PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL INTERPRETER

A Comprehensive 40-hour Medical Interpreting Course

Academy of
Interpretation

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We want to thank our families, friends and colleagues who are not mentioned for their great support and advice during the writing of this course.

This course was a labor of love for the founders and staff of the Academy of Interpretation. Plans for developing this course began in 2012. Our aspiration has been brought to life in a course developed based on accreditation standards and that gathered our experience and wisdom from being both an interpreting agency and interpreter training company. The largest effort to bring this course to completion spanned from late–2019 and throughout 2020–during the first year of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the writers, contributors, reviewers and staff mentioned below, we would also like to thank and acknowledge the healthcare providers, hospital language services managers and their staff who were kind enough to provide valuable feedback, and share their knowledge and experience that helped us in designing our medical interpreter course and accompanying textbook.

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We would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude to the following individuals who contributed to this course including the textbook, presentation materials, and implementation into a learning management system (LMS), so the course can be accessed online.

SAMEH ABDELKADER, Co-Founder and Director of Education for the Academy of Interpretation and Recipient of the 2015 IMIA Distinction in Education Award

For the direction, vision and contribution of his ten years' experience teaching adult learners the complex skills involved in becoming a professional medical interpreter.

Specifically, Mr. Abdelkader utilized our experiences in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, where the hospital systems expect the very best in terms of quality interpretation services. That combined with his wisdom and heart has allowed us to achieve success in training thousands of students both in-person, remotely by video conference, and through online training.

TIMOTHY WORSTEr, Founder of Liberty Language Services

For the vision of developing and providing a world-class training that is affordable and accessible to all, with the ultimate goal of serving the communities where we live and work. Whether they be language access services staff within hospitals or individuals who meet the qualifications to be trained to give the gift of their language, culture, and voice to the limited-English-proficient (LEP) communities in the United States and beyond.

DREW BAHR, Esq., Spanish/English Legal and Medical Interpreter

Drew Bahr is a licensed immigration attorney, a medical and legal English/Spanish interpreter, and an interpreter trainer. Mr. Bahr was involved with the creation of the course content including presentation material.

CYNTHIA E. ROAT, MPH

Cindy Roat is an international consultant on language access in health care and patient navigation. A recognized subject matter expert on medical interpreting, she contributed the chapter and exercises on the topic of **message conversion:** the mechanics of converting a spoken message from one language into another.

IZABEL SOUZA, Ph.D.

Dr. Souza is an international expert and leader for medical interpreting. She served as reviewer and contributed to the book as a recognized subject matter expert in medical interpretation and intercultural mediation. Her chapter on The Roles of Interpreters emphasizes the undeniable cultural broker role and how medical interpreters mediate intercultural communication between patients and healthcare providers.

Dr. Jacqueline Messing, Ph.D.

Dr. Messing is a linguistic anthropologist and served as reviewer and copy editor for the course textbook and presentation materials. Her research interests focus on issues of language, identity, ideology, race and racism in Mexico and the United States, on indigenous communities, multilingualism, and attempts to revitalize native languages through education. Dr. Messing's review was done in the context of the tumultuous year that was 2020 and she sought to also review for inclusivity, equality, and diversity.

MARIA TERESA BUENDIA SCHLENKER, Certified Healthcare Interpreter for English/Spanish and Medical Interpreter Trainer

With a degree in microbiology and as an experienced healthcare interpreter, Ms. Schlenker is an in-house subject matter expert and provided her review of the course and contributed medical terminology content and exercises.

Additional Academy of Interpretation staff that contributed to the review, refinement, and editing include **Lia Cunanan** and **Devin Stewart**. Ms. Cunanan also coordinated beta testing of the online course.

Special recognition goes to **Salar Raoufi** who brought the course to life in its digital format, as well as providing project management. Mr. Raoufi contributed graphic content, interactivity to the online course, final touches, and LMS implementation to bring the course online and available to the world.

