



# Interpreting in Community Settings

Community-based training for interpreters working in health, social and legal settings

Student Handbook





## THE INTERPRETER'S LAB

Discover, Learn, Share, Meet

The Interpreter's Lab is a professional development and training series for community interpreters.

This Handbook is provided as a study guide for the **Community Interpreter Training** Short-course Training Series provided by The Interpreter's Lab™ - a program of Shifting Pictures Inc., and is not intended as a stand-alone training manual. This Handbook may only be used as a supporting document to the 20-hour Community Interpreter Training delivered by Shifting Pictures.

### Contact Information:

Shifting Pictures  
1424 Commercial Drive  
Vancouver BC  
V5L 3X0

[info@shiftingpictures.org](mailto:info@shiftingpictures.org)  
[admin@interpreterslab.org](mailto:admin@interpreterslab.org)

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## What is a Community Interpreter?

What is the role of the Community Interpreter? A language interpreter is a conduit for 2 or more people who do not speak the same language. The primary role of the interpreter involves the oral rendering of meaning from one language into another without changing content, register or tone

An interpreter:

- Is a language assistant
- Is fluent in two or more languages
- Understands their limitations
- Does not advocate for either party in an interpreting session
- Does not let personal opinions enter into their work
- Maintains a current knowledge of vocabulary and terminology
- Is not a “friend” to the client
- Does not offer counseling nor advice

### Interpreting Techniques and Modes

Interpreting is conducted according to established techniques and modes. Different settings call for different techniques. It is important to use the appropriate technique for the setting.

There are two main interpreting modes. These are simultaneous and consecutive. There are also other modes, such as summarizing, descriptive, etc., but these are not typical and are used discriminately in select situations. Simultaneous and consecutive are the primary and standards modes.

#### Simultaneous Mode

The interpreter begins to interpret the message while the speaker is still talking. The interpreter keeps a few words behind the speaker.

#### Consecutive Mode

The interpreter waits for the speaker to pause and then accurately interpreters what the speaker has said. Usually allows for a few sentences of information to be spoken before pausing.

### Settings and Styles for Interpreting

Interpreting happens in a variety of different settings. While community interpreting is perhaps the oldest form, it is the most recent to join the professionalization rank. When people think about interpreting they often envision booths, headsets, microphones, and a large auditorium or a United Nations conference room. But interpreting happens everywhere. From the smallest community-based office to the largest conference rooms. Below is a listing of different settings and styles for interpreting.

1. Conference Interpreting
  - Conference setting involves specialized equipment and interpreters skilled in simultaneous mode
2. Court Interpreting
  - Court/legal setting - may involve specialized equipment. In more and more situations, court interpreting is conducted in simultaneous mode.
3. Diplomatic Interpreting
  - Interpreters for this setting are usually citizens of the country for which they interpreting and must know a range of subjects and work specifically for the diplomat to which they are assigned.

4. Business Interpreting
  - Business meeting/conference setting - may involve special equipment.
  - Interpreters for this setting may have specialized knowledge and may also act as a cultural chaperone.
5. Community Interpreting
  - Community level - involves social services, education, health care, police or any service that is community based

## **The Primary Description of an Interpreter**

The main purpose of interpreting is to facilitate understanding in communication between people who speak different languages.

### Key Purpose

- **Facilitate** implies the interpreter has an active, rather than a passive, role.
- **Understanding** means that the interpreter is clear on the message in all of its forms.
- **Communication** means that the interpreter has the ability and capacity for effective communication
- And **speaking** is understood

### **Communication and Interpreting**

Interpreting is communication. Without a good understanding of communication, an interpreter cannot appreciate the full scope of the work that they do, and the challenges that they have in interpreting from one language to another – across cultures, values, and communication styles.

### **Barriers to Communication in Interpreting**

As human beings, our communication styles are a part of who we are, where we come, what are values are, where we fit on the socio-economic ladder, in addition to so many other variables. The challenge is not only in knowing this but also in being aware of how these variables affect our communication, and how they create barriers **to** effective communication with others.

Below is a list of potential barriers that face everyone, but might have additional significance for community interpreters:

- Linguistic Barriers
- Socio-Economic Barriers
- Cultural Barriers
- Systemic Barriers

### **Self Assessment**

It is important, as we do this work, to check in once in a while and do a self-assessment on our cross-cultural communication styles. Remember that when we talk about cross-cultural communication we are not only talking about communication between two “geographical” cultures, but it can also be between different cultures of values, systems, class, gender, etc.

### **How does an interpreter overcome communication barriers?**

The difficulty for interpreters is in trying to **overcome** barriers, while remaining true to their **Primary Interpreter Role**.

### **The Different Hats of a Community Interpreter**

## Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

I am...

