



Glossary of Translation and Interpretation Terms

Balanced translation - is one that can be considered the middle ground between source and target languages as to the respect of meaning, structure, etc. of both languages. A translator adopts the original text into the target language using the normal word order, grammar and syntax of the target language preserving the meaning of the source language. This is what translators normally try to achieve.

Conference interpretation - simultaneous interpreting of a speaker's statements at a conference, symposium or any other large meeting.

Consecutive interpretation - one of three modes of interpreting (along with simultaneous and sight interpretation), in which a speaker pauses every few sentences to allow the interpreter to interpret what has just been said.

Court/Legal interpretation - interpreting at legal proceedings, which is performed by a court interpreter who has special subject matter knowledge.

Cultural adaptation - adjusting translation to the cultural environment of the target language to make it suitable for the target audience.

Free translation - is one that provides the general meaning of the original, but it might be far from the exact wording of the original. It provides a great freedom in translating, the most extreme form of it, and should be avoided by translators unless there is a specific reason for free translation.

Freelancer - a self-employed translator or interpreter who works independently directly with the clients and might as well do projects for translation agencies.

Guide or escort interpreter - interpreter who accompanies visitors from a particular country abroad or foreign visitors that come to visit a country to ensure that they are able to communicate during their stay. This requires frequent travel and ability to interpret on a variety of subjects both professional and informal.

Human translation - translation performed by a real human translator as opposed to translation performed by a machine.

Interpretation, interpreting - the process of facilitating oral communication from one language to another. It is performed by an interpreter.

Interpreter - one who renders oral communication from one language into another language.

Literal translation - is one that closely matches the wording and structure of the source language. The literal meaning of words is taken as if from the dictionary (out of context), but target language grammar is respected. Literal translation often appears unnatural, hard to read and understand, and therefore should be avoided unless a translator is specifically asked to do a literal translation.

Literary translation - translation of work of literature such as novels, short stories, poetry, etc.

Medical interpretation - interpreting in various medical settings such as doctors' offices, hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, etc. This type of interpretation is done by medical interpreters who have a special subject matter knowledge.

Machine translation - translation performed by computers using various computer programs without a human translator's input in the process. Machine translation cannot be relied upon as its accuracy is very low and the meaning in most cases is distorted.

Native language - it is the first language a person learns and usually is known as a person's "mother tongue".

Sight interpretation - one of three modes of interpreting (along with consecutive and simultaneous interpretation), in which an interpreter reads a document written in one language and orally interprets information into another language.

Sign language interpreter - interpreter who facilitates communication between people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who can hear. Sign language interpreter must be fluent in English and American Sign Language (ASL).

Simultaneous interpretation - one of three modes of interpreting (along with consecutive and sight interpretation), in which an interpreter interprets the message orally at the same time as the speaker is speaking. The interpreter usually sits in a booth and listens through a headset or other equipment.

Source language - the language in which text was originally written.

Target language - the language into which text is translated.

Telephone interpretation - interpreting a conversation over the phone.

Translation, translating - the process of facilitating written communication from one language to another. It is performed by a translator. Translation should almost always be done by a native speaker into his/her own mother tongue.

Translator - one who renders written text from one language into another language.

Transliteration - the process of representing text in the characters of another alphabet. For example, one can represent/transliterate Russian text into Latin alphabet, so that it can be pronounced by English speakers.

Word-for-word translation, verbatim - the process of matching the individual words of the source language as closely as possible to individual words of the target language. It is often referred to as literal translation. One will rarely see a true word-for-word translation, which is at all readable and with the exact same meaning as the original.