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THE
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STORY

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The pandemic forced all kinds of association events online. After the initial panic, many associations realized a silver lining: Events international members couldn't attend in the past because of travel costs were suddenly available to them. Members who had never been able to take part in conferences, meetings, and educational opportunities suddenly could.

With so many more people taking part in events, something else occurred to many associations: Most people who speak English as a second language prefer and generally engage more with content in their native language. That's where Remote Simultaneous Interpretation (RSI) comes in, and that is where Nicholas Strozza comes in.

I need an easy and affordable solution for translation services.

Now You're Speaking My Language

REMOTE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION OPENS MANY DOORS, NOT JUST FOR INCREASED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT, BUT ALSO FOR MEMBER BENEFITS.

BY THOMAS MARCETTI

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Ho bisogno di una soluzione facile e conveniente per i servizi di traduzione.



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With more associations turning to translation and interpretation services, what has been the biggest learning curve?

It's not a learning curve, but what a lot of associations are learning is just how easy remote simultaneous interpretation (RSI) is to use.

Often, they think these services take a long time or it's too expensive to even try. Then they see what RSI can do — and the tech has gotten so much better — and they see what they've been missing. Seeing is believing, or rather hearing is believing in this case.

There is a cost, but I encourage associations to look at it strategically. This is not a commodity — it's an investment. Associations all the time tell us that even after offering it at one event, they get so much traction and interest in future events.

Even if a member speaks English, but if, for example, Mandarin is their native language, they will almost always prefer to hear the presentation in Mandarin. And they tend to be really appreciative that you offer that option. Being able to show people the range of lingual options is like rolling out a welcome mat. It's a sign that inclusion matters to you.

Many of our projects involve localization into a variety of languages simultaneously. For example, for several of our clients, we manage multiple projects into over 30 languages concurrently.

Aside from the obvious, what are some of the additional benefits of using an RSI?

Doing interpretation properly allows for two-way discussion. It's not just the presenter's English being interpreted into Spanish; a Spanish-speaking attendee can ask their question in Spanish and have it delivered in English to the presenter. This again comes back to people who might not have felt comfortable asking a question in a second language, but now they can engage with your presentation.

Interpretations can also be recorded alongside the presentation. Now you have two on-demand offerings.

Now you have additional audio for podcasts, other videos, and promotional materials. People are coming up with all sorts of new areas and content to leverage them. It's additional member benefits.

RSIs were already improving pretty rapidly; the pandemic just accelerated it. RSI platforms are growing, getting even faster, and adding new features all the time. They are only going to get better and more widely used.

Once an association dips its toe in the interpretation waters, the number of people asking for more convinces them of the value.

What can associations do to make their events and content more translation and interpretation friendly?

For us, it's education. We want to know what the presentation is trying to do. What's the goal? That helps the interpreter figure out how to communicate certain parts that don't translate word-to-word.

Having reference materials is really important — especially for jargon- or data-heavy presentations. Whenever possible, we like to have a draft. Interpreters will look up past speeches by the presenter to get familiar with the speaker's patterns, tones, or accent. Interpretation is different from translation. It's different training, skills, and certifications.

The more material you can provide ahead of time, the more it helps the interpreter understand better. That's advice I'd give for any event interpretation or translation: Give them as much information as you can about what's going to be presented. **S**

Just to make sure we're all on the same page, how does RSI work?

In-person events sometimes have on-site interpreters — there might be a booth for interpretation. But RSI (remote simultaneous interpretation) works by streaming the presentation's audio to a studio. The interpreter interprets it, and their audio goes back to the platform or an app for those who want it. It also supports a wider array of languages than on-site.

People think it's really hard to set up, and then they log in, hit a button to change the language, and suddenly they're hearing that language with just a couple seconds delay.

Interpretation is not the same as translation. For one, interpretation is in real-time. More than that, it conveys the meaning of what is being said, which is important when the word-for-word translation doesn't work. People don't often think about all the colloquialisms and idioms we use. They don't make sense in a straight translation.



FROM 1980 TO 2018, THE NUMBER OF ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE (ESL) AMERICANS INCREASED 192% COMPARED TO 28% FOR ENGLISH ONLY.

Source: Center for Immigration Studies



Thomas Marcetti is associate editor of *Signature*. He fluently speaks nerd and geek.