

## Guidelines for Working with Interpreters

### Introduction

Interpreters render speech orally from one language (the source language) into another language (the target language) in an accurate and objective manner.

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) is the national standards and accreditation body for translators and interpreters in Australia. It is the only agency that issues accreditations for practitioners who wish to work in these professions in Australia (NAATI, 2013).

Interpreters at this level are capable of interpreting across a wide range of subjects involving dialogues and minor speeches. They are thus capable of interpreting presentations in the consecutive modes. (NAATI, Interpreters and Translators: Keys to Better Communication).

All interpreters practise in accordance with the professional Code of Ethics of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Inc. (AUSIT).

Interpreters require high-level language skills and an ability to facilitate communication between parties for whom a language barrier obstructs effective and efficient communication.

The interpreter forms an important part of a multidisciplinary team.

To obtain maximum effectiveness from your session it is important that you follow these guidelines.

### Prior to the interpreting session

- It is your responsibility to arrange for an appropriately qualified and experienced interpreter.
- Be sure you get the language right, e.g. not all Indo-Chinese people speak Vietnamese. They may speak Cantonese, Teo Chiew, Khmer, Lao or one of several other languages.
- Consider whether a male/female interpreter would be particularly appropriate for your client.
- Endeavour to have a briefing session with the interpreter to provide background information (not case details) so that he/she understands any special features, e.g. nature of the case, number of individuals involved, what you want to achieve out of your interview, any sensitive issues.
- Allow for adequate time

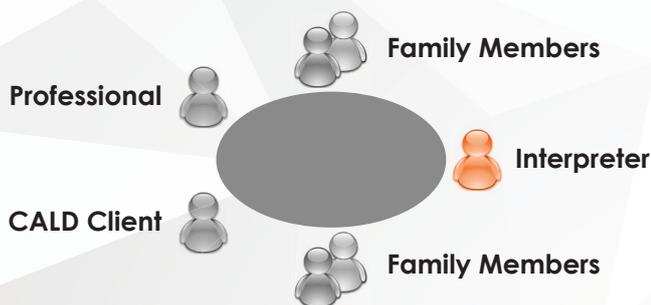
### During the session

- The interview should be conducted in the same way as with an English-speaking client and therefore your usual interviewing principles still apply.
- Introduce yourself to the interpreter.
- Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client. Explain your role and the interpreter will explain his/her role to the client.
- Explain the purpose of the interview. You should not assume that your client always knows what the interview is about. Clarify this with the client. Allow the client to raise any questions or issues which concern him/her.
- Assure the client that complete confidentiality will be observed by the interpreter as well as the professional.
- The most appropriate seating arrangement will place you face to face with your client (without any barriers such as desks and equipment), with the interpreter seated off-side but at an equal distance between you and your client, forming a triangle as shown below:



- When a group of individuals are involved, then a semi-circle should be organised with the principal client sitting close to the professional as shown below in diagram A. This configuration will enable the interpreter to follow the communication process.

**Diagram A**



**Diagram B**

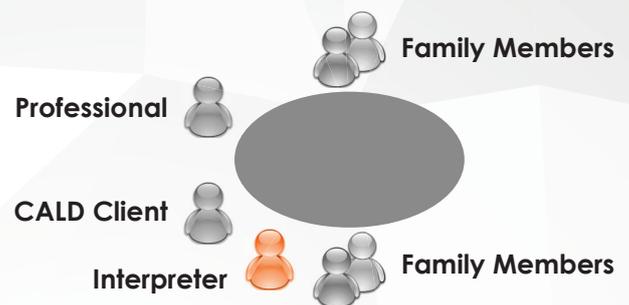


Diagram B shows an alternative situation that allows the interpreter to interpret simultaneously for the clients.

- PLEASE make sure that ONLY one person speaks at any given time.
- Remember your interview is with the client. Speak with, and attend to, the client directly, using the first person.
- Keep in mind the complexity of the interpreter's task. Pause to allow time for translation.
- It is important that you continue to observe the non-verbal communication of your client and respond accordingly. It is not the role of the interpreter to interpret the non-verbal communication.
- Clarify any cultural aspects directly with your client through the interpreter.

#### **After the session**

- If necessary, debriefing can take place for the benefit of the professional or the interpreter.
- The presence of an interpreter in professional and client interaction changes the dynamics of the communication process. It is important that the roles of the professional and the interpreter are clear to all those who are involved in an interview.

For more information about cross-cultural communication workshops please contact:

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