

WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

justice AmeriCorps
Year II National Training

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Training Content

- What is Interpreting?
- Language Assessment
- Tips for
 - Preparing for the interpretation
 - The interpretation experience
 - Working with particularly vulnerable children
 - Deaf children
 - Indigenous language speakers

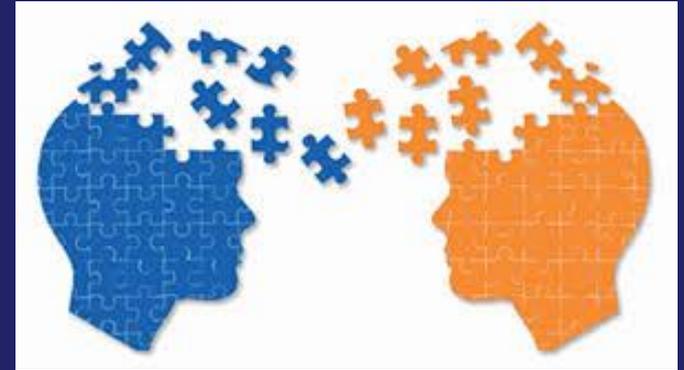




What is Interpreting?

Interpreting: The Task

- It is a Process
- Not just about bilingualism
- Serious cognitive task (Not Google Translate)
- Very difficult to do well!



Interpreting: Why It Matters

The Interpreter is the means of communication between the attorney and the child – a bridge.

An effective interpreter enables the attorney and the child to establish a relationship with each other.



The interpreter may be the most important person in the room, but to be truly effective, must be INVISIBLE.

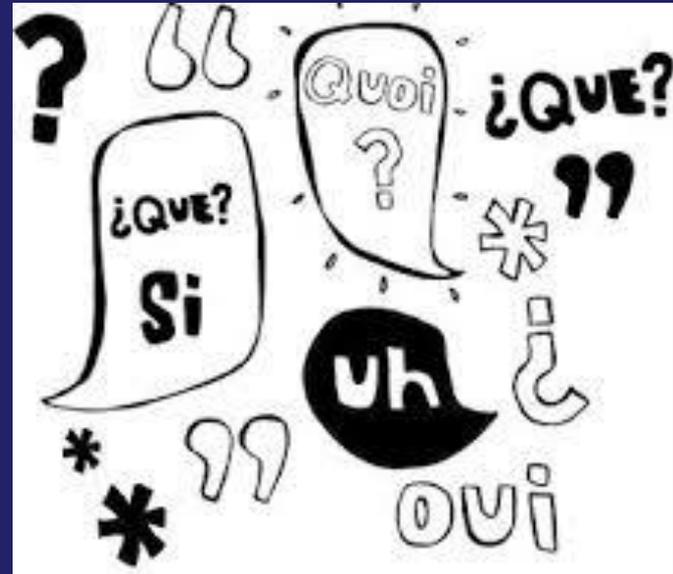
Interpreting: The Requirements

- Accurately, without distorting the meaning
- No omissions
- No substitutions
- No additions



Common Errors of Untrained Interpreters

- Omission
- Addition
- Substitution
- False cognates
- Lack of familiarity with dialects & idiomatic expressions



Interpreting: Who is your Interpreter?

- Professional vs. Non-professional interpreter

- Nonprofessional interpreters:

- Colleague
- Volunteer
- Family member

It is very important to know your interpreter and prepare them accordingly.

- Socio-economic differences between interpreter and child
- Political/racial/religious differences between interpreter and child from same country
- Implicit biases of interpreter (opinions about children; immigrants; etc.)

