

## Chapter 5: Education

---

### 1. Dynamics of interpreting in the school setting (see *Dialogue Interpreting* p. 197)

Courtesy of Colorado Department of Education PDF internal link (pdf provided)

### 2. Peer interpreting models and experiences

Additional resources on peer interpreting models and schemes can be found at:

1. Nuffield Foundation Report on interpreters in British schools:

<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Child%20Language%20Brokerin%20-%20Good%20Practice%20Guide%20-%20June%202014.pdf> (accessed 28 February 2016)

2. <http://www.classroominterpreting.org/Interpreters/children/Cognitive/midhigh.asp> (accessed 28 February 2016)

3. <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/mar/05/teaching-eal-foreign-languages-students-integration-schools> (accessed 28 February 2016)

4. <http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/esl/Meeting-the-Needs.pdf> (accessed 28 February 2016)

### Activities

I. Students as language buddies. Nottingham Trent University (UK) coordinates volunteer opportunities in schools for students with limited language proficiency. Here is the information (taken from:

[https://www.ntu.ac.uk/current\\_students/while\\_here/volunteering/student\\_led\\_projects/school-projects.html](https://www.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/while_here/volunteering/student_led_projects/school-projects.html)

(accessed 9 January 2016).

What advice would you give to students who wish to be involved in the scheme in relation to what they are being asked to do differs from the role of an interpreter?

#### Language Buddies

Could you use your language skills to provide one-to-one support to school children during lessons? Language Buddies provides you with the opportunity to use your first or learnt language in supporting children who would otherwise struggle in lessons. Nottingham City has a very diverse culture and many different nationalities, so this is a great way to support this diversity.

II. A primary school in England lists a number of roles pupils can apply for within the school environment, one of which is a language buddy (used differently to the University advert above).

### **Language Buddies**

The Language Buddy Group is a group of children from the school that help to support those children who are learning English for the first time. Their job is to help support the new arrivals with settling into the school. This is an excellent job as part of it is helping to celebrate all of the many cultures in this school. We have over 40 different languages at this school and we represent many countries in the world. How exciting is that! Language Buddies are in place to help us celebrate the diversity and create an environment that values all different cultures and religions.

Read the case study in Chapter 5 on the Young Interpreter Scheme in *Dialogue Interpreting* (p.193) and reflect on the ways in which this text could be re-worded to present the role in ways that draw attention to career potential.

## **3. Effectively preparing for interpreting assignments in schools**

Spoken language interpreters are most commonly employed in formal parent-teacher meetings.

### **3.1 Pre-meeting briefing with school representative**

It is important for the interpreter to understand where her/his assignment fits within the pattern of parent-teacher communication established with the school. This will help the interpreter to manage expectations about the assignment, the feelings of the parties involved and anticipate questions and likely outcomes. However, it is also important that student and family confidentiality is respected and that only information relevant to a particular assignment is shared. The following questions are recommended as a guide for reflection in preparing for assignments in education settings. Each question is accompanied by a short explanatory text (under the heading 'relevance') to suggest ways in which they might help the interpreter manage expectations and interaction during the meeting:

1. How many times has this family been involved in meetings where a professional interpreter has been present?

*Relevance:* This question helps interpreters to manage expectations about communication management and positioning. If families have worked with interpreters before they are likely to be aware of the role, importance of confidentiality, etc. If several meetings have taken place, it will also be a strong indicator of the level of awareness of the education system and their child's classroom activities and goals. In short, the level of assumed new context-specific knowledge is likely to be reasonably good.

The question may also elicit an answer that suggests different forms of language support have been used (including bilingual teaching assistants or even the child him/herself), meaning that the role of the professional interpreter may need to be (re-)explained in order to manage expectations about the level of impartiality / advocacy shown.

2. Has this family worked with different professional interpreters on each occasion?

*Relevance:* This question will help the interpreter judge the amount of trust building s/he may need to do within the assignment and be aware of issues that might have arisen in previous meetings such as perceptions about the quality of interpreting and awareness of the parameters of professional practice.

3. Does the child have many/any peers in school from a similar cultural background?

*Relevance:* This question will help the interpreter anticipate the level of intercultural interaction with a peer, especially if the child is newly arrived and is feeling vulnerable. Certain family anxieties may be explained in cases where the child is the only child from a particular cultural or linguistic background. If there are peers, it might also suggest that the family has established or begun to establish networks with parents outside of the School.

4. Does the family have more than one child at the school?

*Relevance:* This question will help the interpreter to anticipate comparisons with the experiences of a sibling and the likelihood of information being exchanged with regard to different levels and stages of development within the same meeting.

5. Has the family responded to contact from the school with regard to school events, announcements, etc?

*Relevance:* Depending on the nature of the assignment, this question might help the interpreter anticipate issues of comprehension and general cultural understanding about the School and its activities.

6. Are there any topics that have been problematic or sensitive in the past that might be discussed in this meeting?

*Relevance:* This question needs to be handled with care as it should not be seen as an unwarranted attempt to elicit confidential information. However, the nature of the assignment may be such that this question would be useful in helping to manage the interpreter's expectations prior to the meeting. If there are issues of abuse in the family that have been raised the interpreter would be better placed to anticipate tensions between family members in the room, unresponsiveness, etc. Issues affecting some immigrants such as poor housing, finance, etc. may be impacting on the nature and level of support provided to the child in school.

7. Has the communication in previous meetings unfolded as anticipated? Have the parents felt confident to express concerns or ask questions?

