



CHAPTER 2

Interpreting Terminology

Taken from: "Court Interpretation: Model Guides for Policy and Practice in the State Courts" by William E. Hewitt Published in 1995 by the National Center for State Courts

Technical terms used throughout this guide are defined and explained below. Terms are not presented alphabetically. They are arranged in an order that is more suitable for readers to learn the fundamentals of interpreting concepts, terminology, and procedure.

"Non-English speaking person" is the term used in the text to refer to any person who is unable to communicate in English or who has a *limited* ability to communicate in English. The term also applies when the language limitation arises due to deafness or being hard of hearing. The term generally refers to a principal party in interest or a witness in the case.

Non-English speaking person

Source language is the language of the original speaker. "Source language" is thus always a relative term, depending on who has spoken last.

Source language

Target language is the language of the listener, the language into which the interpreter is communicating the meaning of the words spoken in the source language.

Target language

Interpretation means the unrehearsed transmitting of a *spoken* or signed message from one language to another. Interpretation is distinguished from "translation," which relates to written language (see below). Two modes of interpreting are used in court by qualified interpreters -- "simultaneous" and "consecutive." A third common mode is

Interpretation

"summary" interpreting, which should not be used in court settings. These terms are also defined below.

Consecutive interpreting

Consecutive interpreting is rendering statements made in a source language into statements in the target language intermittently after a pause between each completed statement in the source language. In other words, the interpreter renders an interpretation after the speaker has stopped speaking.

When using this mode of interpreting, it may be necessary for the interpreter to signal a speaker to pause to permit a consecutive interpretation when the length of the utterance approaches the outer limits of the interpreter's capacity for recall. During consecutive interpreting, the interpreter should take notes to assist him/her in rendering the interpretation.

Simultaneous interpreting

Simultaneous interpreting is rendering an interpretation continuously at the same time someone is speaking. Simultaneous interpreting is intended to be heard only by the person receiving the interpretation and is usually accomplished by speaking in whispered tones or using equipment specially designed for the purpose in order to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Sight interpreting

Sight interpreting is more commonly referred to as "sight translation" (see below).

Summary interpreting

Summary interpreting is paraphrasing and condensing the speaker's statement. Unlike simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, this method does not provide a precise rendering of everything that is said into the target language. This is a mode of interpreting that should *not* be used in court settings.

Intermediary interpreting involves more than one interpreter to reach people who have idiosyncratic speech characteristics or (in the case of deaf people) who employ gestures or other signing varieties beyond the understanding of the primary interpreter. Intermediary interpreting should be undertaken with a trained primary interpreter, assisted by the secondary interpreter. Secondary interpreters may be deaf people holding the Reverse Skills Certificate (RSC) awarded by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, family members or friends of the person needing special communicative assistance, and professional service providers. *See Chapter 7 for more information about when relay interpreters are needed.*

Intermediary or "relay" interpreting

Intermediary interpreters must work with a primary interpreter who is a professional.

Translation is converting a written text from one language into written text in another language. The source of the message being converted is always a written language.

Translation

Sight translation is a hybrid type of interpreting/translating whereby the interpreter reads a document written in one language while translating it orally into another language. It is sometimes called sight interpreting. In this mode of interpreting a written text must be rendered orally without advance notice and on sight.

Sight translation

Functions of interpreting relate to the purpose or the setting in which interpreting occurs. It is important to understand the functions of interpreting because in some settings more than one interpreter will be required, depending on how many interpreting functions need to be carried out during the same proceeding.

Interpreting functions

In some circumstances, two or more interpreters might be required during one trial in order to perform all of the required interpreting functions.

Proceedings interpreting

Proceedings interpretation is for a non-English speaking litigant in order to make the litigant "present" and able to participate effectively during the proceeding. This interpreting function is ordinarily performed in the simultaneous mode. The interpreter's speech is always in the foreign language, and is not part of the record of proceedings.

Witness interpreting

Witness interpretation is interpretation during witness testimony for the purpose of presenting evidence to the court. This interpreting function is performed in the consecutive mode; the English language portions of the interpretation are part of the record of the proceeding. A variant of "witness" interpreting is assistance provided by the interpreter during communications between the judge or other English-speaking official on the case and a non-English-speaking defendant or civil litigant. Typical examples are communications who occur during arraignments, plea or sentencing hearings.

Interview interpreting

Interview interpreting is interpreting to facilitate communication in interview or consultation settings. Interview interpreting may occur in conjunction with court proceedings or before or after court proceedings. Foremost among these are interviews or consultations that take place between attorney and client (sometimes referred to as "defense" interpreting) and between a non-English speaking person and bail screening or probation personnel.

Interview interpreting may be performed in either or both the simultaneous and consecutive modes during an interview, depending on the circumstances.