Interpreting: The Modes

Preferred:

- Consecutive: longest method, but most accurate

Other modes:

- Simultaneous: quickest but very difficult, and hard to gauge comprehension
- Summary: not recommended
- Sight translation: reading a document while translating



In Person vs. Telephonic

In person should be used, if possible, in the following situations:

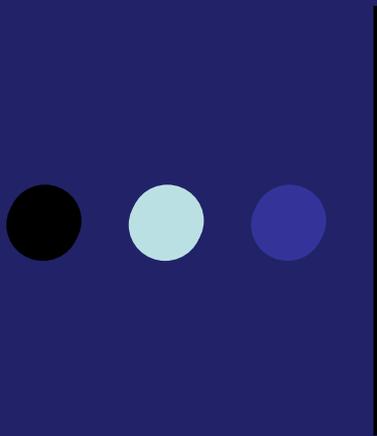
- The content is complex or emotionally charged
- The encounter is lengthy, formal, or significant
- The encounter involves multiple parties

Telephonic interpretation works best in the following situations:

- Determining what language a client speaks
- Conversations that will be conducted over the phone anyway
- The content is straightforward



Language Assessment



Preparing for the Interpretation

Keep in Mind:

- Plan for a longer conversation
- Plan to pause
- A break may be necessary
- If telephonic interpretation:
 - Move the phone to the middle
 - Remember the interpreter cannot see you
- Use plain language
- Build in comprehension checks
- Set the stage

Use Plain Language: (Handout 1)

Before (un-simplified, non-plain language)

Asylum is a form of legal relief pertaining to those who are afraid to return to their country of origin. Often this is because they or their loved ones have been persecuted in their country of origin for any of the following reasons: nationality, race, religion, political affiliation or opinion, or their membership in a particular social group. Asylum is also a form of legal relief pertaining to those who believe that they will likely be persecuted if they return to their country of origin in the future.

After (simplified, plain language)

Asylum is a defense for someone who is afraid to go back to their country because someone has hurt them or their family for a particular reason (for example: nationality, race, religion, political opinion or particular social group). Asylum is also a defense for people who believe that they will be hurt if they return to their country in the future.

Build in Comprehension Checks:

- When sharing information: After each topic, ask 1-2 questions to gauge comprehension; ask the child to explain important information you have shared in his/her own words
- When seeking information: Note any unresponsive answers and/or discrepancies between child's demeanor and translated response; ask follow up questions; rephrase questions to clarify responses

Set the Stage:

- Whenever possible, speak to the interpreter beforehand to set out the ground rules of interpretation:
 - Confirm confidentiality
 - Explain the purpose of the meeting to the interpreter (who, what, how long)
 - Remind interpreter of the importance of his/her role, the need for consecutive, accurate translation, with no additions, omissions, changes
 - Remind interpreter to ask speakers to slow down, pause or repeat when necessary

Set the stage: (continued) (Handout 3)

Once child and interpreter are present together, explain to the child the presence and role of the interpreter through the interpreter:

- “The interpreter is here because I do not speak your language. The interpreter is here to interpret what you and I say as we discuss your legal case.”
- “I have asked the interpreter to sit (describe the orientation of the seating) so that the interpreter can do a good job. I will speak directly to you and look at you while I speak. You should try to do the same as well.”
- “I will speak in short phrases so that the interpreter can interpret what I say more easily.”

Instruct the Child (Handout 3)

- Speak slowly
- Speak 1-2 thoughts at a time
- Be patient
- Allow the interpreter to finish speaking
- Say if you do not understand the interpreter
 - Best practice is to establish a non-verbal cue for this (e.g., raise his/her hand; hold up a colored index card)

Confirm Comprehension (Handout 3)

- Mock Question
 - (telephonic): What color is the phone?
 - (in-person): What color is your shirt?
- Ask interpreter to confirm that the child understands
- Ask the interpreter if s/he understands the child
- Remind child to raise his/her hand if s/he does not understand

Example of Ensuring Comprehension

- Video Vignette #1*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcZ3StAOQ18>
- Highlights the importance of plain language, speaking slowly and comprehension checks on the part of the provider.

Debrief: Ensure Comprehension

- What could the provider have done better?
- Effective ways to gauge comprehension in children?
- Other examples from practice?



During the Interpretation

Keep in Mind...

