

1. Strategies for interpreting in asylum interviews (page ref. 93)

1.1 Communication management: Home Narratives

Home Narratives refer to an aspect of the personal interview in the asylum procedure in which an applicant provides details about the situation that has led him/her to leave the region or country. These home narratives perform a sense-making function for the applicant among others (see Blommaert 2001) and it is important for the interpreter to avoid unnecessarily disrupting the telling process through interruptions. This is why effective note-taking and communication management skills are needed.

Possible approaches:

1. Set ground rules at the start of the interview: the interpreter asks the interviewing officer's permission to explain to the applicant how s/he proposes to interact to ensure details of the claim are conveyed clearly and comprehensively.
2. Develop strategies for intervening with minimal disruption, such as:
 - identifying shifts in the narrative between local and global levels of detail and signalling to the applicant that you wish to interpret that part before continuing;
 - building in pauses to double check proper names and spellings as they arise;
 - building in flexibility: even if interactional preferences and parameters are set at the start of the interview, there is a possibility that interviewees will forget about them quickly as the stress of the process is felt.

1.2 Note-taking strategies

In home narratives where timescales, agents and relationships may seem confusing on initial presentation, interpreters can assist recall by developing strategies to emphasize these aspects in the note-taking process. Here is an example of notes from the extract in Chapter 3 of *Dialogue Interpreting*. Compare this example to your own set of notes based on the text extract in Chapter 3. Consider ways both sets could be improved to signal the shift in topic or narrative.

[Click here to view the note-taking sample](#)

Additional resources

Bögner, D., Herlihy, J. and Brewin, C.R. (2007) 'The impact of sexual violence on disclosure during Home Office interviews', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, (191): 75-81.

Bögner, D., Brewin, C.R., and Herlihy, J. (2010) Refugees' Experiences of Home Office Interviews: A Qualitative Study on the Disclosure of Sensitive Personal Information, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36 (3): 519-535, DOI: 10.1080/13691830903368329.

Gilbert, P. (1998) 'Shame and humiliation in the treatment of complex cases', in Tarrier, N., Wells, A. and Haddock, G. (eds) *Treating Complex Cases: The Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Approach*. Chichester: Wiley, 241-71.

Haenel, F. (1997) 'Aspects and problems associated with the use of interpreters in psychotherapy of victims of torture', *Torture*, 7(3): 68-71.

Loftus, E.F. (1993) 'The reality of repressed memories', *American Psychologist*, 48(5): 518-37.

McNulty, C. and Wardle, J. (1994) 'Adult disclosure of sexual abuse: a primary cause of psychological distress?', *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 18(7): 549-55.

Tribe, R. and Raval, H. (2003) *Working with Interpreters in Mental Health*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Toukmanian, S.G. and Brouwers, M.C. (1998) 'Cultural aspects of self-disclosure and psychotherapy', in Evans, S.S. and Evans, D.R. (eds) *Cultural Clinical Psychology: Theory, Research and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 106-24.

2. Guidance on introductory sequences in interviews involving children (see *Dialogue Interpreting* p.142)

Read the following example of an introductory statement taken from **the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Guidelines for Children's Asylum Claims, Sample Opening Statement** (2009: 51), available at:

https://cliniclegal.org/sites/default/files/AOBTC_Lesson_29_Guidelines_for_Childrens_Asylum_Claims_0.pdf (accessed 20 February 2016).

I am glad that you are here today, and that your friend Mr. (Ms.) [name of support person, if any] is here with you. Do you know what we are going to do today? We are going to talk about why you left [name of country of origin], and why you may not want to go back there. As we talk, we will both have jobs. My job is to understand what happened to you. But I need your help. Your job is to help me to understand by telling me as much as you can remember, even the little things.

I will be asking you a few questions today. Some questions will be easy, but other questions you might not understand. It is OK if you do not understand a question. Just tell me that you do not understand and I will ask the question some other way. But please do not guess or make anything up. If you do not know the answer to the question, that is OK too. Just tell me that. No one can remember everything. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to any of my questions.

As we talk today, I will write down what we say because what you tell me is important. Do not get nervous about my taking notes. Later, if I forget what we said, I can look it up.

I understand that you may be nervous or scared to tell me about what happened to you. I will not tell anyone in [name of country of origin] about what you tell me today. Also, none of your friends or, if you want, family here in the [receiving country] will know anything about what you tell me.

Before we start, do you have any questions that you would like to ask me? Or is there anything that you want to tell me? If you think of something while we are talking, let me know. If you have to go to the bathroom or want to stop for a while, also let me know.

Activity

The opening statement above is written from the perspective of a monolingual interview. If you were to interpret the statement, consider:

- Issues that might arise as a result of the interpreter's presence in the room
- Any recommendations on adjusting the text for an interpreted event
- Strategies for negotiating your involvement with the interviewer to ensure that appropriate reassurances are made about the interpreter's involvement in the interview process