



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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Interpreting In a Classroom Setting

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Before the Session:

Think about the seating arrangement

- Interpreter should sit just behind the student/parent and a little to the side.
- Avoid triangle seating arrangement- allows the teacher to be connected with the student/parent rather than the interpreter being the primary focus point.

Have a pre-interview with the interpreter

- Allow teachers to properly introduce themselves.
- Inform interpreter on what topic area they will be discussing during the session.

Goal is meaning for meaning vs. literal interpretation

- The interpreter is a linguistic channel for processing two languages, and rendering the meaning of what is said in the course language into an equivalent meaning in the target language, without changing the register and without adding, omitting, editorializing, or summarizing.

During the Session:

Interpreter speaking in first person:

- Interpreter must not give their opinion, omit information, or advise.
- The only time an interpreter speaks in 3rd person is when s/he needs to explain cultural differences or needs to clarify.

Teacher's Role:

- Speak directly to the student/parent: Referring to the student/parent as s/he makes the interpreter the focus point, leaving the student/parent on the outside of the process. Instead, use "I" and "You".
- Keep eye contact with student/parent rather than interpreter.
- Keep language simple.
- All involved in the session should feel free to interrupt to ask for clarification or explanations.
- The teacher should take charge in guiding the interpreter.
- Don't tune out while the interpreter is speaking to the student/parent. This gives the impression that you are disconnected from the process and the person.
- Don't think out loud. This can cause confusion for the interpreter, and if not interpreted can cause uneasiness in the student/parent.

Culture differences:

- Eye contact and body language varies from culture to culture. Don't make assumptions about meaning of eye contact, posture, etc.
- Culture and language have considerable impact on how student/parent access and respond.
- The interpreter must possess understanding of cultures associated with the language s/he interprets.
- The interpreter will alert all parties to any significant cultural misunderstanding that arises.

Possible Reasons for Silence from the Student/Parent:

- Lack of trust
- Discomfort with interpreter (ex: gender, member of community)
- Taking time to think
- Shame

Possible Reasons for Silence from the Interpreter

- Doesn't Understand
- Searching for vocabulary
- Trying to avoid re-traumatization or is experiencing re-traumatization themselves.

After the Session:

Speak with interpreter concerning:

- Only if it is regards to feedback on cultural context
- May not ask for advice or opinion

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