

János Dobai

Italian-Hungarian, Hungarian-Italian interpreter

Freelance conference interpreter and translator with more than 40 years of professional experience, he also worked as a journalist and announcer in the Italian broadcasting section of Magyar Rádió.

Early years

János Dobai was born in November 1954, in Rome. He completed his primary education in Italy, which enabled him to gain a native-speaker's command of Italian. Then the family moved back to Hungary, where besides Italian, another language aroused his interest as he studied English in high school. However, later on, during his career, Italian played the major role. Practically he ended up working in this profession by chance, when at the age of 20 he was introduced to the world of interpreting because, due to his excellent language skills a good old friend of his offered him an interpreting job that ended with compliments and positive feedback. After his first successful experience, at the beginning of his twenties, he was mainly asked to do escort interpreting in political matters. Then he worked for an Italian machinery company based in Hungary where he facilitated the communication between the Hungarian mechanics and the Italian technicians, which according to his words was an excellent training ground. Considering the visual language elements, he easily mastered the technical terms, practiced co-operation and thanks to the series of small successes, he gained a massive amount of self-confidence. He graduated from Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), where he studied Italian language and literature at the Faculty of Humanities.

Career:

After graduation, he started working at Magyar Rádió as a journalist and announcer in the Italian broadcasting section. During the years he spent at the radio, he became more and more convinced that he had the right personality to work as a freelance interpreter because in that way he could work independently. Therefore, in 1988 he started working as a member of the official conference interpreter team of the Alps Adriatic Alliance Working Community in Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Hungary, in the regions that had joined the organization. During those 18 years, while he was working for the community, he gained lots of experience in interpreting. Meanwhile, between 2001 and 2004 he taught and was a member of the examination board both at Marc Bloch University in Strasbourg and Budapest University of Technology.

During the first ten years of his career, he mostly dealt with consecutive interpreting, which was followed by three decades of simultaneous interpreting. Among others, he worked for the governmental bodies of the Hungarian Parliament, Hungarian ministries, Italian governmental bodies, the Italian Chamber of Commerce and the Italian Cultural Institute. Furthermore, he also interpreted for several large Italian companies such as ENI, FIAT, Italgas and Nuove Pignone.

With nearly 30 years of professional interpreting experience behind him, János Dobai decided to enter a new field and try the interpreting booths of the European Parliament. In 2003, he successfully passed the European Union conference interpreter exam with qualification "A" in both languages in Brussels. Following the examination, he was invited to work about 600 days as a freelance conference interpreter at the institutions of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice and the Committee of the Regions between 2004 and 2015. Now he definitely prefers simultaneous interpreting because, according to him, after one has gained the required routine it takes place in a more pleasant environment than consecutive interpreting. Spending many years in this profession has brought him several changes but one thing has never changed: interpretation has remained an integral part of his life.

Tips for beginners:

His first, simple but instructive piece of advice went like this: *"Mistakes are allowed moreover, it is a must in our profession!"* They can be reduced by mastering various techniques; however, this is only possible if we are willing to go tread the path paved by our own mistakes. In addition, János Dobai emphasized the importance of word stress, speaking properly and the importance of an objective but also clear and calm manner of speech, which if it implies that the interpreter wants to facilitate understanding between the two parties, could become a huge advantage. *"You need to read a lot and learn about cultures. Once you've made the decision, you must go on and never give up."*

Concluding thoughts:

During the interview, I got to know János Dobai as a very kind, modest person and an excellent interpreter who has always been involved in professional challenges. I would therefore like to thank him for giving me many useful pieces of advice.

**Written by
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