- Sensitive to own cultural reality
- Aware of my own identity
- Aware of any values and biases I may have and how they may affect others
- Open to learning about other people's backgrounds by suspending my assumptions
- Comfortable with differences between myself and others
- Aware of the factors that may influence communication and am open to receiving and producing a wide variety of verbal and non-verbal messages.
- Able to tolerate ambiguity.
- Aware of my boundaries.
- Able to set a climate of respect.
- Capable of possessing perspective – and am able to step outside of myself.
- Aware of how the reality of racism and discrimination may impact individuals.
- Able to recognize and learn from my own mistakes and start again.

### Primary Role: Language/Communication Facilitator

- The primary role of the interpreter involves the oral rendering of meaning from one language into another without changing content, intent, register or tone
- This role **should govern all of the interpreter's actions** unless they have a valid reason to step outside of this primary interpreting role.

### Auxiliary and Temporary Roles:

#### **Situational Clarifier**

Sometimes an interpreter needs to make sure that the intended message is received and understood. This means that the interpreter steps outside of the fundamental role and become invasive.

- Adjusting the complexity
- Defining the word
- Explaining symbolic meaning
- Checking for comprehension
- Situational clarification

#### **Cultural Clarifier**

- The Interpreter offers a cultural point of reference or framework so that the message may be understood
  - This is done using appropriate intervention techniques only
- Why does the Interpreter take on different roles?**

In any interpreting session there are 3 relationships that have been established:

Provider – Interpreter  
Interpreter – Client  
Provider – Client

The client/provider relationship is the most important because the other relationships exist only so that this one can occur. The interpreter provides the means for the development of that crucial client/provider relationship. So the more invasive a role the interpreter takes – that is everyone starts paying attention to the interpreter– the greater the risk of getting in the way of the client/provider relationship.

It's easy for interpreters to become involved or invasive in community-based appointments as all of the people involved are working collaboratively to the same end. The interpreter must remember that they are simply there to facilitate the primary relationship between the client and the practitioner.

## What is Communication?

The desire to communicate is basic to our human nature. But what exactly is communication?

Communication involves the translation of thoughts and ideas into words, symbols or actions and the reception and interpretation of these into meaning.

For communication to take place we need at least two parties:

- Sender
  - Receiver
- For effective communication to take place the Receiver must understand the exact information that the Sender intended to transmit.
  - Interpersonal communication can be broadly defined as any verbal or nonverbal behaviour that is perceived by another person. In other words, it is much more than the exchange of words because all behaviour conveys some message and therefore is a form of communication.
  - Interpersonal communication or communication among people is a process in which everyone receives, sends and infers meaning and messages all at the same time. All communication involves people sending one another symbols to which certain messages are attached. The following diagram below explains the process of communication from the fruition of an idea and the intent of the communication through to the receipt and understanding of the idea or intent.

We communicate all the time with both our spoken words and our non-verbal behaviours and gestures.

Messages we send may not be understood as we intended. That doesn't mean we didn't use the correct words, we may have used perfect words.

But barriers (many invisible ones) can hinder understanding. Being aware of potential barriers will help you try to avoid them hence avoiding misunderstanding.

According to communication studies, non-verbal communication consists of all the messages other than words that are used in communication. In oral communication these symbolic messages are transferred by means of intonation, tone of voice, vocally produced noises, body posture, facial expression or pauses. When we interact with others, we continuously give and receive countless wordless signals. All of our nonverbal behaviors—the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make—send strong messages.

### Non-Verbal Communication Elements

Intonation

- Intonation is the way that the sender's pitch of voice raises and falls when speaking. For example, it shows the interpreter whether the
- speaker expresses his or her message in the form of a question or statement. In the first case the voice raises at the end of the phrase or the sentence and in the second case, it falls. At the same time, intonation indicates the end of a group of information, that, when written, is indicated by commas, semicolons, periods, exclamation or question marks. Another function of intonation is to lay emphasis on a particular word or idea, a detail that the interpreter must not fail to be aware of.



### Tone of Voice

- The tone of voice is a means by which the speaker implies his or her attitude to the message. It is also a means by which he seeks a reaction from the hearer. In a political debate, for instance, the tone of voice is likely to be rousing, whereas on television the daily news is communicated in a more factual tone. Other examples of tone of voice are: aggressive, critical, nervous, disappointed, monotonous, friendly, enthusiastic, vivid, persuasive, etc.

### Vocally Produced Sounds/Noises

- Speech can be accompanied by vocally produced noises that are not considered as part of language, even though they help in communicating the intent of the message. Vocally produced noises are things like laughter, shouting, screams of joy, fear, pain, as well as conventional expressions of disgust, triumph, etc., traditionally spelled “ugh!”/“ha ha”, etc.

