



Centre Universitaire Abdelhafid Boussouf - Mila
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Traduction et Interprétariat
TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING

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Translation vs. interpretation: how do they differ?

Translation and interpreting are needed to enable communication between cultures and across languages. In a world where communication is key, it is necessary to use the help of interpreters and translators to effectively communicate.

Although interpreters and translators have similarities, interpreting and translation involve different skillsets. Interpreters mediate languages orally while translators work with written material. When it comes to language skills, translators need to have solid reading comprehension, transfer, and target language production skills. Interpreters need to optimize their working memory in rendering content much more quickly and with no extensive access to external resources for support.

Learning the Difference Between Translation and Interpretation

Often, the difference between translation and interpretation is confused. So, what is the real difference between the two? To directly compare translation vs. interpretation, we need to evaluate some key aspects.

On a general level, the difference between interpretation and translation is that interpretation deals with spoken language in real time while translation focuses on written content. Another difference is that translation happens over a period of time with extensive access to external resources, compared to interpretation which occurs on the spot during a live scenario. Below, we will dive deeper into translation vs. interpretation.

Translation:

When working within the translation field, one is working to successfully decipher the meaning of written content from a source language into the language that is targeted. One of the biggest differences between translation vs. interpretation is that translators often use a wider range of computer-assisted tools when working.

Translators are able to use software, such as a translation memory and a termbase, that facilitates the translation process and quickly fills in the missing gaps. They are able to go through text and refer to other written materials such as parallel texts to ensure an accurate translation. Translators focus on working with written materials like print or websites, which is one main difference between translation and interpretation.

Interpretation:

Interpretation focuses more on paraphrasing the content that the speaker is trying to convey. An interpreter, someone who repeats the message but in a different language, deals with live conversation, which can include translating meetings, conferences, appointments, live TV, and more. Since interpretation is in real time, it requires someone who is able to work under pressure with excellent communication skills.

The main difference between interpretation and translation is that an interpreter orally transmits spoken language, while translation centres exclusively on written texts (although a translator can also work with audio or video files or even images, but the final result will always be in writing).

In order to hire the right professional, it's important to know the main differences between the two services given that specific characteristics and skills are required for each.

The 5 main differences between translation and interpretation to keep in mind when contracting a service

1. Interpretation works with the oral language in real time, while translation works with text-based files that don't tend to be delivered immediately.
2. Interpretation tends to happen on the spot; it can be done in-person, over the phone or by videoconference. In recent months during lockdown and COVID-19, remote interpreting apps (RSI, Remote Simultaneous Interpreting) have

experienced a boom, and here at Tatutrad, we're developing an innovative initiative to adapt to emerging needs.

Translation, on the other hand, doesn't have to be carried out in the moment. A clear example of this is the translation of books; they are first published in just the original language and then, following success among readers of that language, they are translated into other languages to reach a wider audience.

3. Another difference between translation and interpretation is the level of accuracy of both services. In interpretation, provided that the original message is not changed, a certain degree of "inaccuracy" is allowed, mainly due to the time available to understand, translate and transmit the message.

The translation process usually includes two additional steps prior to final delivery to the client: proof-reading and editing of the text, which enables a far higher level of accuracy than in interpretation.

4. Interpreters tend to work in both language directions, from language A into language B and vice versa. Translators, on the other hand, typically only translate into their mother tongue, that is, from language B into language A.

5. The preparation time for the work. An interpreter tends to spend weeks, and even months, studying and finding out about the topic of the next conference they are going to interpret. A translator spends time researching not just prior to starting work on the text to be translated, but also while undertaking the translation.

Although there are differences between the two services, translation and interpretation also have several things in common.

1. Training and knowledge: both professionals must have training and knowledge of the topic they are going to translate or interpret; for example, a legal translator or interpreter must know the differences between the judicial systems of the languages they work with.

2. Linguistic command: to do their job correctly, both translators and interpreters must have complete command of the languages they offer. In this sense, holding a conversation in an informal environment is not enough; rather, they need to know technical expressions or word plays that can appear when least expected.

3. Professionalism: anyone who wants to work as a translator or interpreter must be professional, comply with deadlines and be capable of transmitting the original message in the target language without changing its meaning. At times, not only do the message and tone need to be adapted to the target language, but also to the culture and characteristics of their speakers. This process is known as localization or transcreation.