We would also like to acknowledge **medical interpreters** worldwide for their dedication to the field. Their commitment to working to serve their communities is admirable and serves as inspiration for the creation of all our trainings and especially this one. And a special acknowledgment to those interpreters who chose to continue to work in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table of Contents

Welcome

Welcome to the Academy of Interpretation. We are pleased to present this training to you as the next exciting step in your medical interpreting career. This course is for fully bilingual individuals who wish to start working as interpreters. This course is also catered to dedicated interpreters who may (1) not have previously been trained, (2) wish to refresh their knowledge and skills, and/or (3) want to build on their foundation of proper interpreting techniques and abilities, in a fun, collaborative setting.

Please note that the information in this welcome and introduction will not be tested. Also, the numbering of the sections in the textbook will skip some numbers to align with the course presentation.

Accompanying Medical Terminology Textbook: Medical Terminology for Medical Interpreters, by the Academy of Interpretation, is the accompanying textbook to this comprehensive course.

THE IMIA AND NCIHC

The International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA) and the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) are the most important organizations for medical and healthcare interpreting in the U.S. Both organizations have developed standards of practice and code of ethics that are necessary parts of medical interpreters' training and practice. They are mentioned throughout this book and our medical interpreter training course is aligned with these organizations.

ABOUT THE ACADEMY OF INTERPRETATION

The Academy of Interpretation www.academyofinterpretation.com is a learning platform that expands access to educational offerings and establishes a standard of quality in the language services industry. We aim to professionalize the language services industry through proper training and credentialing. The Academy believes that interpreters are crucial to our communities and that we want to recognize their contributions by providing them with the tools for proper performance.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS (CONTINUED FROM SYLLABUS)

This is an intensive course; if you have other time-consuming commitments you will need to take care of on the same days as this course, you should consider re-scheduling your other commitments or withdrawing from the course.

Note: If taking online version, disregard statement above, as this course is also taught in person. The online version is self-paced.

At the end of this course, you should be able to successfully perform all the objectives listed in the Course Syllabus. These skills cannot be learned passively, so you will need to play an active role in the exercises, role play practice sessions, and complete your homework before each day of class.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Students may dress comfortably during the course, but the Academy of Interpretation reserves the right to modify dress standards as needed. Cellphones are permitted in the classroom, but trainers have authority to ban all cellphone use in the classroom if cellphones become a distraction. Please be responsible with cellphones and courteous to your trainer and classmates at all times.

This training is a safe space for students. A safe space (also known as a "brave space") is a place where students can express themselves without fear of rejection or judgment based on any part of their identity. Racist, homophobic, bigoted, or otherwise disparaging remarks will result in immediate removal from the classroom and, if necessary, enrollment withdrawal from the course.

During this course, students will give and receive constructive criticism through the critique analysis process. Many sections of the course will invite students to analyze and critique one another, or to the entire class, about other students' performance. Students should feel comfortable pointing out perceived mistakes and areas of improvement, so long as they also mention the positive aspects of the performance and focus on the performance, not the student.

1

INTERPRETING

LEARNING GOAL

After successful completion of the Interpreting Section, participants will be able to do the following:

- Define the concept of interpreting and identify the main goal of the interpreter.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Using the above goals, participants should also be able to do the following upon successful completion of this section:

- Understand the concept of interpretation.
- Know the main responsibility of the medical interpreter.
- Identify the difference between the source and target language.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND WORDS

- Interpreting
- Message
- Preserve the meaning
- Social work
- Profession
- Autonomy
- Perception of favoritism
- Ethics
- Professional distance
- Neutral
- Source language
- Target language
- Speech
- Conscious

The word "interpret" may mean many different things in the English language depending on the context. For example, many museumgoers "interpret" art, and some dancers "interpret" music. However, in the context of this course, which is for spoken languages only, the concept **to interpret** refers specifically to the process of listening to and analyzing a message received in one language, then recreating that same message and delivering it in another language, all while preserving its meaning.

WHAT INTERPRETING IS NOT

Sometimes when talking about interpreting, it can be useful to understand what interpreting is **NOT**. For example, interpreting is NOT social work. Many interpreters enter the profession out of a desire to help others, and interpreters do indeed help many people. However, interpreters help people by interpreting their messages, and respecting their autonomy. Interpreting is not about recommending or discouraging patients or providers about something not related to interpreting.

