

实用口译手册

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK
OF INTERPRETATION

钟述孔著

· 中国对外翻译出版公司 ·

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK OF INTERPRETATION

by Zhong Shukong

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— a handbook in which an effort has been made to integrate theory with practice, and in which some 100 speeches and statements on a fairly wide variety of themes are included for practising interpretation

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作者的话

口译，是人类交流思想所借助的重要手段之一。在甲乙双方互不通晓对方的语言的情况下，若要进行会谈、交涉、说理、谈判，以及进行科技、工农业生产、文艺、贸易、防务、行政管理等方面的友好合作与经验交流，口译是不可缺少的一个桥梁；在许多国家代表出席的国际会议上，口译更属必不可少的一项工作。在了解情况、“洋为中用”以促进祖国的四化大业方面，在“反对霸权主义，维护世界和平”的事业中，口译也是一项重要的工作。

同笔头翻译相比较，口译的一个突出的难处在于，译员在进行口译时，没有进行反复推敲的时间，更没有时间去查阅词典或工具书等；如若担任“同声传译”，则译员必须边听边说，甚至几乎没有“思考”的时间。因此，职业性的口译工作要求是很严格的。不仅要求译员具有高度的工作责任心，熟练地掌握所涉及的两种语言，具有广博的“知识面”（不少外国专家称之为“百科全书般的知识”），还要求译员熟练地掌握口译的基本规律和技巧。所以，国际上（包括联合国）主张，凡欲参加“口译专业训练”者，必须具有大学毕业以上的学历、语言水平和知识水平。

本书作者从事过多年的口译实践（包括多次会谈的口译，以及国际会议的口译），最突出的体会会有两点：（一）周总理生前关于要在实践中“打好三个基本功”（即政治基本功、语言基本功、

知识基本功)的谆谆教诲,是对口译人员基本要求的高度概括;是不断提高口译工作水平的牢固基础。(二)口译从“听”到“说”的过程是很短的,但却充满着矛盾。而口译所涉及的是汉语与英语这两种差异很大的语言时,有些矛盾尤为突出。解决这些矛盾,最根本的是要靠刻苦的实践、大量的实践——在实践中不断打好“三个基本功”,在实践中有目的地进行大量的听、说、读、写,在实践中领会和辩证地掌握口译中的“听”→“译”→“说”诸环节的基本规律和基本技巧。

不少年轻同志曾建议作者编写一本较系统的有关口译训练和进修的书。自从打倒“四人帮”以后不久,作者便利用业余时间着手编写——既根据作者从实践中所获得的一些体会以及陆续积累的一些典型材料,也吸收了一些有经验的中外口译专业人员的若干心得之谈。因为工作较忙,拖到1981年8月才全部编写完成。

基于“实践出真知”的根本观点,本书力求把作者所知的一些与口译有关的理论和规律与实践结合起来;重点在于实践。为此,设计和编写了一百篇“口译练习”,涉及多方面的常见、常用题材,并且准备了全套的参考译法。本书的服务对象,是各种涉外部门的广大年轻在职口译员,包括旅游业的广大在职译员,大学英语专业的广大年轻教师,具有相当于大学毕业水平的年轻口译爱好者,以及大专院校高年级的学生。因此,本书是用英语编写的。

口译的训练,尤需注意“从严、从难、从实战出发”。“听”,又是一个十分重要的环节。因此建议利用本书进行训练或进修的同志们,如有可能,最好使用一台录音机(任何型号均可),宜先将有关的“练习”录在磁带上(凡有二人以上共同练习,可采取互助的方式,而不必非找“标准伦敦音”不可;因为在实际工作中所

遇到的讲英语的外国人，大多数并非“操伦敦音”者)，然后按照书中对于各个部分所建议的程序，一步步地进行认真的、严格的训练。如果利用此书进行训练的读者手边没有录音机，可采取二人结合的办法，由一人“读出”原文，另一人当即口译为另一种语言。总之，一定要肯下功夫，利用本书反复练“听”→“译”→“说”。通过反复练，来提高口译的准确性和流利程度。多一分劳动，多一分收获；通过自己的大量反复实践，最后可以收到“熟能生巧”和“触类旁通”的效果。

作者的工作经历和水平，都有局限性，敬希读者指正。

1981年8月于北京

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In the context of our nation's historic mission of the Four Modernizations, one of our crucial policies is "to learn from the *strong* points of all nations and all countries". In the world context, increased international exchanges in science, politics, trade, management and culture have become both a vital element and a professional requisite of our contemporary world. Hence, the ever-increasing *need* for skilled professionals in the field of *translation* and *interpretation*.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT "INTERPRETATION" MEANS

In my book on Translation (published by *The Commercial Press*, March 1980), I have submitted that "*Translation*, essentially, is the faithful representation, in one language, of what is written in another language." And I wish to submit here that INTERPRETATION, essentially, means an *extempore* oral reproduction, in one language, of what is said in another language. To this may be added the following two points of clarification.

One. As proved by practice, interpretation cannot be viewed as a merely linguistic undertaking, but should be regarded as an aspect of a larger domain, namely, that of *communication*. In the case of complex discourses or speeches, interpretation involves not only "*linguistic proficiency*" but also "*encyclopedic knowledge*".

Two. A few words on the use of *terms*. In the United Nations (and, for that matter, at all official international meetings)

the term “translate”, “translator” or “translation” is used when the *immediate result* of the work is a *written* text; and the term “interpret”, “interpreter” or “interpretation”, when the immediate result is a speech *reproduced orally* in a language (always in one of the working languages) other than that spoken by the original speaker.

