



OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT  
Court Language Access Services

## Introduction to Simultaneous Interpretation Summary

This Introduction to Simultaneous Interpreting webinar is intended for those students of interpretation that are venturing into simultaneous for the first time, or that have just started to develop their simultaneous skills. Simultaneous interpreting should be attempted after you have begun your consecutive interpreting practices and have mastered the basic skills in that mode.

At the end of this document, you will find a bibliography and other useful resources that were used to prepare the webinar, and resources that can complement your interpreting practice sessions.

During our time together, we talked about what consecutive and simultaneous interpreting have in common: they are both modes of interpreting, therefore the basic mechanism when interpreting must remain the same; that is the interpreter must listen, analyze, understand, and reformulate.

Regarding multitasking, both consecutive and simultaneous require performing several tasks at once: in both modes we listen, we analyze, we talk while we listen (in simultaneous) and we reformulate and render our interpretation (both in consecutive and simultaneous).

What are the differences, then, between the consecutive and the simultaneous modes?

One difference between the two modes is speed of mental processes. When interpreting in simultaneous you cannot linger to process like you can in consecutive. You don't have time to "ponder" about the significance of a word or phrase. In court, the interpreter can stop the proceeding to look up a term or consult with speaker, but you cannot stop the recording while in the certification exam! Practice your techniques to move on when this happens while doing your interpreting practices so you don't get stuck when you are taking your certification exam.

Another aspect that is unique to simultaneous is the noise interference created by our own voice while you are listening to the speaker and interpreting simultaneously.

The most unique trait of simultaneous is the act of listening and analyzing WHILE rendering, and the fact that you never know where the speaker is going. Personally, I feel that is the most challenging aspect of simultaneous interpreting, the interpreter doesn't usually know how the sentence is going to finish when they start it.

When approaching simultaneous interpreting for the first time it is useful to do it with materials that are somewhat familiar, repetitive, and predictable. One of the most difficult issues with simultaneous is unpredictability of the source content (of what the speaker is saying). If you start your practices with materials that you are already familiar with the unpredictability factor is reduced. If your materials are repetitive this will also be useful because when you start with simultaneous it is very normal to miss fragments of utterances or even complete utterances in your interpreted renditions. If the materials are repetitive this gives you an opportunity to relisten



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to that information and interpret those missed portions, which will make overall comprehension of the source language more complete.

As you do your simultaneous interpreting practices you should always aim to:

1. Make sense, in every single sentence. You might think that is easy, that it goes without saying. But when you approach simultaneous for the first time, with the tension that the body experiences and the voice of the speaker in your ears plus your own voice in the air and the very real risk of language interference it is very easy to lose sight of this basic element.
2. Speak grammatically, respect the grammar of your target language, and finish all your sentences.
3. Initially, give more importance to the quality of the output than to quantity. If you don't, and you prioritize quantity first, you might tend to acquire the bad habit of interpreting word for word and provide an incoherent output, which is very difficult to correct. If you make a commitment to always make sense and finish your sentences, you will have the foundation needed to add quantity to your quality.

As you advance in your simultaneous interpreting practices you should aim to:

1. Be more complete (improve on your content).
2. Provide a more natural interpretation (improve on your form).

One way that you can be more complete in your interpreted renditions in simultaneous is to review your *décalage*. If your *décalage* is too short you will find that it can have all sorts of negative results: you might start a sentence that you can't finish, or you will try to finish it in a clumsy way, or a non-grammatical way, or leave it unfinished, or realize you have to correct yourself and start over. If your *décalage* is too long, on the other hand, you risk loss of information. *Décalage* is unique to each interpreter, you need to find what works for you. Also, *décalage* is to be adapted to the type of source content: a narrative can use longer *décalage* than a list of items or a series of statistics, which will require you to be closer to the speaker.

To provide more natural interpretations you will need to be efficient when you interpret, which complete mastery of your working languages. You will also need to keep up with the speaker, which entails to finish renditions semi close to when the speaker finishes as to not miss crucial information that might be given at the beginning of the next utterance, i.e. a sentence that starts with "However" is very different in meaning that the same sentence without "However."

Finally, the only way to guarantee that you learn from your interpreting practices is recording yourself every time and analyzing those recordings. An exercise that is not recorded is precious time lost when you are preparing for a certification exam, and a recorded exercise without feedback is useless and might even reinforce mistakes that you are making. Make sure that you record yourself, listen to the recording and analyze it while reading the transcription of the



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exercise; another crucial step is fill in your [assessment log](#). You will also need to REPEAT the exercise until you are satisfied with the results. I always aim for 10% more accuracy and completeness than what is expected to pass the exam I am preparing for.

Remember that repetition is key to improve your interpreting abilities. It is only after you have solved your issues with vocabulary and understanding of the source message that you can finally work on improving on your interpreting abilities when you are doing your interpreting practices.

### **Materials to get you started:**

If you are still wondering which materials you should purchase to start with your interpreting practices my recommendation is to choose something from Acebo ([ACEBO — ACEBO](#))

With time I have purchased all their materials and I have enjoyed them all, but if you must choose just one my recommendation is the *Interpreter's Edge* for it includes all three modes of interpretation you will be tested in, plus glossaries and terminology explanations.

### **European Union Speech Repository:**

[Home | Speech Repository \(europa.eu\)](#)

The EU speech repository is a great resource. You can choose the mode you want to practice, consecutive or simultaneous, the difficulty level of the practice and the area of knowledge that you want to work on.

<http://interpreters.free.fr/simultaneous.htm>

Site dedicated to conference interpreting with many simultaneous and consecutive training tips and exercises.

<http://www.orcit.eu/resources-shelf-en/story.html>

Online library of conference interpreting resources.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.htm>

Large repository of recorded speeches for simultaneous practice.

<https://www.vsotd.com/>

Vital speeches of the day—resources for simultaneous practice.

<http://learningenglish.voanews.com/p/5611.html>

Voice of America news videos at three levels of difficulty and speed. Includes texts and videos.



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<http://www.toastmasters.org/Resources/Video-Library>

Numerous videos on topics related to public speaking.

**Trainers Specialized in Judicial Interpreting Training and Certification**

There are many, many trainers and courses available. After being in the USA for ten years and taking a great number of courses with many different trainers these two ladies are the ones that I personally recommend:

Virginia Valencia – Interprettrain ([www.Interpretrain.com](http://www.Interpretrain.com))

Athena Matilsky – <https://AthenaSkyInterpreting.com>