

## **Compilation of Notes on Team Interpreting**

From workshops led by Risa Shaw

### **What Team Interpreting Is**

- working towards a shared goal (effective interpretation)
- operating as one unit
- a shared decision-making process
- a mechanism for greater accuracy and a higher standard of service

### **How To Build and Keep A Team Intact**

- re-state the goal to establish common ground, and for clear communication
- trust that comments made by teammates are geared toward a more effective interpretation; not that comments are personal
- make explicit your decision-making process
- ask for clarification of teammates' decision-making process
- make explicit the context
- make decisions based on how to meet the goal
- open yourself up to other people (a risk, but a necessary ingredient)
- attend to building trust for the working relationship

### **Factors That Influence Team Effectiveness**

- degree of trust
- extent of communication
- experience
- skill level
- complimentary skills
- self-esteem
- investment in ego
- experience with team interpreting
- definition of the situation; perspective and orientation to the task
- knowledge and familiarity with context, content, participants, language

## Pre-Conference Topics

This is a time to talk to each other, to discover and confirm priorities and focus, each others' tendencies, preferences and styles, and to tie it all into the goal of effective interpretation. As you discovered, some of these topics may or may not be broached prior to interpreting; some may be discussed on break, or after the job is finished; and they will be discussed to different depths according to your experience working together, your energy level, the demands of the job, the setting of the job, etc.

- discuss what you know about the job, the participants, the situation, and preparation information
- be aware of and be able to describe your own process and style
- discuss personal styles - how to read each other
- describe what you know you may need help with (strengths/weaknesses)
- describe your style and processing (lag) time
- describe what body language and positioning means to you
- discuss and agree on parameters for physical touch and proximity
- discuss who will begin interpreting and who will begin monitoring, and why
- discuss turn-taking: how to switch, when, how to signal if need to switch early
- discuss what types of feeding works best for you (words, chunks, fragments, sentences)
- discuss types and ways of monitoring and feeding
- establish a common understanding of signals to be used
- discuss what signals you might use or prefer to use: tap, lean, words/signs...
- discuss how to switch to the other person to do the interpreting, if need be, and how that decision would be made
- discuss who will stop the speaker, and how, if need be specify to the speaker where you need them to go back to (remember that this may throw the speaker, use least obtrusive behaviors "excuse me, could you repeat..."; hold up "one finger", or use brow raise)
- make explicit your definition of the task and goals
- explain to a new teammate why you will be watching (paying attention to) the interpretation; talk about what it can mean to the interpretation as a whole, explain what you can provide them, what they can provide you, and suggest some ways to try it out (writing notes to each other, giving each other reinforcement, talking about it afterwards, etc.)

### **Post-Conference Topics**

- reflect on the interpretation
- discuss and analyze WHY and what specific things contributed to an effective interpretation and WHY and what hindered an effective interpretation
- tie all discussion into the goal (effective interpretation)
- ask how strategies and behaviors affected the interpretation
- discuss the techniques and strategies that were used for feeding and support; what was comfortable, uncomfortable; what seemed to work well, what seemed to not work well; how would you change things next time; and WHY
- discuss the team's decision making process and use of judgment

### **During The Interpretation**

- communicate with each other (subtle and concise enough not to call attention to yourselves, clear enough to be understood by each other)
- communicate about the accuracy of the interpretation (body cues, linguistically)
- communicate about switching if/when the need arises
- it is a judgment call (usually the interpreter's) as to if, when, and how to use information that is fed
- if the monitor does not have information that the interpreter is looking for, tell the interpreter
- tell your teammate when you are taking a mental/physical break
- if information that was fed is not immediately used, it may mean:
  - ∞ the feed was not heard (the interpreter may need a visual or tactile cue to signal that a feed is coming);
  - ∞ the volume was too low, or the signing not seen;
  - ∞ the information may be incorporated to build context;
  - ∞ the information may be produced in interpretation later

### **Ways to Feed Information**

- full sentences
- sentence fragments
- vocabulary words (#s, names, etc.)
- lexical items (eye dr.-> ophthalmologist)
- glossed words/signs
- a feed may be used and produced verbatim
- a feed may be used and produced in interpreters' words

