

Fourth Lecture..

Which one is harder?

This is one of the 'hottest' topic in the interpreting community, and, like so many others, it's completely open to debate.

Some swear simultaneous is a thousand times harder than consecutive, while others claim the exact opposite.

SI is extremely demanding due to the fact it consists of such an unnatural activity. CI is also extremely demanding due to the note-taking aspect and to the much higher level of exposure.



I will not give you my input as an interpreter on this topic, but it will be interesting to share with you what my experience as a [project manager](#) has showed me.

When I first entered the translation industry as a PM back in 2017, my initial role was almost 100% dedicated to interpreting events.

One of the things I soon realised was that booking interpreters for high profile simultaneous assignments almost always felt easier than it was for an equivalent consecutive one.

Of course, this may not tell us much about the actual level of difficulty. There may have been other underlying factors for this trend.

Nevertheless, that gave me the sense that the same group of professional interpreters would usually find simultaneous assignments desirable, but run away when asked to do consecutive.

Could this suggest that note-taking is more frightening than listening and talking at the same time?

Interpreting Sub-Types

These were already briefly touch upon, so here's a more elucidative description:

Whispering (*Chuchotage*)

A type of SI that does not involve any equipment. It's ideal for events where there's only a couple of people in the entire room who do not understand the language of delivery.

Under normal circumstances the interpreter sits slightly behind the person who needs the translation, and interprets the original speech **directly to the person's ear**.

All that happens while the speech is being presented, thus being a form of simultaneous interpretation.

Despite being known as '*whispering*', the term is not to be taken literally.

Interpreters have to translate what's being said in a **low tone of voice** in order not to disrupt the event. But they don't exactly whisper either, for they need to ensure the person they're assisting actually hears what they say.

Typically, one interpreter can assist up to two people at the same time. More than that and it becomes extremely difficult to maintain the low tone of voice.

Respeaking (*Speech-to-Text Interpreting*)

Respeaking is a fascinating mode. It's essentially a speech-to-text type of interpreting, which also makes it largely inter-semiotic.

If you live in or have been to the UK, you may have noticed how the TV in many pubs always displays subtitles. That's respeaking making its 'magic'.

For that to happen, an interpreter is responsible for **shadowing** what's being said in the TV channel (i.e., repeat the exact same words, virtually at the same time) to a computer or laptop equipped with a speech-to-text software. A widely-used

software in TV media for that purpose is Nuance's Dragon Naturally Speaking.

Essentially, this small 'secret' is what makes the subtitles pop-up at the bottom of the TV screen.

Respeaking is less complex than standard SI in the sense it doesn't involve translation. As mentioned, the interpreter shadows the original speech in the same language (it's a monolingual mode.)

However, in another sense it's more complex than standard SI. First, the interpreter has to be extra careful with pronunciation in order to minimize any potential transcription errors (although they may still occur.)