### Body Posture

- Body posture is way the speaker is “holding” or positioning their body. For example, a person might be slouching, or sitting with crossed arms. Body posture is different then gestures because is something that is more subtle and at times unconsciously done. Body posturing can be due to the situation (i.e. a patient lies down in a bed) and therefore normal or expected, or it can happen in response to the context (i.e. a sudden tensing of the body in response to alarming news.) Some postures, such as slouching or crossed arms, can provide some clues to the non-verbal behaviour, mood, and intention, of the speaker. But in this one must be careful when working across cultures. What might be true for one culture might not be true in another.

#### **Sources of Communication Difficulties**

- Words
- Tone
- Silence
- Laughter
- Face or Body Expressions
- Touch
- Dress
- Space
- Informal Rules
- Time

### Body Gestures

- A body gesture is a movement made with a limb, especially the hands, to express, confirm, emphasize or back up the speaker’s attitude or intention. This non-verbal activity is regularly used in conversation. Sometimes gestures require no words (i.e. thumbs up, the OK sign, etc.) But gestures can also cause all sorts of miscommunication in a cross-cultural context. Interpreters must confident that they understand the intent of the gesture if they are going to translate its meaning. As an aid to understanding the message, it is always good to double-check what the face is saying for a clue as to what the hand intends.

### Facial Expressions and Eye Movement

- The face is the primary source of emotions. When a speaker is speaking their facial expressions tend to change continually and are constantly monitored and interpreted by the receiver. Examples of this are: smile, frown, raised eyebrow, yawn or sneer.
- Eye movement is a key part of facial behavior. Researchers have discovered that certain facial areas reveal our emotional state better than others. For example the eyes tend to show happiness, sadness or even surprise. The lower face can also express happiness or surprise; a smile, for instance, can communicate friendliness or cooperation. As with all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication, eye movement is culturally bound.

### Pause

- A pause can have two different functions:
- It can indicate when the relationship of one sentence to another and provide emphasis.
- It can also reveal the speaker’s uncertainty, hesitation, tension or uneasiness. A pause can also indicate judgment, agreement or disagreement. For interpreters, pauses can be troublesome because there meaning can vary widely.

## Culture and Diversity

- Culture is an important and significant part of our lives, personally and professionally and a crucial element on communication and health care.
- Cultural frameworks will differ on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, race, religion, class, sexual orientation, gender and age.
- Culture influences how we communicate in many ways. One of which is how much information we convey when communicating

### Consider this:

The impact of a message breaks down like this:

- **7** percent verbal (words)
- **38** percent vocal (volume, pitch, rhythm, etc.)
- **55** percent body movements (mostly facial expressions)

### High versus Low Context Cultures and Communication Styles

High-context cultures and the contrasting low-context cultures are terms presented by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall in his 1976 book *Beyond Culture*. It refers to a culture's tendency to use high-context messages over low-context messages in routine communication. This choice of speaking styles translates into a culture that will cater to in-groups, an in-group being a group that has similar experiences and expectations, from which inferences are drawn. In a higher-context culture, many things are left unsaid, letting the culture explain. Words and word choice become very important in higher-context communication, since a few words can communicate a complex message very effectively to an in-group (but less effectively outside that group), while in a low-context culture, the communicator needs to be much more explicit and the value of a single word is less important.

Much of what we “see” in a culture is often just the tip of it all.

Another way to think about it is through the concept of dimensions of culture. There are Primary and Secondary Dimensions of Culture and Self.

Primary dimensions are:

- Unchanging, inborn and exert impact throughout our lives
- They are core of our individual identity.
- They shape our basic self-image and our life experiences are filtered through them.

Secondary dimensions:

- Change throughout our lives
- They exert impact on our self-esteem, self-definition, needs and priorities.
- They add another layer of complexity to the way we see ourselves and **others**
- These dimensions impact us differently e.g. Income most poor people are negatively affected, while upper-income people may be impacted differently.

Issues of age and level of education can be more significant than the surface definition of gender or ethnicity.

## Standards for Community Interpreters

Standards are based on a value system, but what are values?

- Values are a system of criteria by which conduct is judged and approval or disapproval is given.
- States a value describe the ideal, not necessarily the actual behaviour
- Values come from one's cultural background. The origins of values are difficult to trace to a particular source and are often part of a person's unconscious behaviour.
- Within any given culture, a person's values often make sense and are very logical.
- People should be very cautious when making moral judgments about other people's values.
- A self-fulfilling prophecy functions to make some values into fact. E.g. In a culture that values logical, reasonable and expected behaviour, people with mental illness are often medicated, and isolated from the rest of the group. As a result, they may feel useless and devalued.
- From values, we build an ethical construct that guides our behavior – both personally and professionally. So, what are ethics?