Interpreters are NOT patient representatives. Interpreters need to be careful to be as professional as possible to all parties to avoid the perception of favoritism (this will be covered more in the ethics section). Patients especially may wish to become closer with their interpreters. However, interpreters should always maintain a professional distance and be neutral to both sides. This can be challenging, but it is the only way that patients and providers can trust the interpreters to faithfully interpret their messages to one another. Personal closeness to patients (due to language and possibly culture) can cause

unrealistic expectations from the patient's side as well as a level of mistrust from the provider's side (more on this later). Interpreting between languages can be confusing to discuss, so this textbook will introduce some common terms interpreters use when talking about interpreting.

Source language is the language that is to be interpreted or translated. Target language is the language which the source text or speech is to be translated or interpreted.

The source and target language can vary during an interpreted conversation many times depending on who is speaking. Sometimes interpreting is unidirectional, such as when a presentation is interpreted from French into English. Other times, and mostly in healthcare, interpreting is 'dialogic', when a conversation, or 'dialogue' is interpreted in both directions. For example, if Yuanyuan and Arnold are a Mandarin speaker and a German speaker respectively, and neither person speaks the other's language, they could use an interpreter to understand one another. Whenever Yuanyuan is speaking Mandarin and the interpreter is interpreting Yuanyuan's messages, the source language is Mandarin, and the target language is German. However, whenever Arnold is speaking German and the interpreter is interpreting Arnold's message (which may be only a couple of seconds later), the source language is German, and the target language is Mandarin.

These terms are important because interpreters need to be conscious of errors that may occur when interpreting in either direction. *The interpreters' main goal is to enable understanding in communication between people who speak different languages.* The interpreter's goal is not to simply repeat words, but also to ensure that the messages are understood (IMIA Standards A-8 and A-9).

2

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

LEARNING GOAL

After successful completion of the difference between interpretation and translation section, participants will be able to do the following:

- Identify the difference between interpretation and translation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Using the above goals, participants should also be able to do the following upon successful completion of this section:

- Differentiate between interpretation and translation.
- Know the needed skills for both interpretation and translation.

