
Introduction to Consecutive Interpreting



The Basic Principles of Consecutive Interpreting

- In order, then, the three basic stages of a consecutive interpreter's work are understanding, analysing, and re-expressing. These three notions have to be looked at in turn.

- **(Listening) Understanding**

- The 'understanding' we refer to here is not of words but of ideas, for it is ideas that have to be interpreted. Obviously, you cannot understand ideas if you do not know the words the speaker is using to express them, or if you are not acquainted sufficiently with the grammar and syntax of the speaker's language to follow the ideas.

The way to become a better listener is to practice “active listening”:

Hear what people are really saying.

Hear not only the words.

Try to understand the whole message.

What is active listening?

- It's a communication skill that involves both the speaker and the receiver.
- In active listening, the receiver tries to understand what feelings, thoughts, & beliefs are being communicated and accepts it as the person's own.
- The listener feeds back only what they believe the sender's message meant - nothing more, nothing less. It involves feedback and verification that the receiver correctly understood the sender's message.
- The active listener avoids getting stuck in another person's “helpless” feelings.



- **Why is it important to listen?**

Failure to listen brings unfortunate results!

Human beings want to express themselves, to be heard.

Listening can de-escalate situations.

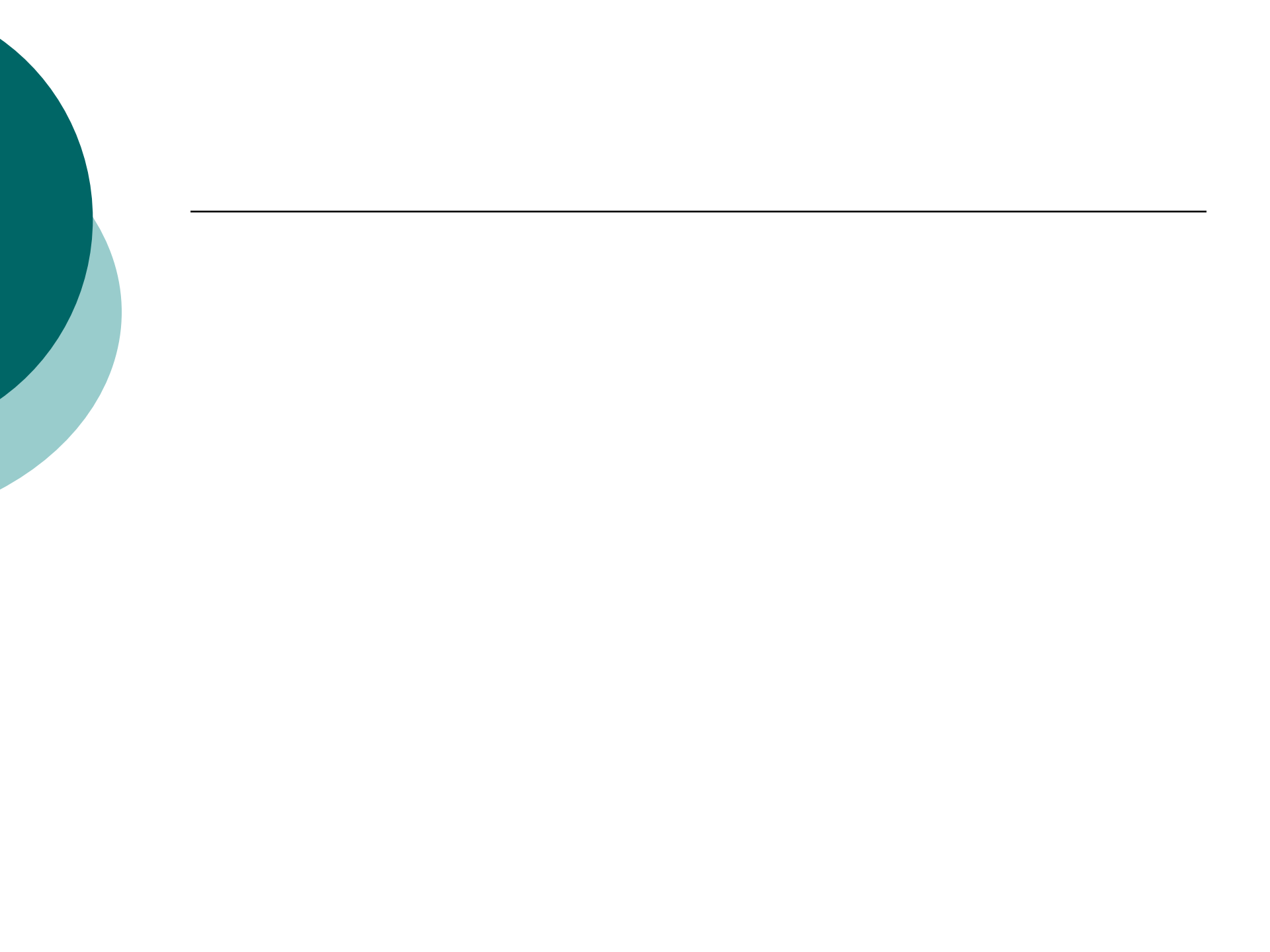
People can hear four times faster than others can talk, which gives a skilled listener time to sort matters.