### Ethics:

- The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc. (medical ethics, Muslim ethics); or
- The principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession: standards of behavior; or
- Moral principles of an individual

“A value system represents what is expected or hoped for, required or forbidden.”

**Ethel Albert**

### Professional Ethics

- Characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession or an occupation:
- Manifesting fine artistry or workmanship
- Based on sound knowledge and conscientiousness: reflecting the results of education, training and experience

Interested in learning more about Ethics and how our cultures influence our decisions, as individuals and as interpreters? Visit **The Interpreter's Lab** to learn about Professional Development opportunities for Community Interpreters – [www.interpreterslab.org](http://www.interpreterslab.org)

## Core Competencies

As with other professional designation and/or occupations, interpreting is defined by core competencies. These are the critical competencies that a practitioner (interpreter) must have, acquire or demonstrate in order to be considered a professional.

### What are core competencies?

- A defining capability or advantage that distinguishes a profession
- A defined level of competence in a particular job or academic program

How are competencies described?

Competencies are described in ways that are:

- Observable
- Measurable
- Linked to the workplace, academic environment and other life experiences
- Transferable
- Based on performance

#### Interpreting Competence

- Interpreting competence comprises the ability to interpret a message from one language to the other in the applicable mode.
- It includes the ability to assess and comprehend the original message and render it in the target language without omissions, additions or distortions.
- It also includes the knowledge/awareness of the interpreter's own role in the interpreting encounter.
- The interpreter shall:
  - Have active listening skills and strive to improve them through self-training.
  - Have good memory retention skills.
  - Be able to take notes during the interpretation assignment to ensure accuracy of the information given.
  - Be able to mentally transpose and verbalize into the target language

#### Linguistic Competence

- Linguistic competence includes the ability to comprehend the source language and apply this knowledge to render the message as accurately as possible in the target language. The interpreter shall:
  - Have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of his/her working languages and the required range of language registers.
  - Have knowledge of subject areas and relevant terminology
  - Must be able to deal with obscenities and render them accordingly in the target language. The interpreter must also be able to understand cultural stigmas without assuming the role of advocate or cultural broker.

#### Interpersonal Competence

The Interpreter shall:

- Have strong communication skills.
- Be polite, respectful and tactful.
- Be able to relate well to people.
- Have good judgment.
- Must be punctual.
- Must be able to work with limited supervision.
- Must be able to remain neutral before, during and after every interpretation assignment.
- Must be organized.
- Must be articulate.
- Must be assertive in his/her work without being overconfident.
- Must be able to cope with stress during and after the assignment.
- Must be dedicated professional.

## Research and Technical Competence

- Research competence includes the ability to efficiently acquire the additional linguistic and specialized knowledge necessary to interpret in specialized cases.
- Research competence also requires experience in the use of research tools and the ability to develop suitable strategies for the efficient use of the information sources available.

## Basic Skill Sets for Interpreters

The basic skill set for interpreters, listed below, is incorporated into the core competencies:

- Listening Skills
- Memory Skills
- Language Skills
- Concentration Skills

### Listening Skills

- Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process.
- Listening is key to all effective communication, without the ability to listen effectively messages are easily misunderstood. Is listening the same as hearing? Hearing refers to the sounds that you hear, whereas listening requires more than that: it requires focus. Listening means paying attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language and voice, and how the other person uses his or her body. In other words, it means being aware of both verbal and non-verbal messages. Your ability to listen effectively depends on the degree to which you perceive and understand these messages.

### **The 7 Levels of Listening**

1. Not listening: Not paying attention to or ignoring the other person's communications.
2. Pretend listening: Acting like or giving the impression that you are paying attention to another person's communications, but in actuality not really paying attention to that individual.
3. Partially listening - Only focusing on part of the other person's communication or only giving it your divided attention.
4. Focused listening: Giving the other person your undivided attention to his or her communication.
5. Interpretive listening: Going beyond just paying attention but really trying to understand what the other person is communicating.
6. Interactive listening: Being involved in the communications by asking clarifying questions or acknowledging understanding of the communication.

7. Engaged listening: Being fully engaged in communications involves listening to the other person's views, feelings, interpretations, values, etc., concerning the communication and sharing yours as well with the other person(s). In engaged listening, both parties are given the opportunity to fully express their views, feelings, and ideas.

## Sample Introduction Statement

Introduce yourself using this statement – or construct one that makes sense for you. An introduction statement is an example of using best practices as an interpreter.

Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I will be your interpreter for the session with \_\_\_\_\_. Please speak directly to the client and I will ask the client to speak directly to you. Also please allow me to interpret after each response you make. In addition, at the beginning of the session please allow me the opportunity to explain my role to the client. I will state the following to them:

I am here so that you will be better able to understand (the health provider) and that (the health provider) is better able to understand you. It is my responsibility to interpret everything said in the session either by you or the practitioner. Everything said in this room is private and confidential and will not be repeated outside this room.