- Seek to build rapport
- Maintain eye contact with child
- Monitor your speech
- Be patient
- Remember the interpreter cannot see you
- Remember that you are in control
- Remember that interpreting is difficult

Ask Yourself

- Can we all hear each other well?
- How responsive to my questions are the answers?
- Is the participant/child responsive during check-ins?
- Is the participant/child asking any follow-up questions?
- Is there a capacity issue at play?

Signs of a Good Interpretation

- Interpreter uses first person
- Interpreter asks speakers to slow down, pause
- Interpreters seeks clarification



Signs of a Poor Interpretation

- Interpreter engages in “side bar” conversations that are not just for clarifying the meaning
- Interpreter’s statements are significantly shorter than what was spoken

Example of Poor Questioning

- Video Vignette #2*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shsombVovt8>
- Highlights the importance of word choice and speaking directly to the participant.

Debrief: Poor Questioning

- What could the provider have done better?
 - (“Miguel, please tell me...” vs. “Ask him how many...”)
 - (“How many brothers?” followed by “How many sisters?” vs. “How many siblings?”)
- Main takeaways:
 - Address the client directly
 - Break the original questions in English down to their fundamental parts to ensure a more complete conversation
- Other examples from practice?

Example of a Challenging Interpretation

- Video Vignette #3*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rejE9Vx2ly4>

- Highlights the importance of a provider's role in keeping the conversation on track and reminding the interpreter of his/her role.

Debrief: A Challenging Interpretation

- What did the provider do well?
 - Addressed client directly
 - Broke questions down into their fundamental parts
 - Confronted interpreter about sidebar conversation and raised suspicion of omitted information
 - Reviewed some of the ground rules with the participant
- Other examples from practice?

Red Flags

- Participant/child appears to be frustrated, confused
- Participant/child corrects the interpreter
- Participant/child opts to speak in English or Spanish
- Interpreter frequently reformulates or changes what is said mid-sentence
- Interpreter uses English (or Spanish)



What if There's a Problem?

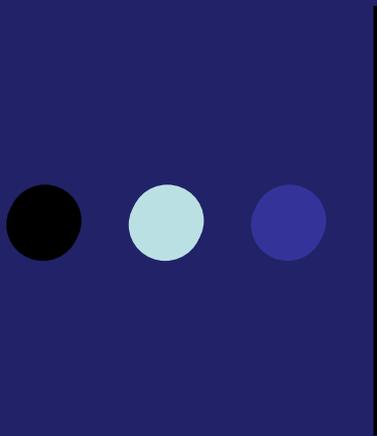
- STOP
- Remind interpreter of his/her role
- Remind the participant/child to help the interpreter by speaking slowly and clearly
- Ask if anyone needs a break
- Get a different interpreter or schedule a follow-up



Closing the Meeting

Before Ending the Meeting

- Restate important points
- Discuss if/when you will speak again
- Ask participant/child to restate any follow-up actions
- Ask the participant/child if the interpretation was clear and easy to understand
- Ask the participant/child if s/he has questions about the interpretation
- Thank the interpreter



After the Meeting

Immediately After

- Take note of the participant/child's demeanor (e.g., sad, upset, anxious, apathetic, confused, relieved, tired, etc.)
- Maintain a record of a particularly good interpreter to request in the future (may require an advance appointment)

Checklist (Handout 4)

Tell the interpreter the context.

Explain the interpreter's role.

Limit the use of gestures and facial expressions.

Ensure the participant/child's understanding.

Pace your speech appropriately.

Have sufficient time available.

Offer only one question at a time.

Note the interpreter's ID number.

Enunciate words and speak audibly.

*Source: Nataly Kelly,
Telephone Interpreting: A
Comprehensive Guide to the
Profession (2007).*

Checklist (Handout 4)

Incorporate first person or direct speech.

Notice and work through additional communication problems.

Take turns speaking.

Encourage requests for clarification.

Refrain from using figures of speech.

Protect and respect the role of the interpreter.

Remain present for all communication.

Exercise awareness of the words you say aloud.

