

STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

The American Association of Language Specialists (TAALS) was created in 1957. Since then, its members have accumulated a wealth of experience in providing interpretation and translation services to a wide range of government institutions and private organizations. Members and their employers have worked hard to make each multilingual event a success. Their efforts point to the following useful elements in planning multilingual conferences and meetings. These recommendations are not prescriptive. They are designed to guide interpreters and translators in their interactions with conference organizers and one another (*see NOTE below*).

A. CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

To ensure professional standards of quality, TAALS recommends that its members strive to avoid physical conditions that hinder the performance of their tasks. Interpreters must be able to see and to hear properly. Simultaneous interpretation without a booth leads to deterioration in sound quality, and a level of ambient noise that may disturb both participants and interpreters.

Interpreting teams should be organized to avoid the systematic use of relay.

All engagements should be covered by a written contract which stipulates the fee, the duration of the appointment, working languages, hours of work, the coordinating interpreter, briefing sessions and/or preparation days, travel time and arrangements, accommodation, and per diem, as appropriate. Since a contract creates a firm and binding commitment which prevents an interpreter from accepting another concurrent job, a cancellation clause is strongly recommended.

Contracts may also include provisions for compensating interpreters when proceedings are recorded (*see RECORDING below*).

The contract may provide for a coordinating interpreter, to serve as liaison between the conference organizer and interpreters. If the coordinating interpreter cannot be present throughout the conference, another interpreter should be designated as team leader and provided all necessary information.

Whispered interpretation is not generally recommended. It may be used for a small number of listeners to work from one or two languages into a single language.

PREPARATION AND BRIEFING

Interpreters must be well-prepared. Background material should be provided sufficiently in advance. In the case of technical and scientific meetings, interpreters may request a briefing session and/or an equivalent period of independent preparation.

RECORDING

The work produced by interpreters may become their intellectual property. Accordingly, it is protected by relevant provisions of intellectual property law, including the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, as amended. The rights of interpreter and employer to the work product should be specified in the contract of employment whenever such rights have economic or commercial significance.

B. TRANSLATORS

Translators should be allowed sufficient time to complete their work, having regard to the nature, complexity and length of the text, as well as to any special formatting requirements.

They should have ready access to the dictionaries (in electronic or paper form) they need, and whenever possible, to documents and information (including marked-up copies) required for proper understanding of the text to be translated, and for the production of a good translation.

In addition to the reference material mentioned, any specific background documentation for the conference (special glossaries, reports of previous meetings, documents under consideration, etc.) should be made available for ready reference.

All engagements should be covered by a written agreement which stipulates the rate of payment (per word/per 1,000 words, per hour, whether based on source or target language word count, etc.), deadlines, language direction, rush fee and compensation for complex formatting. For on-site/conference assignments, all engagements should also specify the duration of the appointment, hours of work, coordinating translator, briefing sessions if any, travel time and arrangements, accommodation, and per diem, as appropriate. Since a contract creates a firm and binding commitment which prevents an on-site/conference translator from accepting another concurrent job, a cancellation clause is strongly recommended.

Under some circumstances the work produced by translators may become their intellectual property, thus protected by the Bern Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (Paris Text, 1971). Whenever this may have economic or commercial significance, the rights of the translator and of the employer to the work product should be specified in the contract of employment.

ON-SITE AND CONFERENCE TRANSLATORS

As indicated above, all engagements should be covered by a written contract which stipulates the fee, the working languages, the duration of the appointment, hours of work, coordinating translator, briefing sessions if any, travel time and arrangements, accommodation, and per diem, as appropriate. Since a contract creates a firm and binding commitment which prevents an on-site/conference translator from accepting another concurrent job, a cancellation clause is strongly recommended

It is recommended that a coordinating translator be appointed to serve as liaison between the conference organizer and the team of translators.

The facilities and physical working area provided for translators should be adequate to enable the production of translations of proper quality. A computer with Internet connection, and close-by access to printing facilities should be provided for each translator. The work area should be adequately illuminated and ventilated, and reasonably quiet; and privacy should be ensured. Translators should not be required to share their work area with any distracting activity. Sitting arrangements must be comfortable and adjustable ergonomic seats provided whenever possible. On-site technical support should be available.

NOTE:

The Federal Trade Commission Decision and Consent Order, issued August 31, 1994, specifies in Paragraph IV: "... nothing contained in Paragraph IV of this Order shall prohibit respondent [TAALS] from providing information or its non binding and non coercive views concerning interpretation equipment, the hours of work or preparation, or the number of language specialists used for types of jobs."