### Types of Information to Be Fed

- message, meaning, point
- discourse: transitions/glue; opening/intro.; closing/conclusion
- contextual information
- affectual information
- semantic information
- logistical information
- words to build the concept/text
- specifics/detail
- a correction
- missing information
- audience reaction
- volume/size/space

### Signaling

- it may be different than what you set up in pre-conference
- it may be difficult when you're not used to working with someone
- visual cues to prompt need to be in the person's line of vision
- visual cues to prompt for more or less feeding is helpful to some people
- possible signals for requesting information to be fed: head nod, change in body language, brow raise, head movement, leaning, touching, face "squint", verbal cue, visual cue, eye gaze (ask for it, look away when enough), head tilt, etc.; change in vocal or signing (may be very subtle)
- consider what messages you send to consumers by your facial and body language when signaling to your teammate, and by your positioning and posture

### As The Monitor

Both the team members are equally responsible for the interpretation. The role of monitor-team member and the role of interpreter-team member have specific responsibilities in each.

- specific responsibilities: watch/listen to the source message, monitor the interpretation, check for accuracy, feed information to interpreter when necessary, deal with logistics (i.e.: lighting, microphone problems, etc.), audience reaction, etc.
- vocal and sign feeds need to be done with acuity so they are understood by the interpreter
- feeds should be subtle and between the interpreters, not for the audience to hear or see
- let the interpreter know if you "missed" what they asked for
- use anticipation/prediction skills to know what, how and when to feed
- you may need to give context or purpose of a feed
- watch for interpreters' non-verbal cues (looking puzzled, hunched shoulders)
- watch specifically for names, lists, numbers (specific lexical items) to feed
- monitor can check interpreter through peripheral vision
- it may be appropriate to speak the feed loud enough for the audience (small group) to hear the interpretation

- the timing of feeding information is important, so it does not distract or break the interpreter's concentration
- too long of a feed or too much information in a feed may be distracting
- communicate with your teammate: support and reinforcement signals may be helpful (a pat on the back, head nods, verbal reinforcement (i.e.: "good", "you're doing fine"))

### As The Interpreter

- decide how to use/incorporate information from monitor  
immediate      verbatim      into processing  
delayed      "re-worked"
- communicate with your teammate during the interpretation about working together (i.e.: "we're doing great"; "one word is not enough, give me more")
- think about why your monitor is feeding you, and use it appropriately
- choose if, how, and when to incorporate a feed
- be specific about what you ask for, what you need
- specify where you want the vocal feed (i.e.: in ear, behind ear)
- refine your internal monitor (to heighten self-awareness, and monitor your interpretations)

### Negotiating Strategies

- know what your goal is, assess that different ways of achieving it
- give others the benefit of the doubt
- be specific about what you need to do your job
- be sincere
- use "I" statements
- lead the other interpreter to how you want to function (model behaviors)
- talk about the interpretation, not the interpreter
- ask questions
- be specific
- offer suggestions
- offer descriptions
- ask yourself if you have the same objective - discuss your objectives
- if you can't or don't want to have a discussion right away, make yourself notes, and make an appointment with your teammate for a later time/date
- remember that you won't always walk away satisfied, but your work might lead to a better working relationship in the future
- remember that you might plant a seed

### Situational Factors To Take Into Account In Making Decisions

- context
- content
- participants
- type of interaction
- pace
- time of day
- power dynamics
- intensity of interaction

### Interpreter Factors To Take Into Account In Making Decisions

- skill level
- style
- target language comfort and proficiency
- knowledge and familiarity with context, content, participants, language
- experience
- fatigue
- rapport with the participants

### Team Considerations

- preparation time; and later, debriefing time
- preparation with the speakers/participants, setting, and content
- how and when the team holds team discussions (public or private)

### Some Thoughts

- team interpreting: a joint meeting for the purposes of collaborative problem solving
- look at the big picture - how and what can i contribute to this process?
- perfection is not the goal; working together for a more effective interpretation is
- the ability to negotiate and achieve a successful working relationship is not proportionate to interpreting skill

### Some Questions

- what factors contribute to the justification for team interpreting
- what factors go into your decisions you make while teaming
- how do you decide to ask for help, what type of help, offer help, leave well enough alone
- what factors contribute to deciding who is in the interpreter role and the monitor role, and how does this change
- can you use descriptions for discussion purposes; they are concrete, you can own them, and give examples; descriptions are not judgmental nor threatening