

MODES of Interpreting

Consecutive Interpreting

Involves a relay in which one speaker says a few sentences, the interpreter interprets, the other speaker responds, the interpreter interprets, etc.

This mode is the most common in legal interpreting because it closely resembles how people actually talk to each other and it tends to be the least confusing and most accurate mode. It is the mode in which the interpreter is most likely to be able to provide exact, word-for-word interpretation.

For consecutive interpreting to be successful, the sentences are best kept simple and short. Consecutive interpreting may require note taking if the sentences are long or complex.

Simultaneous Interpreting

The interpreter interprets at the same time that the speaker is speaking, just a few words behind. This technique is most useful when interpreting for a single person. For example, sitting next a single person and interpreting a conversation between two or more other people so to ensure that the person understands the gist of what is being said.

This mode is not preferred for interpretation between two persons, because it tends to be distracting and confusing. However, it may be useful if a client launches into an emotional speech that cannot be interrupted.

Summarization

Occurs when one person speaks at some length and the interpreter summarizes the most important points at the end.

Summarization is generally not recommended in legal settings due to the great potential for errors and omissions.

This mode should only be used at the specific request of a Judge or other legal provider. The interpreter should ensure that all parties understand that the interpreter is summarizing.

If the interpreter is going to summarize, he or she should take careful notes while the person

is speaking.

Sight Translation

Involves taking a document written in one language and reading it out loud in another language.

This mode may be used to interpret legal retainers, consent forms, client education materials, or any other written material. Sight translation may occur at hearings, attorney's offices, and administrative agencies. For example, in court a witness may be asked about particular documents, or a lawyer may ask a client about certain documents, and will have the client sign agreements, contracts, or retainers

Sight translation may require the interpreter to have access to a legal dictionary to clarify terms contained in the document, which may be technical. If the interpreter does not understand a term he should seek for clarification before interpreting.

While sight translation may be necessary under some circumstances, it is always preferable to translate the material in written form, so that the client has a written record in his/her own language.

ROLES of an Interpreter

Conduit

The most basic and more traditional role of the interpreter. The interpreter as a neutral conduit interprets everything that is said, exactly as it is said, adding nothing, omitting nothing, and changing nothing. This is the primary and sometimes the exclusive role played by interpreters in formal legal settings such as courtrooms.

Conduit is the role on which interpreters should fall back if there is any uncertainty about what role they should play.

Clarifier

Involves the interpreter making slight modifications or elaborations to what is said in order to ensure full communication and understanding between two parties. The interpreter as Clarifier interprets what is said faithfully, but in such a way that the listener can understand.

Interpreters may have to clarify:

- when one party speaks at an educational or literacy level too high for the other to understand;
- when the interpreter is asked to interpret a word for which a literal equivalent word does not exist in the other language; or
- when words have a symbolic meaning which cannot be conveyed simply though

a literal interpretation.

Clarifier is the second most common interpreter role. The interpreter should explicitly state when and how he or she is clarifying, so that both parties are aware that the interpreter is deviating from a conduit role.

Cultural Broker

Involves the interpreter offering culturally appropriate information to either side of an interpretation in order to overcome cultural differences which would otherwise be a source of misunderstanding.

Culture is a shared set of beliefs, values, practices and assumptions which determine how we interact with and interpret the word. Cultural differences can cause bumps in communication. This is particularly true in the legal setting, given the peculiarity of legal culture.

Cultural Broker is a less common interpreter role, but it is an essential role under certain circumstances.

The biggest challenge/risk is to explain cultural differences without unfairly stereotyping one side or the other.

Advocate

Involves the interpreter stepping outside of their neutral role as a conduit of information and taking sides with the client on some issue. Often, it will involve the interpreter speaking directly to a legal or social service provider on a client's behalf in order to promote the clients' interests.

Advocate is the most controversial of all interpreter roles, and is not appropriate in formal court settings where the court has appointed the person as a neutral interpreter charged with faithfully serving as an interpreter for all sides.

Advocacy should not take the form of an interpreter deceiving one side by providing a manipulated interpretation of a statement made by one side; rather it involves the interpreter making clear that he/she is stepping outside of the conduit role and engaging in advocacy.