Additional things to mention (if you wish or need to)

- I am not here to judge or give advice.
- Please listen carefully to me before answering the practitioner – let me finish what I begin.
- If you begin to speak too fast or say too much I will stop you so that I can accurately interpret what you have said.

## Memory Skills

A good memory is essential for interpreters. There are 3 different types of memory:

Very short-term memory

- Allows you to hold an exact string of numbers in your head for 5- 7 seconds
- Can only be stretched a bit perhaps a few more seconds

•  
Short-term memory

- Helps you recall concepts or ideas
- Will allow you to see the most improvement rapidly.

Long-term memory

- Your store of knowledge - what you have learned in the past that stays with you over time.
- Improving long-term memory involves studying something over time

You use all 3 forms of memory in your interpreting work! Your brain is on a constant cycle of retrieval and dissemination.

Developing memory capacity is like training for long-distance running; it takes repeated exercises, pushing day after day to go farther than the day before.

For an interpreter there are two considerations in relation to memory:

1. Developing good memory
2. Using techniques in the moment that support memory, or that help retain what you heard.

### **Developing Memory**

Memory is one of the key skills in interpreting, and specifically in community interpreting. In addition to fluency in language, memory is one of the most important tools that an interpreter can have in their interpreter toolbox. Luckily memory can be exercised, trained, and improved, So if you feel that your memory is not the best or could use improvement, try some of the tips listed below. But before you do, recognize that good memory is a result of a healthy lifestyle. The best things to do to improve cognition and memory skills is to get an adequate amount of sleep, eat a balanced diet that includes lots of healthy oils (fish and seafood), and exercise.

"The interpreter needs a good short-term memory to retain what he or she has just heard and a good long-term memory to put the information into context. Ability to concentrate is a factor as is the ability to analyze and process what is heard"

### **Exercises and Activities for Memory**

#### **Retelling in the Source Language:**

Listen to a radio broadcast or watch a video presentation on YouTube (about 45 seconds to 1 minute of a well paced speech) and then try to retell it without taking notes. See how accurate you are by reviewing. While you are listening try using the techniques below.

- **Categorization:** Grouping items of the same properties together, or even connecting items to patterns of knowledge you have already memorized
- **Generalization:** Drawing general conclusions from particular examples or message from the provided text – this can also be referred to as critical thinking skills.
- **Comparison:** Noticing the differences and similarities between different things, facts and events;
- **Description:** Visualize the description of a scene, imagine concepts and ideas as shapes or think about other attributes like size etc.
- **Shadowing Exercise:** This kind of exercise is recommended for training of Simultaneous Interpreting, but also benefits interpreters that work in consecutive mode.

**Find a recorded passage or listen to a YouTube video** (like an interview program or a “how-to” video - it does not matter the subject matter as long as it is not too complicated.) Listen/watch once through and then replay and try to “shadow” the speaker, trying to repeat everything as it is said. Keep repeating this process, each time staying further behind the speaker until you are a sentence or two behind (this amount of speech varies according to language.) Keep repeating this with other videos or even with real people that are reading from a pre-written speech. You will find that you do get tired, but this works your memory and concentration skills. Make sure to check your accuracy against the original.

### **Mnemonic to Memory**

Mnemonic is a device, such as a formula or rhyme that is used to support recall. Mnemonics are methods for remembering information that is otherwise quite difficult to recall. A very simple example of a mnemonic is the "I before C except after E" rhyme. The basic principle of Mnemonics is to use as many of the best functions of the human brain as possible to encode information. Techniques like rhyming, setting something to music, creating images or building an outline of concepts. Mnemonic devices work differently for different people. Try finding what perks your memory and develop a system.

### **Note Taking**

Note taking is an AID to memory, as well as an essential skill for interpreters. Note taking is secondary to memory in consecutive interpreting. Some interpreters like to take notes to help them remember key phrases, numbers, dates, etc. This is a technique used extensively in court interpreting, but probably less in community interpreting, although used appropriately is a great technique to employ.

To some people, the sight of the interpreter taking notes during an interview can be very distressing. It might bring back memories of surveillance and repression in their country of origin. If you want to take notes, ask the client's permission first and take the notes circumspectly. An interpreter should develop their own system for note taking and shorthand symbols. It is important to NOT make note taking the centre of attention – no flapping papers, or frenzied writing please. Care should be taken to dispose of them in such a way that confidentiality is maintained. This is true even though most interpreters' notes would mean absolutely nothing to anyone else. The interpreter's note should be written in shorthand that recognizable only to the interpreter: most experienced interpreters who take notes develop their own kind of shorthand based on symbols. An interpreter should develop their system of shorthand **prior** to using it in a live situation. Once an interpreter has become used to his or her own unique shorthand system, it can become automatic. And allows the interpreter to let the speaker continue for a longer time without interrupting the flow of the message.

