Training in consecutive and consultant interpreters

These seemingly disparate topics have two things in common: both are needed and both have been examined often within AIIC.

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In Part 1 of this series we revisited pages on quality and new technologies. This time around we start by delving into consecutive interpreting and its place in the training of future interpreters. Following that we take a look at the world of consultant interpreters, those expert language service providers with first-hand experience of meeting dynamics.

Training in consecutive

Let’s not deny it – the role of consecutive in conference interpretation training programs has been under the microscope for a long time. Some say that it is irrelevant, a waste of time when today's market demands simultaneous; the latest AIIC survey of members reported that consecutive assignments represented only 8% of days worked. Others, myself included, respond that sound formation in the discipline adds value to our education and to our craft. And besides, consecutive interpretation is used in significant niches of our profession (diplomatic interpreting, negotiations, etc.)

Back in 2001 I asked Daniel Gile to comment on the controversy. In his contribution he noted:

"A further argument made against CI training is that in programs serving a market where this mode of interpretation is not required, learning consecutive means devoting much time and energy to the acquisition of skills not relevant to the market, time and energy that would be better invested in simultaneous. Some, however, counter this argument by claiming that simultaneous is just an "accelerated consecutive" and that the skills of consecutive are therefore relevant to simultaneous.

This paper looks more closely at the nature of consecutive in cognitive terms, and brings this analysis into the debate."

Read Gile's The role of consecutive in interpreter training: A cognitive view.

Then we have the matter of best practice and new developments in the teaching of consecutive and its component skills. In 2013 Marc Orlando shared his experience with the use of digital pen technology in the classroom:
"Because such digital pens provide the means to easily capture handwriting and speech – video and audio – and speech/notes can be replayed simultaneously from the notebook or visualized on a computer, they provide a universal platform for improving note-taking learning among students, the ideal tool for classroom visual activities and immediate collective feedback where students can easily learn from others."

Read Orlando's Interpreter training and digital pen technology.

Consultant Interpreters

If interpreters are go-betweens, then a consultant interpreters is a go-betweens twice over, linking clients to the expert linguists they need as well as being one of those selfsame experts. So how can you get the most out of one? Imagine...

"You are in charge of pulling together an international meeting, either for your own organisation or as an event planner for a client, and you need interpreters. Put luck on your side and ask an AIIC consultant interpreter to advise you on the technical details and provide you with a cost estimate. Here is what you should be ready to discuss."

So begins Vincent Buck’s still timely article from Issue 7 of the AIIC webzine, What your consultant interpreter needs to know.

The webzine team also appreciates a touch of humor now and again, and we happen to have just the columnist to provide some: Phil Smith. He hasn’t ignored consultant interpreters - in fact, he is one.

"Very occasionally, probably when everyone else is busy, I have to put together a team of interpreters for a very important meeting...This means that I'm a consultant interpreter, and I'm probably not getting the respect that is my due. Well perhaps I am pro-rata because I probably only qualify as a mere dabbler. I know there are people who have a real office with secretaries and a coffee machine. I have a room in the house that has an office sign on the door that one of my children picked up at a jumble sale (the sign, not the house - you must concentrate). Act global think local!"

Finish up with a good laugh by reading Phil's SOS: consultant interpreter adrift.

More

For a list of AIIC webzine and blog articles on training click here.

For further information on consultant interpreters click here.

The AIIC webzine and blog welcome submissions from both members and non-members. Subjects: interpretation, translation and other topics related to the language professions. Proposed articles will be judged on quality and relevance. Contact Luigi Luccarelli.

Recommended citation format:

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