II. THE TWO MOST WIDELY-USED FORMS OF INTERPRETATION

INTERPRETATION may assume either of the two most widely-used, distinct forms — “*consecutive interpretation*” or “*simultaneous interpretation*”. In case the interpreter is under the instructions to “interpret between chunks of the original speech” (or rather, *immediately after* the original speaker has completed a few connected sentences or, in most cases, a fairly long paragraph), he will be doing “*consecutive interpretation*”, and he is technically referred to as a “consecutive interpreter”. On the other hand, if he is instructed to interpret while the original speech *is being made*, as is always the case with *formal meetings* at the U.N. and its related agencies, then he will be doing “*simultaneous interpretation*”, and he is called a “simultaneous interpreter” or “conference interpreter”.

CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION, which requires no well-equipped booths and sophisticated wiring system, is the most widely used form of interpretation in China on various occasions — ranging from *formal* talks or negotiations (between our Party or State leaders and the visiting VIPs, for instance) to helping a foreign tourist to get over his language difficulties in shopping in an out-of-the-way store. Indeed, it has been such a widely used form in our country that when the non-professional people

speak of “oral-interpretation” (or “interpreters”), what they really refer to is, in the jargon of international conferences, “consecutive interpretation” (or “consecutive interpreters” who, incidentally, can be seen in a fairly great number of our cities where scenic spots or places of historical interest are open to visitors from abroad). To this most widely-used form of interpretation, therefore, PART TWO and PART THREE of this book are devoted. And it has been borne out by practice that *genuine competence* in “consecutive interpretation” can serve as a very *solid foundation* for “simultaneous interpretation”, though the latter calls for additional, laborious “*intensive training*”.

SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION, which *occupies no time* apart from that taken by the original speaker but *requires* rather expensive and highly sophisticated sets of electronic equipment, is increasingly needed at international meetings and conferences where a large number of countries are represented. This form of interpretation, which requires *very intensive specific training* to attain proficiency and the training programme for which is *internationally accepted as a post-graduate professional training programme*, is to be dealt with in PART FOUR and PART FIVE of this HANDBOOK.

In addition, there is the *third* form — “On-Sight Interpretation” or “At-Sight Interpretation” or, simply, “Sight-Interpretation” — which, for all practical purposes, is basically *similar* to “simultaneous interpretation” in *approach* on the part of the interpreter, and which is to be dealt with in PART FOUR of this book.

Furthermore, there is the *fourth* form — “*Whispering*” — which is sometimes used at “Small” meetings (e.g. a sub-committee or a Drafting Committee) or at a meeting where *no arrangement or equipment* for either consecutive or simultaneous interpretation is made and, in such cases, an interpreter’s assigned job is

sometimes to *whisper into the ear* of one or two representatives (occasionally a row of three sitting in front of the interpreter) *what is being said by the original speaker.*

III. PREREQUISITES FOR INTERPRETATION

Drawing on his experience over the years, one seasoned interpreter says, "The main difficulty with interpretation is that it is impossible to do it perfectly." Striking a similar note, another veteran interpreter says, "Interpretation is a *very complex* matter. The case is: there is always something I could have done better!" However, nearly all veteran interpreters agree that *with proper training and long years of practice, one can achieve a fairly high degree of competency* in interpretation, whether consecutive or simultaneous. In this connection *two questions* are being frequently asked: (1) What are the prerequisites for interpretation (as distinct from those for translation)? (2) What are the specific qualities required of an interpreter? These two questions are obviously inter-related. However, to facilitate our analysis and discussion, let us take up the first question first.

"*Prerequisites for interpretation*" are basically *four-fold*: (1) A strong sense of duty; (2) Linguistic proficiency; (3) "Encyclopedic knowledge"; (4) Mastery of interpretation techniques.

(1) An interpreter's *strong sense of duty* always finds expression in two respects. *First*, he is most particular about *being conscientious* — conscientious in pre-conference preparations, conscientious in following the original speaker and furnishing the best possible rendition, conscientious in abiding by the "*professional ethics*" (See Chapter 17) and the relevant rules and regulations, etc. *Second*, he has a conscious and persistent *desire* to improve his competence; for him the training in interpretation

is a never-ending process, so that in practically every speech he has “processed” (through “listening — transference — delivery”) he *learns* something.

(2) “*Linguistic proficiency*”, in the context of interpretation, means primarily a fairly good command of the languages involved and a good grasp of the cultures of the languages involved. Specifically, it means, *inter alia*, acute hearing, exceptionally large vocabulary, precision and flexibility of expression, good articulation and elocution. And, in this connection, the importance of constant exposure to different varieties of English spoken and written by native speakers and constant exposure to various relevant publications in Chinese cannot be overemphasized.

(3) “*Encyclopedic knowledge*”, though hardly possible in practice, is a goal towards which the conscientious interpreter or translator should work untiringly. This is because lack of knowledge of the “subject matter” dealt with by the original speaker can become a serious stumbling-block, or even the cause for which an interpreter “gets stuck”. This is no alarmist talk. Let us cite two cases to illustrate this point. First, if one is assigned to work as a U.N. conference interpreter, one will find that the United Nations is a forum where “everything under the sun and, indeed, everything in the universe” could be involved, where one hundred and one disciplines of modern sciences could be relevant, and where well over 150 Member States are represented with the delegates representing vastly different cultural, political and social background! Secondly, if one is to interpret for trade talks on the import or export of some modern computer technology, one has to learn to acquire in advance some basic knowledge of, and basic terminology relevant to, the various functional units of a modern computer, electronic circuitry, computer software and hardware in general, memory and “memory dump routine”, etc., etc. Of course, the level of knowledge acquired or mastered by an inter-