**Interpreter Pre-Session Practice for Isolate Language Groups**

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In many interpreter training settings, the interpreting instructor will need to address the problem of isolate language groups, i.e., one Nepali interpreter, one Karen interpreter, one Kayah interpreter. There is no easy solution to this problem. The participants lose the opportunity to experience corrections and comments from their peers. They also lose the opportunity to learn more equivalent words that they could add to their working glossary. Despite all of these challenges, an instructor should still be able to provide an experience that gives the participant an opportunity to practice in his or her own language even though they don’t have the benefit of another speaker with them in the classroom.

An instructor needs to plan for this occurrence even if he or she believes that every language in the class will be paired. People may be absent, they may have changed their minds about taking the class, or the language pair may not be exactly what the instructor thought it would be. For example, the instructor may assume that the Karen-speaking participant also speaks Burmese, but on the day of class discover that the interpreter only feels confident in Karen. It is also possible that two speakers of the “same” language may speak mutually unintelligible varieties along a language chain.

A class which encourages interpreters **to interpret** is very critical to an interpreter’s development.An instructor should always include many opportunities for interpreters to practice orally, and spend minimal time explaining points of interpreting. The effort of explanation is directed toward listening and critiquing the interpreter’s performance with his or her peers. This is especially crucial for Interpreters of Languages of Limited Diffusion. However, an instructor has to keep in mind that an interpreter may be uncomfortable speaking a language in front of people who don’t understand it.

An instructor can provide a structure for the isolate speaker to practice role play scenarios in their own language. At the beginning of a class, practicing the pre-session affords a good opportunity for the isolate speaker to master the introductory pre-session in both English and the target language. Take note that this is not an ideal situation, but an approximate method to achieve proficiency.

**Required Material**

Not every pre-session is the same, but this is an example of a basic pre-session for use in this activity. Many LLD interpreting students find that demonstrating the hand gesture to slow down helps them remember those final words in the pre-session:

**Interpreter:** Hello. My name is (Insert Name) and I will be your \_\_\_\_\_(language) interpreter today. Everything you say is confidential. Everything you say will be interpreted exactly as you say it. Please speak in short sentences so that I have time to interpret. If I raise my hand (raises hand), please slow down.

**Provider: Thank you.**

**Interpreter: Hello.** My name is (Insert Name) and I will be your \_\_\_\_\_(language) interpreter today. Everything you say is confidential. Everything you say will be interpreted exactly as you say it. Please speak in short sentences so that I have time to interpret. If I raise my hand (raises hand), please slow down.

**Patient: Thank you.**

**Statements to include in a pre-session:**

* Interpreter’s greeting.
* Interpreter’s name.
* Interpreter’s language.
* Interpreter’s reminder that everything stated is confidential.
* Interpreter’s reminder that everything will be interpreted.
* Interpreter’s request to speak in short sentences.
* Interpreter’s request to slow down when hand is raised.

**Activity:**

1. Before starting any exercise, the instructor may ask the isolate speaker to recite a list of non-class related concepts, for example: ask the isolate speaker to list, names of family members and their relationship to the interpreter, places the interpreter has been before arriving in the city where the training is taking place, cooking implements found in a typical house and what they are used for. This will allow the instructor to hear the intonation and timing pattern of a list to be better able to count items during class exercises.
2. The interpreter in this scenario is the isolate speaker, another student is the patient, and the third student is the doctor. The scenario is the beginning of a session in which the interpreter needs to provide the pre-session in English and the target language.
3. As the interpreter, the isolate language speaker will speak in the target language and in English. For practice purposes, the patient will speak only in English. The doctor will speak in English.
4. To practice the target language, the isolate language speaker will introduce himself or herself first to the patient in the target language. The patient will respond in English. The isolate speaker will then introduce himself or herself in English to the doctor. The doctor will respond in English.
5. Ahead of time, the instructor makes sure everyone has had time to practice the introduction in both their target language and in English. The instructor asks if all students feel confident in their performance of both introductions.
6. When listening to the isolate speaker give both introductions, the instructor will be aware of hesitations or faltering in the target language (and English) and then ask the isolate speaker individually if he or she feels confident in their performance. The instructor can direct the isolate speaker to be sure to practice outside the class with another speaker of the target language.

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