Best Practices for Working with Interpreters

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Learning Objectives

1. Recognize the diversity of languages represented within a service area

2. Identify cultural biases and attitudes around language differences

3. Implement resources for better collaborating with interpreters when serving limited-English proficiency clients
Language diversity

• The 17th edition of Ethnologue (2013) lists 7,106 languages spoken by 6.7 billion people.

US Language Diversity
Languages in WA State’s Education Systems

OSPI Migrant and Bilingual Education office, the top 15 languages most frequently spoken by students who qualified for English Language Learner services included:

Spanish (61,558), Russian (4,150), Vietnamese (3,592), Somali (2,260), Ukrainian (2,197), Chinese (all) (1,773), Korean (1,603), Tagalog (1,237), Arabic (971), Punjabi (902), Cambodian (788), Marshallese (607), Samoan (596), Amharic (546), Japanese (480), Rumanian (398), French (392), Nepali (345), Mixteco (316), Lao (306), Hindi (301).

A little perspective...

http://www.gofluently.com/psa.html

Talk briefly at your tables about how this video made you feel.

Did this video change your perspective of the Limited-English-Speaking families we serve?
Language Discrimination

Individuals with other accents of English than that is the socially-accepted norm sometimes experience **language discrimination** in the form of racist, classist, and sexist prejudices.

Mainstream media of USA tends to idealize Standard American English (SAE).

Privilege #1:
You’re assumed to be American

Privilege #2:
Easy Access to Information

Privilege #3:
You’re Assumed to be Intelligent, Educated, and Non-Violent

Privilege #4:
Your Accent is Positively Represented on TV, Film, & Radio
What Can We Do?

TRANSLATORS vs INTERPRETERS

While both translators and interpreters transfer meaning between languages, there’s a big difference between what they do and the skills they possess. This simple infographic will help you determine which type you need.

WRITE
It’s simple; translators write...

SPEAK
...and interpreters speak.

DELAYED
Your final translation product will take days or longer

REAL-TIME
The final product is delivered instantly

TARGET LANGUAGE
Translators don’t have to be conversational fluent in their source language but must be in the target language

BOTH LANGUAGES
It’s essential that interpreters are native or near native in both languages

DICTIONARIES
Translators rely on numerous industry-specific resources

ON-THE-SPOT
When on the job, interpreters do not have consult dictionaries, glossaries, etc.
Interpreter & Translator - Job Description

Interpret oral or sign language, or translate written text from one language into another.

What else do you think is involved in being an I/T?

Methods of interpreting

Consecutive

Simultaneous
ASHA Code of Ethics

Principle of Ethics I

• Individuals shall honor their responsibility to hold paramount the welfare of persons they serve professionally or who are participants in research and scholarly activities, and they shall treat animals involved in research in a humane manner.

Rules of Ethics

• Individuals shall provide all clinical services and scientific activities competently.
• Individuals shall use every resource, including referral and/or interprofessional collaboration when appropriate, to ensure that quality service is provided.

Limited-English Proficiency Families

Gold standard : bilingual provider

Second best approach : work with a trained interpreter/translator
Teamwork!

Some considerations...

• Collaborating with an I/T may influence a clinician's ability to diagnose, treat, and seek reimbursement for services.
For language/speech services:

• Seek out information on the features and developmental characteristics of the language(s)/dialect(s) spoken or signed by the client/patient/family.

• Obtain information on the sociolinguistic features of the client's/patient's/family's significant cultural and linguistic influences when possible.

• Understand the standardization process for assessments and how collaboration with an I/T may influence or possibly invalidate standard scores.

Regarding Testing / Assessments

• If you have to conduct a test that relies on the client’s independent response, best practices is to teach the interpreter the test to then administer to the client.

• The interpreter should also be taught to avoid the use of gestures, vocal intonation, and other cues that could inadvertently alert the individual to the response during testing.
A note on being bilingual...

Being bilingual also means being biliterate.

Being bilingual is not sufficient in ensuring that individual will be a successful I/T.

Not having a trained interpreter is unfair and unethical to all parties, the individual acting as an interpreter, the professional involved, and, of course, the client and family members.

