

INTERPRETATION MODES: RULES AND TECHNIQUES

Overriding theme: The goal is to afford the non-English speaking or hearing-impaired party an opportunity to hear everything and to respond, just as an English speaking person. To achieve this goal, the interpreter must interpret every unit of meaning faithfully, reflecting the language register (level of language), errors, hesitations, etc., while at the same time trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. There must be no paraphrasing or summarizing.

When there is a comment or a request to be made for or about the interpreter, the interpreter will refer to him/herself as "the Interpreter," never using the pronouns "I" or "you".

I. CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION

As the name indicates, the interpretation follows the statement. The interpreter first listens to the statement or question in one language, then interprets; the interpreter listens to the response and then interprets that.

This mode is used any time there is direct colloquy or dialogue with the non-English speaking person: e.g., court testimony, interview with attorneys, when the non-English speaking person is addressed directly. Using the simultaneous mode when speaking out loud at the same time the speaker is speaking out loud, results in great confusion.

It is important that the interpreter get into the habit of taking notes in order to avoid having to interrupt to ask for a repetition in case of a long statement. If pressed by the circumstances, the interpreter may ask the speaker to pause by using a hand signal.

The interpreter will use a loud and clear voice so that everybody in the courtroom can hear. At the witness stand, the interpreter will be careful not to obstruct anyone's view of the witness or any drawing that may appear on an easel.

The interpreter should emulate the inflections, modality and intonation of the witness, in order to convey the meaning and any emotional content of the statement. However, this does not extend to body language.

II. SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION

As the name indicates, the interpretation occurs at the same time as the statement is being spoken. Or almost. In the simultaneous mode, the interpreter listens and speaks at the same time in a low whispered voice, with or without the use of a voice amplifier or assisted listening device. The device makes it

possible for the interpreter to speak in the lowest possible volume, while at the same time being properly heard, this avoiding interfering in any way with the proceeding. Since the interpreter must render units of meaning, it is necessary to first listen in order to hear enough words which will constitute a unit of meaning, and that is when the interpretation will start. Strict simultaneous interpretation is impossible. Different languages have different lag times, anywhere from 6-8 words to a whole sentence.

This mode is used any time the speaker is not addressing a statement at the non-English speaking person, i.e., during most court procedures. It is also employed during testimony: During testimony (interpreted in the consecutive mode), when there is an objection, the interpreter will switch instantly to the simultaneous mode, and continue in that mode until the judge has ruled on the objection. At that moment, the consecutive mode will be resumed. If the witness has started giving an answer before or after the objection is voiced, the interpreter will interpret that partial or complete answer since the English speaking witness' answer would have been heard.

III. SIGHT TRANSLATION

This is a hybrid mode rendering the meaning from a written document into oral language. Common documents that need to be sight translated are all types of court forms (plea forms, date settings, different types of orders, etc.) as well as letters and certificates of all sorts in both languages, to name a few.

Everything that appears in the document must be sight translated: dates, numbers, seals, signatures, all writing and indications. The interpreter will indicate where the seals, or any writing which is of the main body of the document, are located on the page (e.g., "Upper right hand corner"; or "In the left margin, vertically"; or "Superimposed on the body of the document, there is a seal which says...". Also indicate if it is only partly legible, or if it is illegible, etc.

The interpreter will speak in a loud and clear voice and will use a smooth and homogenous rhythm to allow a ready understanding of his/her rendition.