

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING AT RC WORKSHOPS

Interpreting (orally translating someone's talk into a second language) is an indispensable part of many workshops. Interpreting makes it possible for everyone to be fully included—to understand what is going on and to communicate clearly with one another. Interpreting also contradicts language oppression.

The following are some guidelines for organizing interpreting. They are based on successful experiences at workshops where several different native languages were present. They are also more generally useful, perhaps at all workshops. They need to be applied flexibly, taking in account each workshop's resources. They are not meant to replace our flexible thinking.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF INTERPRETING

There are different forms of interpreting:

1) Up-Front Interpreting: An interpreter stands in front of the workshop next to the leader. The leader speaks in short phrases or sentences and then pauses while the interpreter interprets. This form of interpreting should be used (a) whenever there are workshop attendees who are not fluent in the language of the workshop, or (b) when the leader does not speak the language of the workshop's attendees.

2) Group Interpreting: An interpreter sits with a group of workshop attendees, or with an individual, whose first language is different from the language in which the workshop is being conducted. Group interpreting is usually used together with up-front interpreting. At the same time that the up-front interpreter is interpreting into one language, the group interpreters interpret into other languages spoken by attendees at the workshop. This form of interpreting should be used whenever there are speakers of several languages present at a workshop, especially when some are not fluent in the language of the workshop. Group interpreting makes all languages audible and visible, even when there is no up-front interpreting.

3) Simultaneous Interpreting: As with group interpreting, the simultaneous interpreter sits with a group, or individual, whose first language is different from that in which the workshop is being conducted. The workshop leader does not pause for interpreting; the interpreter interprets at the same time that the leader is speaking. This form of interpreting is mainly useful for demonstrations or support groups in which pausing for interpreting would interfere with the client's discharge.

ARRANGING INTERPRETING JOBS

An **Interpreters' Support Team** is needed. This team arranges for 1) interpreting turns, 2) discharge turns, 3) silence and rest turns, and 4) support for group interpreting.

(1) Interpreting turns

The leader and the interpreting leader decide which of the above forms of interpreting are appropriate for the workshop. If up front interpreting is done, during workshop classes there is an interpreter up front for each language. (Otherwise, group interpreting or simultaneous interpreting is arranged.) He or she interprets for no more than twenty minutes at a time. Choose the most competent interpreters available for this job. Those who are not yet ready to do up front interpreting can interpret during meal times, breaks, support groups, and so on.

Determine the order of the interpreters and the languages to be interpreted. Oppressed and/or minority group and/or Indigenous languages go first. Put the order up on the wall, easily visible to everyone.

Each interpreter—both upfront and group interpreter—has a support person. This person stands beside, or sits in front of him or her. If necessary, he or she helps the interpreter find a word or other part of speech that the interpreter has missed. No one else can call out words to the interpreter.

(2) Discharge turns

At the end of the twenty minutes, the interpreter(s) should get one minute of group attention for discharge, with the support person as the main counselor (not the leader of the workshop). During this minute, group interpreters (formerly called "whisper interpreters") will also have a change to discharge among those for whom they are interpreting; their support person is the main counselor. If there is enough resource, the people receiving interpreting can use this minute to discharge with one of their supporters.

Support for people receiving interpreting can also be arranged ahead of time. This was done at the 2013 World Conference. (See *Present Time* No. 176, July 2014, pages 60-62, "Language Liberation and the World Conference.")

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(3) Silence and rest turns

There is a minute of silence after each person's turn at interpreting. This allows the interpreters to think about what they have just interpreted as well as give their minds a rest. It's also an opportunity for everyone to think about what has been said and the interpreting of it.

(4) Support for group interpreting

Native speakers of the language being spoken by the leader can be organized to support the group interpreter (former whispering interpreter). They can stay near the interpreter and repeat words that the interpreter has not been able to hear, or rephrase something that was not understood into a simpler expression.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE LANGUAGE LIBERATION TEAM (LLT)

When possible, appoint a Language Liberation Team (LLT). The LLT and its leader make sure that language liberation goes forward at the workshop. They do not allow language oppression to interrupt the progress of the workshop.

The workshop leader and the MIL consult with the LLT leader about language liberation issues. The LLT leader also helps the speakers of dominant languages notice oppressive conduct and interrupt it. The LLT leader should have up-to-date language liberation experience.

The LLT leads mealtime tables on language liberation and oppression. All workshop participants are welcome at these tables—this includes speakers of a dominant language; those for whom English is not their first language; those who have lost their native language due to assimilation, colonization, genocide; and so on.

MAIN INTERPRETING LEADER (MIL)

The main interpreting leader (MIL) is selected by the workshop leader and organizer, in consultation with the International Commonality Reference Person (ICRP) for Languages and Interpreting. Her job is to coordinate all aspects of the interpreting. This function is crucial to the success of the workshop.

