Technical notes on simultaneous interpretation

Technical Committee.
Published: March 24, 2000 Last updated: December 2, 2015

The Basics

What equipment does an interpreter need?

- 1 booth per language
- 1 console or interpreter's unit per interpreter
- Individual earphones
  - High-quality and lightweight—NOT the kind intended for listening to music or used by journalists
  - Audio frequencies from 125-12,500 Hz
- Individual microphone
- 1 outgoing channel per language

What should a good interpreter’s control panel or console have?

- Multiple incoming and outgoing channels
  - The selectors for outgoing and incoming channels should be easy to distinguish from each other.
  - Outgoing and incoming channel selectors should be distinct from one another and located in different areas of the panel
- A “cough button”, which interpreters should get in the habit of using
- A “microphone-on” light
- an easily visible ring around the mike or a prominent light on the console

- The microphone control should be easily distinguishable from other controls (a different colour, for example)

- Automatic, pre-selected relay

- Tone controls to adjust bass and treble settings according to individual preferences and different speakers' voices

- All controls should operate silently.

**The importance of sound**

- Good sound quality is essential to successful simultaneous interpretation.

- Poor sound causes unnecessary stress and fatigue.

- Good sound depends on many factors, among others:

  - proper sound equipment that supplies the full range of sound: 125-12,500 Hz
  
  - good-quality, lightweight earphones

  - room acoustics

  - loudspeakers distributed around the room and volume kept low enough

Recommended citation format: