

# Choosing the Right Translation Services for Your Event



Choosing the right translation services for your event is a twofold process. First, your organization will need to determine exactly what type and quantity of service it will need in order to make the event a success for everyone, regardless of the language they speak. Then, you can go about the process of finding the right firm and the right translators there to meet your requirements. While going about your search, there is one more detail to keep in mind: the term "translation" applies to the written word while "interpretation" applies to the spoken word, though most people will use "translation" when referring to either.

## Types of Translation Service

To find the right service, you first need to answer three questions:

1. Do we need personal or conference translation?
2. Do we need consecutive translation, simultaneous translation, or both?
3. Do we need translation of the spoken word, the written word, or both?

## Personal vs. Conference Translation

Translation services come in two broad categories. You can hire a translator that will handle interpretation for a single person or a small group, or you can work with a conference translator that will serve a large group of people.

For instance, imagine that you are holding a conference that primarily serves an English-speaking sales force, but will also host a person or two from an array of foreign countries, each speaking different languages. In that situation, you may want to provide an escort for each foreign guest. That way, they receive translations of event content in their native language. They also have someone to help them communicate with other event attendees so they can more effectively network.

Conference translation services can be a better option when you have larger groups of people who speak the same foreign language. For instance, if you have an event that serves both American and Latin American attendees, a single translator that can turn English content into Spanish (and vice versa) could allow everyone to be included in the event. While you lose the individualized benefits, personal escort translations for networking with a large number of people is cost prohibitive.

## Consecutive vs. Simultaneous Translation

Consecutive translation occurs when someone speaks for a short period of time, then pauses while the translator redelivers the content in a foreign language. It is typically used in small groups or as a way of facilitating conversations. Simultaneous translation, on the other hand, is designed to allow people to experience content in

multiple languages without affecting the flow of the event. In these instances, a translator in a soundproof booth listens to the content and dictates the translation as closely to real time as possible. Attendees hear the translated content over headphones.

## Spoken vs. Written Translation

When assessing your conference translation needs, remember that your conference may need more than just to have the sessions translated. If an attendee cannot understand a speaker in English, will he or she be able to read an English handout? Frequently, events need to have their handouts, agendas, and even their signage translated as well. Doing this can help to ensure that every attendee feels like a full-fledged part of the event. Getting it done, though, requires a service that can handle document work as well as live translation.

## Finding the Right Translator

Choosing the right translation firm goes a long way in finding the right translator. However, it's also a good idea to look into the person that you will be working with, when possible. Their language capabilities, their certifications, and other skills will all play a role in how they are able to participate in your company's event and make everyone feel fully included.



It goes without saying that the translator you hire should be fluent in the languages that you need them to handle. They should also be experienced at using that language in the setting you need. A skilled interpreter of the written word might not be appropriate for a live simultaneous translation. Usually, translators with experience in similar industries -- or with experience translating for your industry -- will be able to provide a more nuanced interpretation than those who are just working off of a word list.

As in many industries, translators have their own certifications and training programs. Organizations like the American Translators Association, for example, provide a certification for translators that meet their standards, and are then considered a professional in the field. Many certifications also include training in translation ethics. Given the sensitive nature of the information that your translator may come into contact with, ethics certification is an important qualification to seek out. Certifications also provide verification of the translator's skill and accuracy.

Finally, look for a translator that wants to play an appropriate role in your event. For instance, the right person will want to learn more about you, your event, and your company's/industry's jargon, especially if they are not familiar with it. The translator should also prepare for the event by reading as much of your written event material as possible. Offering useful suggestions and tips is another positive indicator they may be the right translator for you.

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