- **What Interferes with Listening?**

- Sheer laziness and/or just not caring.
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- Noise and or physical discomfort.
- Turing the speaker off and dwelling on the plethora of internal distractions.
- Letting a remark of the speaker (with which we disagree) develop a prejudice which clouds or puts a stop to any further listening.
- Boredom - remember, we hear four times faster that we speak.
- Developing your own listening mainly to find an opening to state what you have to say.
- Allowing personal characteristics of the speaker or his poor delivery to prevent understanding.





- **Analysis**

- *Analysis of Speech Type*

- Working from this active listening, the interpreter may proceed to an analysis of the speech. The first question to ask oneself is what kind of speech is being dealt with.

Speeches may be of many different kinds. If they are presenting a reasoned, logical argument, they can be differentiated into two subsidiary categories: reasoned arguments that present both points of view on a question. and those that are a sequence of logical deductions leading inexorably to the only possible conclusion (from the speaker's point of view).

- On the other hand, speeches may be narrative, adopting a purely chronological sequence.



- *Identification of Main Ideas*

- In order to be able to interpret a speaker's ideas you must know first of all what is important in their comments and what is secondary, what is essential and what accessory. The interpreter, in analysing a speech, must therefore identify the main ideas, and *know* they are the main ideas.

- *Analysis of Links*

- The first key to understanding a speech is the identification of the main ideas; the second is an analysis of the links between those ideas. A speech is not just a sequence of juxtaposed sentences. The sentences are related to one another in a particular way, and it is this relationship that determines the overall meaning of a speech.



- *Memory*

- A consecutive interpreter listens to a speech and then reproduces it in a different language. This means the interpreter must be able to recall ideas, in other words they must call upon their memory. It may be objected that if the interpreter takes adequate notes during the speech they should not need to rely upon memory. We shall discuss note-taking later, but suffice it to say for the moment that it is impossible for an interpreter to rely solely on good notes, and that even if it were possible, it would not, in our view, be desirable. The consecutive interpreter must therefore cultivate the use of short-term memory.



- **Re-expression**

- Having understood and analysed, the consecutive interpreter must move on to re-expressing the speech they have just heard. Before discussing this, though, a parenthesis must be opened to deal with a possible intermediary phase. What if the interpreter, despite all their best efforts, has still not understood everything or is not in a position to reproduce it? They may have missed a number, a proper name. There may be a concept they need to have defined. There may be a part of an argument which is still obscure, perhaps through no fault of the interpreter, but simply because the speaker has not made themselves clear.
- In all such circumstances it is perfectly legitimate for the interpreter to benefit from the fact that they are working in consecutive and put a question to the speaker.

Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting

Note-taking is a wide method to remember information that is typically stored in our STM

In interpreting it is a skill that needs to be developed and practiced. It is necessary to become comfortable with consecutive interpreting mode in order to perform

- It helps to stay focused, facilitating the reception and analysis of speech
- It helps recall information that stays in short term memory such as
 - – Unfamiliar words
 - – Numbers
 - – Dates
 - – Dosage
 - – Proper names
- It helps interpreter maximize memory by releasing short term memory capacity from burden and offering cues to link events

Thank

you