Note taking is a skill that requires quite a bit of practice. Note taking should never get in the way of interpreting; it should augment the interpreter's memory. As is the case with most things in community, the best way to develop this skill is through repeated practice.

### **To Help Retain What You've Heard: What to do once the appointment has begun.**

#### **Concentrate.**

You can't retain what you've heard accurately unless you are focused on what is said. If necessary, close your eyes, and clear your mind of any thoughts unrelated to what you are hearing. Learn to silence your own mental voice so that you can hear the voice of the person for whom you are interpreting.

#### **Visualize**

Try to reconstruct a visual representation of what is being said in your head. For example, if the client says she goes to bed at 11:00 p.m., then wakes up in pain around 4:00 a.m., tosses and turns trying to get comfortable, puts her feet up on pillows, then finally dozes off until 6:00 a.m. While you're listening, picture her going to bed; the clock next to the bed reads 11:00. Picture the clock at 4:00; she's tossing and turning, etc. Playing back this "video" can then help you remember the series of events.

#### **Echo**

Key phrases can be echoed in your mind. Echoing creates a pathway in your memory that helps in bringing you back to the key words again. Of course an interpreter does not only interpret these words, Obviously, you should interpret everything that is said.



**Count the key points.**

Count how many key points are asked or highlight. For example if it's a list of symptoms or descriptions, counting how many are on the list will help recall the items themselves (to a limit of course.) Much like when we have to go shopping, recalling that there were 4 items we needed to purchases help us recall the actual items.

**Write down numbers (dates, measurements, etc.)**

Numbers are challenging. The best way to recall numbers, especially if you are in an appointment where dates, and money are in constant mention, is to write them down. Then you can free your memory to work on the other meanings within the message.

**Sight Translation**

Sight translation refers to the rendering of meaning from one language that is in written form into in another, which is verbalized. It is called sight translation, instead of sight interpreting because the sources message is written, not spoken. Interprets may be asked to sight translate any number of documents, such as:

- Consent forms, registration forms, client education brochures/flyers
- Pre-procedural instructions, post-procedural instructions, prescriptions

**Procedures for Sight Translation**

- Read the document all the way through so you understand what is says before you start translating
- Ask for clarification of any words or concepts you do not understand
- Translate at a steady, moderate pace the goal is read as if you were reading in the language of the client/client. If you read a few lines very quickly and then leave long pause before continuing, it is difficult for the client to understand and remember what you read.
- Translate exactly what is written: Add nothing, omit nothing, and change nothing.
- Remember that some documents, such as consent forms, are legal documents: it is crucial that they be translated as they stand

**Positioning**

There are 3 main positions for interpreters in community interpreting and each has their advantage and disadvantage.

<b>The interpreter beside the professional</b> Physical effect: provider tends to look at client and interpreter.	
<b>Pro:</b> Communication from the client is aimed at provider. The provider and interpreter can more easily observe the client's body language, facial expressions and gestures. The client will more easily and probably refer to and look at provider	<b>Con:</b> May discourage a reserved client from being forthcoming because the interpreter appears to be aligning him/herself with the provider. The client may see the interpreter as part of the medical establishment rather than a neutral party. Interpreters may be in the provider's way as he/she moves about the room to reach for equipment, etc.
<b>The interpreter beside the client</b> Physical effect: promotes direct communication between client and provider. Provider can see both client and interpreter.	
<b>Pro:</b> Client is more likely to speak directly to provider. May encourage a reticent client to be more forthcoming because interpreter presences at side may be felt as supportive	<b>Con:</b> Provider may tend to look at interpreter instead of client. The client may view the interpreter as an ally and try to confide in the interpreter or seek the interpreter's advice. Client may be more inclined to make side comments to the interpreter. In some cases the client may not speak to the provider and turn around to talk to the interpreter

<b>The triangle</b> Physical effect: The client and provider tend to look at interpreter instead of each other	
<b>Pro:</b> This arrangement makes it possible for both the client and provider to see the interpreter as an unbiased participant	<b>Con:</b> There is a strong tendency for the client and provider to focus on the interpreter instead of each other. This position does not encourage direct communication between the client and provider.

## Managing the Interpreting Session: Before, During and After

- It is important that the interpreter accurately take down all information regarding a session
- Keep all information in a confidential location

### At the beginning of a session:

Introduce yourself to all parties involved in session (a sample statement is provided earlier in this workbook.)