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Family members or Friends

Family or friends acting as interpreters, transliterators, or translators may present potential conflicts.

The reliability of the interpretation, transliteration, and/or translation may be compromised given the potential conflict of interest.

Be mindful of risks in high stakes situations, such as mediation, evaluations, or situations where cognitive capacity might be in question.

Children may not possess the emotional maturity and sensitivity necessary to serve in the role to assist family members in the provision of services.
Before having family/friends interpret...

- Intent of the message
- Age of family member
- Position/role of that individual related to the client
- Overall linguistic abilities

Refusal of Interpreter Services

Clients have the right to refuse interpreting services.

Refusal to accept an interpreter could be due to concern about confidentiality being maintained or a client's belief that his or her English proficiency is sufficient to communicate adequately in English.

To the extent possible in the absence of an interpreter, the service provider should seek out the reason for a client’s reluctance to have an interpreter.
Possible Solutions to Refusing Interpreter Services

Three Important Steps: BID Process

1. Pre-plan for an individual’s service to insure the assistant’s understanding of specific clinical procedures to be used.
   BRIEFING

2. During the session, evaluation, conference, etc., the service provider and the interpreter work together to convey the family's and service provider’s messages.
   INTERACTION

3. After the interaction, the service provider should review dynamics, effectiveness and concerns that arose.
   DEBRIEFING
BID Process: Briefing

Send an email, make a phone call, or agree to meet at least 5 minutes before the session begins

- Purpose of the appointment
- Who will be present
- Specific vocabulary or concepts, especially those with meaning to the unique clinical setting
- Potential safety or security concerns
- *Procedures to clarify and/or interrupt the process, if needed
- *Cultural “landmines” or “tips”

BID Process: Interaction

Clinician’s Responsibility:

- Introduce the interpreter and explain their role
- Speak directly to the client/family/child, not the interpreter
- Use clear and simple language to explain health/educational terms and processes, avoid acronyms and jargon
- Ask the client for feedback to demonstrate understanding
- Give client instructions and/or information in writing if appropriate
BID Process: Interaction

**Interpreter’s Responsibility:**

- The interpreter should be the one that ultimately negotiates the speaking time, indicating to each party that the message might be too long, complex or unclear to convey in the other language.
- Indicate to either party when further clarification is necessary
- Relay all information discussed from both parties

The First Meeting

The first meeting may take more time than you usually allow in order to:

- Introduce yourself and the interpreter
- Explain to the client who you are and your role
- Explain the role of the interpreter
- Find out more about the language and cultural history of the client
- Explain that interpreters are bound by their code of ethics to treat everything that is said as confidential
A few more considerations...

- Whenever possible, the same interpreter should be engaged for subsequent meetings with a client. The burden on the client to repeatedly have to establish rapport with new interpreters introduces unnecessary difficulties.

- Maintain control of the meeting at all times

- Interpreters should not be left alone with the client prior to, during or after the meeting. Doing so may compromise the role of the interpreter and overall ethical responsibility of the service provider.
BID: Debriefing

- Ask the interpreter whether there are any comments/concerns/confusion they would like to make about the meeting
- Review any issues that you identified as requiring particular attention before the meeting
- Reinforce good practice with positive feedback
- Arrange for same interpreter for follow-up session, if appropriate
- Feedback to the interpreter agency, if appropriate

Role-Play

- Let’s observe the following role-plays and consider what BID strategies could be used to make the interactions more effective
Let’s all agree...

An interpreter is someone who transmits information from one language to the other orally and a translator is someone who does the same but in writing.

We should avoid saying the phrase “using an interpreter/translator,” instead “collaborating with...” or “using the services of.”

ASHA Resources

ASHA Collaborating with Interpreters

ASHA Bilingual Service Delivery
Resources


Guidelines for Working Effectively with Interpreters in Mental Health Settings (2006) Australia

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/dclinpsy/training-handbook/chapters/handbook-pdf/SECTION_8_Appendix_9_BPS_guidance_on_working_with_interpreters_June_2013

References

Thank you!

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