FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT INTERPRETATION

1. What is interpretation?

   Interpretation is the act and practice of converting an oral message from one spoken language to another.

2. What is the difference between interpretation and translation?

   Translation is the act and practice of converting a written message from one written language to another. So, a translator is someone who converts written texts from one language to another, while an interpreter converts statements from one spoken language to another.

3. Can anyone be an interpreter?

   Yes, anyone with command of at least two languages can be an interpreter, if they are willing to study, train and develop the skills needed. Interpreting is an excellent option for people currently learning a second language, as well as people who are already fluent in at least two languages.

4. If I'm bilingual, can I be an interpreter?

   Yes, being or becoming bilingual is an essential requirement for interpreters. However, being bilingual does not automatically make you qualified to interpret. Interpretation is a skill that is achieved with training and practice. With training and practice, most people can become interpreters of one type or another.

5. Are any special skills required for this course?

   No! This is a general, introductory course that is open to anyone, bilingual or not, in any language, who is curious about the opportunities of interpretation, either as a new career or simply to supplement income.

6. Isn’t interpreting something that is done in the courts?

   Interpreters who work in the courts are court interpreters, and they require much training in order to become certified, or registered, depending on the language. However, interpreters are needed in a very wide range of areas and industries such as health care, education, social services, diplomacy, trade and tourism, as well as many other non-court-related legal applications.

7. If I already have a career, why would I want to pursue interpretation?

   The nature of the interpreting profession allows you to engage to the degree that best fits your lifestyle. Interpreters can work full time, part time or set their own schedule and availability. Interpreting is extremely flexible, not only in terms of schedule but also in terms of subject matter and areas. You can choose to work in a single area full time (i.e., the courts, a hospital) or work only a few hours a week in the afternoons or weekends, if you have other professional or personal commitments such as another job or a family. Interpretation is compatible with your current career commitments.

8. Are there any jobs for interpreters?

   Yes! Interpretation is a fast-growing field, and interpreters of all languages are ALWAYS in demand and needed in a wide range of applications and situations.
9. If I speak a language that is not very common, would I still be able to find work?

Yes! Whether you speak Spanish, Mandarin or even a relatively obscure language or dialect, you will certainly be able to find work of one type or another. Given the extreme cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of California, there is always a need for interpreters of any language. In fact, interpreters of languages other than Spanish are usually paid higher rates.

10. What other benefits are there to pursuing a career in interpretation, either full time or part time.

• Interpretation is a unique career that allows you to learn many things about different people in a wider range of situations.
• You can learn vocabulary from many different fields and trades.
• It allows you access to situations that you would usually only see on TV.
• It offers opportunities for regional, national and international travel.
• It provides a degree of flexibility that is rarely found in other professions.
• It is personally gratifying to assist people who don’t speak English to find the assistance or services they need, or simply be able to express themselves when they would otherwise be disenfranchised.
• Finally, interpreting is a well-paid profession that enables you to make a good living, even for Bay Area standards. There is always work for interpreters, in good times and bad.