Use an **introductory statement** with the practitioner

- Speak directly to the client and I will ask the client to speak directly to you
- Please allow me to interpret after each response you make
- At the beginning of the session please allow me the opportunity to explain my role to the client.
- It is my responsibility to interpret everything said in the session either by you or the practitioner
- Everything said in this room is private and confidential and will not be repeated outside this

Introductory statement with client

- I am here so that you will be better able to understand (the professional) and that (the professional) is better able to understand you
- It is my responsibility to interpret everything said in the session either by you or the professional.
- Everything said in this room is private and confidential and will not be repeated outside this
- 

Additional points that can be added to your clarifying statement:

- I am not here to judge or give advice.
- Please listen carefully to me before answering the professional – let me finish what I begin.
- If you begin to speak too fast or say too much I will stop you so that I can accurately interpret what you have said.

## Intervention: When to Intervene

Sometimes interpreting becomes very challenging and there is a need to intervene. **But when can an interpreter intervene?**

- When anyone uses language that you do not understand;
- When you suspect, due to nonverbal cues, that the client does not understand what the provider is saying (this is a tricky one, so be aware!);
- When anyone uses a term that must be explained or put in a cultural context to be understood;
- When the provider has said something that might be considered offensive in the client's culture;
- When a cultural difference is causing a misunderstanding (also very tricky and subjective – proceed with caution);
- When any individual is not pausing to let you interpret, or if you need any individual to repeat.

### **Guidelines for Intervention**

- Stay Calm!
- Make sure the intervention is transparent (is it clear it's the interpreter talking?)
- Switch from first person to third person
- Ask yourself "is this intervention necessary?"
- Go back to interpreting as quickly as possible and let the attending professional resolve the problem

### **Be Assertive**

- It is important for interpreters to remember that they are the experts when it comes to the role of an interpreter, and that you have every right to intervene when your ability to do your job is impeded.
- Be confident in this knowledge.

### **Interpreter Self Care**

Interpreting in the community is very stressful and more often than not you find yourself interpreting in situations that are constantly changing. To facilitate accurate communication and understanding, you must be constantly alert and sensitive to both the client's and the provider's needs. Often the responsibility can be overwhelming. This is especially true in cases where the encounter may have a negative or painful outcome for the client or one in which past emotional trauma surfaces – we all bring our baggage with us to every situation.

### **Examples of Stressful Situations**

- Being asked at the last minute to interpret for more clients and providers than was scheduled appointments that continue longer than expected
- Worry about being late for the next appointment
- Clients and providers won't listen
- Aggressive clients
- Being subjected to racial and sexual harassment within the interpreter/client provider triad being unable to locate resources for client and/or not having the time to help them unreasonable expectations from the client
- Client lying and/or giving you information but withholding it from the provider
- Provider not telling client side effects of medicines or omitting other important information being expected to take care of the client's children while trying to interpret for the client at the same time
- Client refusing interpreters based on gender, culture, and political or religious affiliation
- Having to communicate bad news to a client
- Reliving past personal trauma through the client's experiences

## Strategies for Self Care

<p>During session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Do a pre-session interview with both client and provider -no matter how short.</li><li>▪ Set boundaries with the client (explain the style of interpreting and expectations).</li><li>▪ Treat all with professional courtesy and expect the same in return</li><li>▪ Stay calm.</li><li>▪ Do not give out your home number to the clients.</li><li>▪ Separate your emotions from the client's (there is a difference between sympathy and empathy). Recognize when your emotions are interfering with your work.</li><li>▪ Inform the provider when you are feeling too close to the situation being described.</li><li>▪ Withdraw from a session if you believe that your personal feelings may get in the way of providing adequate interpretation.</li><li>▪ Be aware of your limitation: refuse an assignment that is beyond your area of expertise or that is too close to unresolved personal experiences.</li><li>▪ Learn to say "no" in a way that does not undermine the trust of the provider of the client.</li></ul>	<p>Outside the session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Discuss a problem with appropriate people rather than avoiding it.</li><li>▪ Do not discuss service activities with a client outside of the service environment</li><li>▪ Work with a professional counselor to resolve trauma</li><li>▪ Set priorities</li><li>▪ Join a professional organization to update skills and join in discussions with colleagues in the field.</li><li>▪ Engage in physical exercise</li><li>▪ Find time for fun activities that are not related to professional duties.</li></ul>
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## Resources and Links

### **The Interpreter's Lab**

The Interpreter's Lab provides monthly professional development for community interpreters in BC. Visit the website for more information: <http://www.interpreterslab.org>

### **Critical Link International (CLC)**

CLI is a national, advocating body for community interpreting comprised of practitioners, educational institutions, service providers and policy makers.

<http://www.criticallink.org/>

### **American Translators Association**

<https://www.atanet.org>

ATA is a professional association founded to advance the translation and interpreting professions and foster the professional development of individual translators and interpreters. Its 10,000 members in more than 90 countries include translators, interpreters, teachers, project managers, web and software developers, language company owners, hospitals, universities, and government agencies.