The MIL oversees all aspects of the interpreting and makes sure they go well. These include the following: 1) the actual interpreting system, 2) communication with the leader about the interpreting, 3) support to the interpreters, 4) the order of interpreters and languages, 5) the timing of the interpreting sessions, and

so forth. She should be in ongoing direct contact with the organizer and the leader and know how the interpreting is going for them. The MIL must be someone with a large amount of interpreting experience who has discharged and thought well about this job. She should be in ongoing contact with the ICRP for Languages and Interpreting.

The MIL should talk about interpreting to all participants, at the beginning of the workshop. Participants need to understand both the policy and process of interpreting as well as its role in eliminating language oppression and achieving language liberation. This information can also be sent to the participants prior to the workshop so that they can begin thinking and discharging about this important issue.

MAIN INTERPRETING LEADER'S SUPPORT TEAM (MILST)

The MIL needs a support team (MILST). This team consists of a leader and one or two other people who have experience with language liberation. Their job is to support the MIL throughout the workshop and assist him or her in organizing the interpreting. If possible, the team should meet some weeks before the workshop (via Skype, for instance) as well as some hours before the workshop. The MIL chooses members of her support team.

THE INTERPRETERS' SUPPORT TEAM

There is also an Interpreters' Support Team. This team is chosen by the MIL and approved by the workshop organizer. The leader of this team works closely with the MIL before and during the workshop. Team members must have good knowledge of language liberation. When possible they communicate with each other prior to the workshop and meet as a group early in the workshop.

This support team does the following: 1) thinks about the interpreters, both those interpreting in front of the workshop and those doing group interpreting (previously called whisper interpreting), 2) organizes support for the interpreters; designates someone to pay attention to each interpreter. The support persons may be native English speakers; the interpreter may ask them language-related questions, 3) handles any interpreting problems that may arise, and 4) meets with the interpreters, explains how the system works, and determines any special needs of the interpreters and/or language groups. The interpreters' support team arranges the following:

(1) *Discharge tables for interpreters, especially group interpreters. These meet each day at mealtimes.* Because interpreting is a challenging job, all interpreters should take part in a discharge table at least once during the workshop (preferably once a day). Here they can discharge among peers who are not dependent on their interpreting.

Support team members can lead more than one table at the same meal, in consultation with the MIL. In addition, volunteers (preferably those who speak the leader's language) can be invited to give one-way time to interpreters whenever needed.

(2) *Discharge tables for workshop participants who depend on interpreting in order to participate in the workshop.* The team should stay in good contact with those who need interpreting. This attention, from outside the language group, breaks the isolation and facilitates the work.

(3) *Support persons or "buddies" for participants who otherwise might have contact only with their particular interpreters.* These are preferably people who speak only one language. Both interpreters and those they interpret for need time away from each other and contact with other people.

(4) *Meal tables on language oppression and liberation.* These tables are open to everyone at the workshop. They should be led by the MIL or by people named by her who have language liberation experience.

Whenever possible, leaders should have previous experience as part of a support team on language oppression and liberation. They should also have an assistant whose native language has played an oppressive role, perhaps someone from a country with a history of imperialism. Both the assistant and the leader need to work together well.

When possible, support team members do not need interpreting of the language the workshop is being conducted in.

TRANSCRIBING TEAM (TT)

Transcribing (and projecting the transcription on a screen) during classes can be an important part of language liberation work. It not only helps the interpreters; it helps everyone participate fully, including people who do not speak English as their first language, people with hearing loss, people experiencing fatigue, and so on.

Transcribing and projection require considerable additional resource. Consult with the workshop leader

and organizer about whether the workshop can provide it. If it can, the team should be formed before the workshop date.

The TT does the following: 1) makes sure that the workshop is supportive of transcribing—in terms of pace, language, set-up of the room and the transcribing desk, choosing partners for mini sessions, and so on, 2) makes sure that each transcriber has a support person nearby while working, 3) posts a list of transcribers and their support persons on the wall.

Transcribing shifts are in parallel with interpreting shifts. They are timed by the Interpreter Support Team.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

The following ideas have helped interpreting go well at both large International workshops (with a large variety of languages) and at smaller workshops.

(1) When it is time for a mini-session, wait until all interpreting has stopped. Make sure that all the interpreters, especially those doing group interpreting, have chosen their Co-Counselors.

(2) Only the MIL gives input to the leader about the interpreting (for example: "speak slowly, please," "speak louder and clearer, please," "interpreting in process, wait," "change of interpreter," "short sentences, please" and so on). She finds the best moment to communicate this to the leader so that it won't interfere too much with her thinking and leading. Signal cards can be used; the person using them should know the leader and her speaking pace.

(3) It is the MIL's job to help participants control their laughing, loud admiring comments, and so on, so that the interpreter's voice can be heard by everyone.

(4) Everything the leader says should be interpreted—for instance, a greeting, a "good and new," a joke. Every such expression is important—they are ways that a leader shows herself. The interpreter is the leader's "oral clone."

(5) The workshop leader consults with the MIL about the interpreting of demonstrations. Demonstrations may be interpreted either fully or partially. The demonstration's importance for the client may outweigh the value of simultaneous interpreting or the strict application of the interpreting guidelines. Sometimes an oral summary of what has been said by the client (with her permission) or by the leader, helps the participants to catch up.