© Rebecca Tipton and Olgierda Furmanek, 2016

*Relevance:* This may seem like an odd question, but it is designed to see how comfortable the School representative feels about conducting a meeting via interpreter mediation. If the person has limited experience and no prior training, the interpreter can prompt the representative to articulate thoughts and, if appropriate, give advice (e.g. on using the first person, looking directly at the interlocutor, etc), and state how they will let you know if there is something that needs a cultural clarification.

8. Has a family liaison officer or other family representative also been present at previous meetings? Has this impacted on communication / trust building?

*Relevance:* Sometimes interpreters can be taken by surprise when they attend an assignment and discover that there are many more people in attendance than anticipated. They may not always be aware of who everyone is or why they are there. A family liaison officer may not be present but may be a person known to the family through previous contact. A family representative may have been brought along for moral support and this person may have some language proficiency. It can sometimes be difficult for interpreters to manage turn-taking in cases where a family representative 'takes over' and informally interprets. Again this can be discussed before the meeting and parameters set for how the School representative will handle the relationships in the room.

9. Will the child also be present at the meeting?

*Relevance:* It is important for interpreters to know who will be present in order to reflect on the range of interactions and performance dimensions that will most prominently feature in the event.

10. Will there be a follow-up meeting to the meeting?

*Relevance:* It can be helpful, though not essential, for the interpreter to have an idea of the goals of the meeting in general terms and the likelihood of follow-up events.

### **Activity**

For each scenario below:

- develop a list of questions to ask in a pre-briefing meeting drawing on the guidance above
- identify relevant resources of information that would help you prepare for the assignment
- reflect on the different performance dimensions (see Chapter 1 of *Dialogue Interpreting*) that are likely to impact on the assignment.

### **Scenario 1**

A family attend a first meeting with the headteacher of a school to discuss their son's needs ahead of him starting the school in a couple of months' time. The child has autism and requires full-time classroom support.

### **Scenario 2**

© Rebecca Tipton and Olgierda Furmanek, 2016

A family new to the area and who have applied for refugee status have come to speak to the headteacher about enrolling their two children, aged 5 and 8, in the school.

### **Scenario 3**

A family come to meet the class teacher of their daughter to discuss a visit to relatives overseas, which will last several months. The child is 5 years old.

### **Scenario 4**

A young pupil aged nine has been recently diagnosed as having Type 2 diabetes. The child's mother comes to school to discuss her concerns about the child's wellbeing and medical needs.

Here are some suggestions for approaching the activity in relation to scenario 1. Compare the suggestions with your own.

### **Answer Key for Scenario 1**

#### **A) Suggested questions for pre-assignment briefing with the headteacher**

- what are the intended goals of the meeting?
- is anything known about the length of time the family has been in the country/area?
- what sort of support arrangements will be discussed?
- what other administrative issues will be covered?
- have you worked with an interpreter before? If yes, follow up question: as a result of these experiences do you have a preferred way of working or any questions?
- If no, follow up question: can I briefly explain to you my professional remit and preferred seating position, so that we can establish working parameters and communication strategies?
- will the child be with the parents?
- will the parents need to come back to see you before the start of term?

#### **B) Relevant sources of information**

- internet search for information from the relevant national autism society to understand more about the condition
- research on local authority special needs assessment processes
- research nature and level of support in schools for autistic children in the family's country of origin

#### **C) Performance dimensions (see *Dialogue Interpreting* p. 29)**

**Involvement** – if this is a first meeting, interventions to clarify cultural meaning and explain setting-specific concepts are likely to be quite high (as part of the pre-meeting briefing, this can be brought to the attention of the school representative so that expectations and time are managed accordingly)

**Visibility** – again if this is a first meeting, the interpreter might assume a greater prominence, especially at the start of the meeting, to help establish turns-at-talk, eye contact and facilitate trust building

**Transparency** – the time needed to explain / frame certain concepts may lead to suspicion on the part of the school representative if s/he is new to interpreter mediation.

Transparency in this case may involve a timely reminder of interpreting process to mitigate any suspicions of the interpreter putting her/his own spin on the utterances.

**Coordination** – a balance needs to be struck in the interpreter's involvement in any coordinating activities. It is important for the family to focus on the school representative as the source of expertise and authority in the room.

**Co-construction** – as this meeting is likely to have a fact-finding / information giving focus, the interpreter's performance in terms of co-constructing the event to support the goals and aims of the institution is likely to be less pronounced than in other situations and settings.

### **3.2 Preparing for assignments involving children who may have special educational needs**

Identifying children from ethnic minorities with limited language proficiency who may have special educational needs is one of the most difficult tasks that school interpreters may need to assist with. The selected extracts below are taken from a checklist created by Manchester City Council, UK, in conjunction with relevant partners, that shows the involvement of interpreters at some stages in the assessment process. The document provides a useful background and can help interpreters understand why and how they are needed at certain points and not others. The following tables are taken from the handbook *Minority Ethnic Pupils and Special Educational Need: Guidance and self-evaluation for schools on identification and assessment strategies for minority ethnic pupils who may also have a special educational need* (2007, updated 2010), available at: <http://www.mewan.net/senco/getfile.php?src=60/EMA+and+SEN+Guidance.pdf> (accessed 25 February 2016).

The document covers three key areas: A Concerns about Communication, B Concerns about Learning, C Concerns about Behaviour, Social and Emotional Development, and D Concerns about Physical and Sensory Needs.

### **3.3 Points for consideration**

- Using the tables in the PDF document, identify the areas in which it is recommended interpreters be used and the nature of pre-assignment preparatory requirements for each.
  - With a partner, discuss the areas where interpreter involvement does not appear to be recommended – consider the reasons why and whether you would recommend interpreter involvement in these cases.
-