### **Society of Translators and Interpreters of BC**

<http://www.stibc.org/>

The mission of the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia is to promote the interests of translators and interpreters and to serve the public by applying a Code of Ethics that all members are bound to comply with and by setting and maintaining high professional standards through education and certification.

## Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council

<http://www.cttic.org>

The Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council sets, maintains and promotes national standards in translation, interpretation and terminology to ensure quality communication across linguistic and cultural communities.

### Additional Reading - Interpreting and Memory

*The Network of Independent Linguists*

<http://www.linguanet.org/memoryindex.htm>

Having a good memory is essential in all forms of interpreting. This seems fairly obvious but how important is a good memory? What do we mean by good memory? How does memory work? First of all, let's not forget how much easier it is to remember something interesting, something that has been phrased particularly well, something that is striking or vivid. Some interpreting pedagogues do not insist heavily on memory, why not?

The study of memory is, to say the least a wide field of investigation that is still dominated by a lot of speculation.

Short-term memory, which refers to the ability to remember multiple data for a short period of time, is often mentioned in relation to interpreting. Working memory is perhaps a more accurate and useful concept for interpreting: it presents a multiple system approach and highlights the interaction between fresh input and knowledge stored in the long term-memory which is mediated by short term storage and processing resources. What appears crucial is the relationship between memory capacity (including in depth process) and attentional coordination.

Extensive research has been carried out on the cognitive operations in language processing by interpreters, particularly by examining recall after interpreting and interpreting related tasks. A particularly interesting piece of research on simultaneous interpreting by Minhua Liu carried out on professional interpreters, advanced and beginning students of interpreting showed that whilst working memory span scores did not vary much between the three groups, professional interpreters did demonstrate higher semantic processing skills and more efficient management of attentional resources. Other experiments tend to show that other strategic aspects of interpreting (condensation, selection, prediction, etc..) are just as important as memory capacity.

If you wish to improve your short-term or working memory, you will find some exercises mostly relying on association and visualisation on the mindtools website. If you prefer to focus on your processing skills and on your attentional coordination, then you may find some of the following exercises useful.

Interpreting requires constant practise. When they are not working on assignments, professional interpreters spend a lot of time practising. Before assignments they prepare themselves by undertaking specialised research and warm-up exercises.

This section proposes a list of exercises that are used in teaching consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. When practising these exercises, it is always essential to record oneself and then work critically on these recordings. Pay attention to voice and delivery (intonation, flow, pronunciation) not just to semantic quality. I hope that this section will be useful for students and professionals alike.

## Exercises

**Shadowing:** repeat what you are hearing in the same language after either a small delay (phoneme shadowing) or after a greater delay (unit of semantic meaning, whole sentence). Often used as a preparation for simultaneous interpreting.

Shadowing is one of the most controversial aspects of interpreting pedagogy: it has fervent advocates as well as virulent opponents. Shadowing does not involve any processing or re-encoding of meaning and is very far from the actual complexity of simultaneous interpreting. You may also not find it particularly motivating. It can however be used to improve delivery, intonation and pronunciation in your L2.

**Simultaneous Paraphrasing:** Using the same language as for shadowing, repeat what is being said using different words and/or changing the syntax. Again you can vary the delay of the output from phoneme to units of meanings. This is a far more complex exercise which does involve processing for meaning.

**Simultaneous interpreting of famous fairy tales:** Get hold of a recording of a fairy tale you are very familiar with in your L2 and interpret it simultaneously in your L1 or vice versa. The advantage of this exercise is that you are working on familiar grounds and will be able to rely on strategies of predictability. You may do a similar exercise if you work from any other type of predictable materials (a radio programme, the summary of which you have read and researched, news items that you have prepared beforehand).

**Sight translation:** although sight translation is a task in its own right and a skill that is sometimes tested in interpreting examinations (DPSI), it has also been recognized as offering valid training for simultaneous interpreting. Clearly the input is visual rather than verbal but it relies on the same translation skills. Sight translation offers the benefit of being easily practiced (all you need is a text) and it is an excellent opportunity to acquire familiarity with structures and phrases that may be tricky to translate into another language. It is also very easy to note down anything that does not flow.

**Consecutive Interpreting:** Translating a short output after one has listened to it. You may vary the length of the output (conference interpreters may have to translate up to 10 minutes worth of speech in the consecutive mode, whilst liaison interpreters tend to operate with much shorter units). Consecutive interpreting has long been viewed by some (ESIT) as a necessary step in the acquisition of simultaneous interpreting skills. Others who believe that the processes do not involve the same degree of complexity dispute this.