

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

An Insight into the 'Clutch Moments' of an Interpreter

07/10/21 / Keyword: interpreter

Did you know that at ECP we also work as translators and interpreters? In this week's article, ECP coach Rob talks about working as an interpreter for top basketball team Baskonia.



Photo © Endika Portillo Visit his [website!](#)

Last Thursday 30th September was International Translation Day and it got me thinking about the importance of translation in everyday life. The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset once remarked that, "Two words in two languages are never exact translations of each other." And of course, that is a translation! At English Coaching Projects, we are very conscious of this idea because, as well as our students asking us to translate words and phrases for them in class ("How do you say 'Me importa un pimiento'?"), we also work as translators (text documents) and interpreters (oral situations).

My colleague Ali is always working on the translation of a text or two and for many years I have worked as an interpreter for Baskonia in player presentations and Euroleague matches. I have experienced both the exhilaration of successfully navigating complicated, and potentially embarrassing, wars of words between coaches and reporters (**fist pump!**), and one very public humiliation of being criticised for "not doing my job properly" in front of cameras and microphones that were streaming and **broadcasting** everything live. I missed one sentence from a long yet seemingly very simple-to-translate paragraph (**face slap!**) and Dusko Ivanovic gave me a **bollocking**. A translator is invisible but an interpreter is usually, **unwillingly**, in the public eye.

Typically, I do 'consecutive interpreting', which **entails** one person speaking for as long as they like - typically a few sentences - while the interpreter takes notes and then translates what has been said. When technical terms, statistics, names and heavy foreign accents are thrown into the mix, it

becomes virtually impossible to do a 100% **faithful** and accurate translation. As Ritxi Guerra (@RitxiWar), sports correspondent and chief Baskonia commentator for Radio Vitoria says, "The translation doesn't have to be completely literal - and long statements will need to be summarised - but at the same time, you can't **miss anything out**." A difficult task he acknowledges, but all part of the job description.

How do you translate words and expressions such as "**clutch moments**", "the **underdog**", "**great insights**" and "**flopping**" into Spanish? Maybe there is no exact translation. The answer, as Oiane Domaika, Communications Officer at [Baskonia](#), explains, is to transmit the context correctly. "I believe that beyond the actual words that are used, what needs to be crystal clear is the context in which the conversation is taking place. A good understanding of the sport and being **up to speed** about the latest developments is vital if the translation is to be as complete as possible." Luckily, I'm a Baskonia fan but I still need to read up on players, coaches and teams. I also keep my fingers crossed that the coaches don't say any of the more difficult-to-pronounce names and that they keep mid-game scores and complicated statistics to a minimum. ("...it was 38-42 in the fourth minute of the third quarter when Choralampopoulos culminated a rapid transition by shooting his third three-pointer from five attempts to break Baskonia's run of nine zero, then...") Rapid and accurate note-taking is not easy and you only have one chance to **get the information down** before all eyes and ears are on you. **Turn to page 2**

Useful vocabulary

insight: a good/profound understanding of something

fist pump: a gesture of triumph

to broadcast: to transmit by radio or television

face slap:  a self-deprecating gesture (slap = use your open hand to strike a person, typically the face)

a bollocking (UK vulgar slang): a severe reprimand

unwillingly: involuntarily, reluctantly

to entail: to involve as necessary

faithful: true to the facts of the original

to miss smtg out: to omit smtg

to be up to speed: to be fully informed of the current situation

to get something down: to write something on paper

Let's chat about that!

1. What everyday actions, objects or events require a translation at some point?
2. Do you use online tools to translate things? If so, which ones? Are they good?
3. Will computers one day replace human translators/interpreters?
4. Look at p2 and give examples of the words in purple.
5. What are the difficulties of consecutive interpreting?
6. Tell us a joke! Translate one from your language into English.

LIVE! English Events

Come and socialise in English!

COFFEE SATURDAYS



Sat 6th November, 11:00 to 12:30
Panadería Bertiz, Calle Francia 23

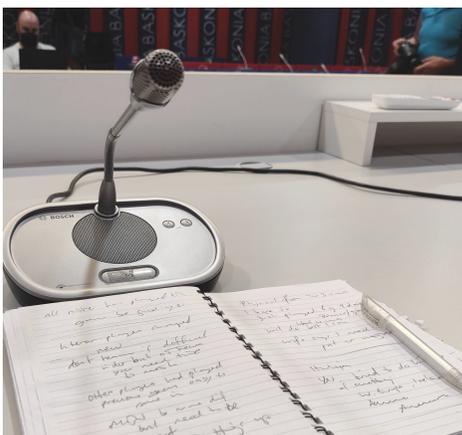
ECP's Cinema Nights



Friday 29th October at 18:30
Send a WhatsApp to John on 657731354

clutch moment: a moment of extreme, intense pressure (in sport) // **underdog:** a competitor with little chance of winning a contest // **great insight:** an accurate and deep understanding of something // **flopping:** the action of deliberately falling in order to give the appearance of having been fouled by an opponent (basketball)

Describe what is happening in these 3 pictures.
Give plenty of details!



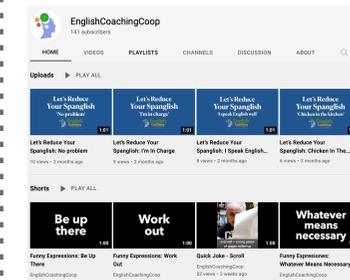
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successful
translations,
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info@ecp.coop

It is also worth noting that the person you are interpreting for very often doesn't actually need an interpreter, it's the other participants in the event that require the translation. This can lead to the sometimes tense situation of the speaker interrupting the interpreter to correct a perceived mistake. "I've seen a lot of tense situations where the person being translated considers the translation to be unsatisfactory," says Ritxi Guerra. "Those moments can be very uncomfortable," concurs Oiane Domaika, "especially when the person goes on and completes the translation themselves. It's fundamental that the interpreter makes a **faithful** translation."

Over the years, I have been interrupted, corrected, criticised, thanked and congratulated. I often check the YouTube recording of the press conferences later and, as a perfectionist, I have to admit that I've seen moments when I could have done a better job. "An imprecise or incomplete translation is the worst thing an interpreter can do," warns Ritxi Guerra.

But, we learn from our mistakes, right? So let's finish with another observation from José Ortega y Gasset: "El verdadero tesoro del hombre es el tesoro de sus errores." How would you translate that?

Written by ECP coach Rob Hextall



Here's a video (from 2017) that shows you what Rob was talking about