列举了很多有关口译的网站名,以供读者查询。

《口译:技巧与操练》不失为一本很有新意和学术参考价值的口译员专用参考教材,也是一本供专业翻译院校使用的口译教学参考书。由于书中内

容的编排不同于当今大部分国际专业翻译院校口译教学的进程和方式,并且书中讲授的语言组合都选在英语、法语和西班牙语之间,本书主要是为那些已经具有一定口译工作经验的译员提供培训和自学的帮助。专业口译教师则可以把它用作教学参考书甚至教材。而对那些初学口译的学生来说,由于缺乏系统训练,他们应该在有经验的口译专业教师的指导下使用本书。

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Introduction: Frequently Asked Questions

Why This Book?

Over recent decades the explosive growth of globalization and regional integration has fueled parallel growth in multi-lingual conferences. Although conference interpreting has come of age as a profession, interpreter training programs have had varied success, pointing to the need for an instructional manual which covers the subject comprehensively. This book seeks to fill that need by providing a structured syllabus and an overview of interpretation accompanied by exercises, developed for the classroom, in the main aspects of the art. It is meant to serve as a practical guide for interpreters and as a complement to interpreter training programs, particularly those for students preparing for conference interpreting in international governmental and business settings.

It is assumed students have mastered their active and passive working languages and the fundamentals of translation. Those exercises which deal with lexicon focus on expanding the student's range of expression in order to build vocabulary to the level needed for conference interpreting.

The texts used in the exercises have been selected both to illustrate various aspects of translation and interpretation and to introduce the student to the wide range of topics and perspectives that arise in the international fora where conference interpreters work.

How to Use This Book

Interpretation cannot be learned from a book alone, but only through a combination of study and steady practice. However, it is hoped that the exercises in this book will help the student interpreter determine what techniques she or he needs to concentrate on. Although interpretation is an oral skill, it contains an element of composition. Consequently, the writing exercises in this book should not be overlooked.

For the sake of brevity, the treatment of subjects and techniques in this book is somewhat arbitrarily divided and some subjects are treated together in one chapter. The chapters need not be followed strictly in sequence and can be taken up in any order that the instructor or student finds appropriate, although it is strongly recommended that none be omitted from a comprehensive introductory course. The skills introduced earlier in the book (e.g. developing confidence as a public speaker) are those which are most necessary to a professional interpreter or which usually take longer for most students to master; those presented later in the book (e.g. transposing literary allusions) are techniques which are less often needed in practice or which interpreters can gradually acquire outside the classroom through experience and study. Most of the exercises can be done in class and/or as homework. Some require the use of tape recorders. Although the working languages used in these exercises are English, French, and Spanish, most of the exercises can be adapted to other working languages.

What Is Interpretation?

Interpretation can be defined in a nutshell as conveying understanding. Its usefulness stems from the fact that a speaker's meaning is best expressed in his or her native tongue but is best understood in the languages of the listeners.

In addition, the respect shown by addressing an interlocutor in that person's own language is conducive to successful diplomacy or negotiation. For example, US President John F. Kennedy undertook the task of mastering French specifically with a view to negotiating with French President Charles de Gaulle. But not all statesmen and diplomats have the time, energy, or linguistic talent to master the language of each party with whom they must speak. By bridging the gap between languages, the interpreter helps speakers to discharge their duty to make themselves understood and helps listeners to satisfy their need to understand what is being said.

How Does Interpretation Differ from Translation?

A translator studies written material in one language (the "source language") and reproduces it in written form in another language (the "target language"). An interpreter listens to a spoken message in the source language and renders it orally, consecutively or simultaneously, in the target language. Both the translator and the interpreter must have

a thorough mastery of the target language, as well as a very good passive understanding of the source language or languages with which they work. For most interpreters, the target language will be his or her native tongue.

The translator relies mainly on thorough research with background materials and dictionaries in order to produce the most accurate and readable written translation possible. The interpreter relies mainly on the ability to get the gist of the message across to the target audience on the spot.

No translation is ever “perfect” because cultures and languages differ. However, in practice, the translator is usually held to a higher standard of accuracy and completeness (including the ability to reproduce the style of the original), while the interpreter is expected to convey the essence of the message immediately.

The translator’s activity is more like that of a writer, while the interpreter’s performance is more like that of an actor. A good translator will spend much time searching for the correct technical term or the right choice of words, but a good interpreter must immediately come up with a satisfactory paraphrase or a rough equivalent if *le mot juste* does not come to mind, in order not to keep the audience waiting. Some people are able to do both translation and interpretation. Others find that, for reasons of temperament and personality, they cannot do one or the other. Generally, some experience as a translator provides a good foundation for becoming an interpreter.

What Is the Difference between Consecutive Interpretation and Simultaneous Interpretation?

A consecutive interpreter listens to the speaker, takes notes, and then reproduces the speech in the target language. Depending on the length of the speech, this may be done all at one go or in several segments. The consecutive interpreter relies mainly on memory, but good note-taking technique is an essential aid.

A simultaneous interpreter, usually sitting in a soundproof booth, listens to the speaker through earphones and, speaking into a microphone, reproduces the speech in the target language as it is being delivered in the source language. Because the simultaneous interpreter cannot fall too far behind, this method requires considerable practice and presence of mind.