Talk in short utterances.

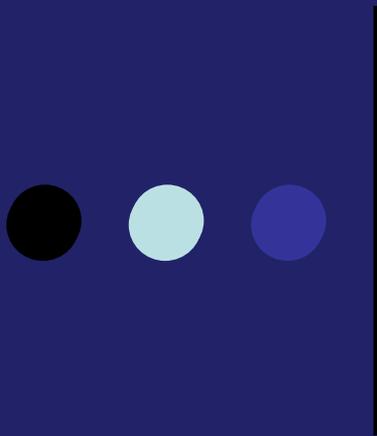
Eliminate vague expressions and words that have double meanings.

Relieve or refresh your interpreter as needed.

*Source: Nataly Kelly,
Telephone Interpreting:
A Comprehensive
Guide to the Profession
(2007).*

Immigration Court – Special Requests

- Contact your local court and request an interpreter for your client
- Carefully review all documents with client prior to the meeting and ask client all questions you have about his/her documents, so that you can make a calculated decision as to whether you should plead or not
- Consider bringing your interpreter to court (SIJS)
- Remember the importance that the interpreter should not be a friend/relative



Particularly Vulnerable Children

Vulnerable Children: Deaf & Hard of Hearing

- Deaf
 - Little or no speech depending severity of the hearing loss and age of onset
 - Communicate with sign language interpreter
 - They may benefit from real-time captioning, where spoken text is typed and projected onto a screen
- Hard of Hearing
 - Hard of Hearing hear only specific frequencies or sounds within a certain volume range
 - Rely on hearing aids and lip reading
 - May never learn sign language

Vulnerable Children: Deaf & Hard of Hearing

- Make sure the client can see your face and avoid unnecessary pacing and moving
- Avoid obscuring your lips or face with hands, books, or other materials
- Repeat questions and statements made by others in the room
- Write questions/answers on a whiteboard or overhead projector
- Use visual aids
- Provide written outlines

Vulnerable Children: Deaf & Hard of Hearing

- Video Vignette #4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpPvGP_GUXs
- Highlights when interpreter is failing to properly interpret.

Vulnerable Children: Indigenous-Language Speakers

- The number of indigenous-language speakers in the U.S. immigration system is rising:
 - Of the top 25 languages spoken in immigration court last year, #25 was Quiche (a Mayan language)
 - 40% of Guatemalans identify themselves as indigenous. FY2015, 12,589 children from Guatemala.
- Indigenous-languages are NOT dialects of Spanish.
- There are important dialect distinctions within many indigenous languages. You must find the right dialect.
 - e.g., a child and interpreter who speak different dialects of Mam may not be able to communicate effectively.
 - Some dialects/languages share some words, but are still very different. This may cause an initial mis-identification of language.

Vulnerable Children: Indigenous-Language Speakers

Challenges

- Stigma/discrimination attached to indigenous association causes children to reject/deny it
("Wanted: Speakers of Mayan Languages, Many of Them," All Things Considered, NPR, Nov 17, 2015)
- Some have limited Spanish-proficiency—can be both an asset and a liability in this situation
- More errors in DHS paperwork due to poor or no interpretation upon apprehension
 - May communicate in Spanish, or through another indigenous-language speaking child
- Shortage of interpreters
("Wanted: Speakers of Mayan Languages, Many of Them," All Things Considered, NPR, Nov 17, 2015)

Vulnerable Children: Indigenous-Language Speakers

Best Practices

- Do a thorough language assessment.
 - Use creative questioning to try to move past the stigma.
- Do a comprehension assessment at the outset of the interpretation
 - Don't assume that an interpreter and child who speak the same "language" speak the same dialect.
- Carefully review all DHS paperwork; make motions to exclude documents/statements that were not properly translated.

Vulnerable Children: Indigenous-Language Speakers

- NPR – Report:
<http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=326426927&m=327369439>
- Highlights the differences between languages, the challenges the children deal with, and the amount of children who speak indigenous languages

Discussion