Consecutive interpretation was long the standard method, until simultaneous interpretation was first tried out on a large scale, and found to be workable, at the Nuremberg trials. Thanks to that breakthrough and to

modern sound equipment, simultaneous interpretation has now become the most widely used method, in every type of meeting from business conventions to summit conferences, and can even be done via remote communications links. It is much less time-consuming and enables a multilingual conference, with participants speaking a number of languages, to proceed without interruption. However, consecutive interpretation is still preferred in certain situations, such as one-on-one interviews, confidential hearings, brief public appearances by prominent persons, or some legal proceedings. It has the advantage of not requiring much equipment.

Occasionally, interpreters may be asked to do “whispering” or “chuchotage”, which consists of sitting behind a participant at a meeting and simultaneously interpreting the proceedings *sotto voce* only for that person.

Simultaneous interpreters normally work in teams of two per booth, taking turns in shifts of about 30 minutes each for a maximum of about three hours at a time, which has been found to be the maximum average time during which the necessary concentration and accuracy can be sustained. They generally work only into their “A” (best) language, or their mother tongue. In certain situations (e.g. in a meeting where one language largely predominates), a single team of three people, known as a “petite equipe”, will work both ways, rather than two booths of two people each. The number of languages spoken at the meeting may also determine the make-up of the team. In the United Nations, for example, the standard “English booth” team consists of two interpreters, one of whom interprets from Russian, one of whom interprets from Spanish, and both of whom can interpret from French. For certain language combinations, relay, or two-step, interpretation is also sometimes used: a speaker will be interpreted in one booth from language A into language B, and then in another booth from language B into language C.

Is It Useful to Specialize in a Particular Subject Area?

Yes. It is easier to translate or interpret with an understanding of the subject. Some translators, for example, specialize in medical translation and obtain regular work from pharmaceutical manufacturers. Some translation agencies specialize in technical, business, or legal translation and rely on translators and interpreters with expertise in those areas. Specialist translators can usually command higher fees.

Many translators and interpreters make an effort to keep abreast of certain fields in which their language combination is useful. However, most translators and interpreters are of necessity generalists, since it is

not possible to be an expert in every field in which there is a demand for translation. Accordingly, translators and interpreters must cultivate the ability quickly to assimilate the basic issues and vocabulary that go with a particular assignment.

Among conference interpreters, the usual practice is to obtain background materials from the conference organizer prior to the meeting and study the materials to gain a basic understanding of the subject and the specialized vocabulary. A translator or interpreter who works regularly for a particular organization or client will soon become familiar with the subject and its jargon.

Are Some Languages More Important than Others for Translation and Interpretation?

It depends on the market. There is more work to be found in the "major" world languages that are most widely spoken and written, but there is also more competition. On the other hand, a translator or interpreter who knows a "rare" or "exotic" language in a particular market is harder to find and can often command higher fees even though there may be fewer work opportunities.

Most institutional employers, like multi-national corporations and governmental or intergovernmental agencies, use a specific set of languages in their operations and will often test the applicant's knowledge of those languages. The United Nations, for example, has six "official languages" (English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian) and requires most applicants to know at least two of these in addition to their native tongue. Some court systems in America regularly employ interpreters with a knowledge of certain Asian languages, like Vietnamese, or certain indigenous languages, like Navajo. Some corporations, like multi-national banks, operate mainly in English but hold their board meetings and publish their annual reports in two or more languages and hire interpreters and translators for that purpose. Some national governments conduct all of their official business and issue all of their official publications in two or more languages, e.g. Canada (English and French) and Switzerland (French, German, Italian, and Romansh).

Are There Any Formal Professional Requirements?

There is no single, uniform accreditation process to become a translator or interpreter. Each employer has different standards and requirements. Book publishers generally employ translators based on their academic

credentials. Court systems will usually administer a formal interpretation exam and certify those who pass. Corporate employers and translation agencies will sometimes administer an entrance test or require a college degree or a certificate from a translation school. Governmental and inter-governmental employers will usually administer a competitive examination and/or require a college degree in languages or a certificate from a recognized translation school. The European Union administers a competitive general knowledge exam as well as language tests. The United Nations holds periodic worldwide competitive examinations for translators and places the highest-scoring candidates' names on a roster from which applicants are recruited as vacancies occur. At the UN, freelance interpreters must pass a test and staff interpreters are recruited through a formal exam before a panel.

Professional associations, like The American Association of Language Specialists (TAALS) and the Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (AIIC) also administer tests to their members in order to list them in their yearbooks according to language competence.

Some employers, because of the nature of their workload, will require staff linguists to do both translation and interpretation, e.g. the UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) or the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Other employers may require applicants to do both simultaneous and consecutive interpretation (e.g. court systems) or may require more than one active language (e.g. the World Trade Organization).

Most international organizations, and the languages they use, are listed in a large directory entitled *Yearbook of International Organizations*, which can be consulted at major libraries.

Is It Advantageous To Be Bilingual?

Only if one is truly bilingual, i.e. thoroughly conversant with both languages, sensitive to the differences between them, and able to use both equally well as a medium of expression. Few people are truly bilingual. Early exposure to two or more languages is helpful because it trains the ear to recognize the sounds of both languages, to grasp difficult accents, and to recognize nuances and idiomatic expressions. But, without additional study and training, it is usually not sufficient to enable a translator or interpreter to use both languages actively at a professional level.

Is Simultaneous Interpretation a Stressful Occupation?

Yes. The sustained alertness and concentration required to perform this job well have been compared with those required to be an air-traffic controller. However, for that very reason, interpreters' associations have developed standards governing workload, team strength, and equipment, based on medical studies, which are intended to keep the workload and cumulative stress within reasonable limits. At the UN, for example, simultaneous interpreters are usually required to cover a maximum of seven three-hour meetings per week, except during peak periods. The average workload at the European Union is somewhat heavier.