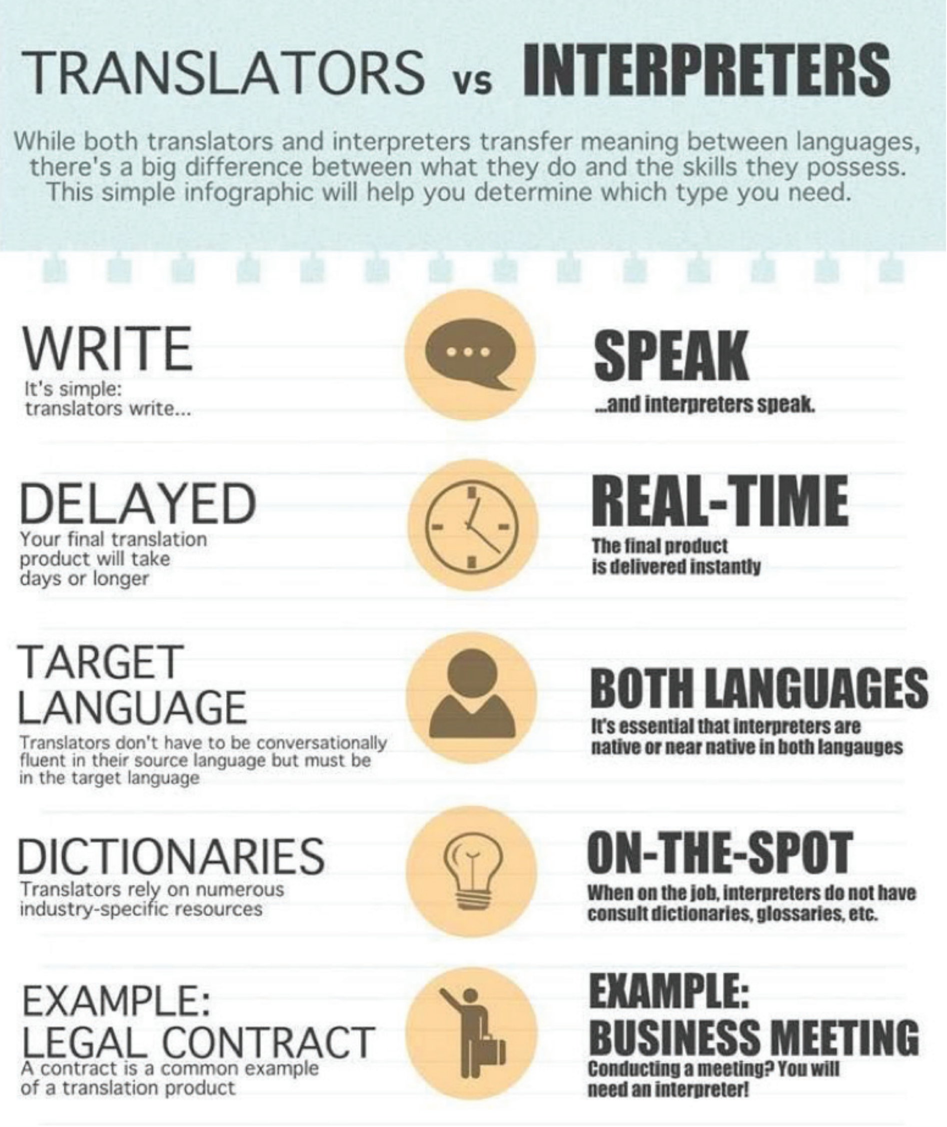
IMPORTANT TERMS AND WORDS

- Translation
- Interchangeably
- Professionals
- Rendering written text
- Signed message
- Skills

Many people use the two terms ***translation*** and ***interpretation*** interchangeably, which causes confusion among the public and the professionals, since there is a very clear difference between translation and interpretation.

The simplest way to differentiate between translation and interpretation is that translation means rendering written text materials from one language into another written form, while interpretation means rendering spoken or signed message from one language into another. Translation is written or typed. Interpretation is spoken or signed.

Many interpreters are not trained or qualified as translators, and many translators are not trained or qualified as interpreters. Interpreters and translators have a different set of skills.



TRANSLATORS vs **INTERPRETERS**

While both translators and interpreters transfer meaning between languages, there's a big difference between what they do and the skills they possess. This simple infographic will help you determine which type you need.

WRITE
It's simple: translators write...

SPEAK
...and interpreters speak.

DELAYED
Your final translation product will take days or longer

REAL-TIME
The final product is delivered instantly

TARGET LANGUAGE
Translators don't have to be conversationally fluent in their source language but must be in the target language

BOTH LANGUAGES
It's essential that interpreters are native or near native in both langauges

DICTIONARIES
Translators rely on numerous industry-specific resources

ON-THE-SPOT
When on the job, interpreters do not have consult dictionaries, glossaries, etc.

EXAMPLE: LEGAL CONTRACT
A contract is a common example of a translation product

EXAMPLE: BUSINESS MEETING
Conducting a meeting? You will need an interpreter!

3

SPECIALIZATIONS AND FIELDS OF INTERPRETING

LEARNING GOAL

After successful completion of the Specialization and Fields of interpreting section, participants will be able to do the following:

- Identify the specialization and fields of interpreting and describe the community interpreting field.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Using the above goals, participants should also be able to do the following upon successful completion of this section:

- Understand the differences between all of the Specialization and Fields of interpreting.
- Differentiate between the community interpreting field and other fields of interpreting.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND WORDS

- Specialization and Fields
- Communication
- Cultures
- Trade and diplomacy
- Conference interpreters
- Educational interpreting
- Conflict zone
- Diplomatic interpreting,
- Liaison interpreting,
- Business interpreting,
  Community interpreting
- Social service,
- Law enforcement
- Consecutive interpreting
- Modes of interpreting

Professionals in many fields need interpreters because language and communication across cultures is essential in many fields. In some fields such as trade and diplomacy, interpreting has been around for hundreds or thousands of years old. In others, such as manufacturing, interpreting is fairly new because the need in that sector is more recent.

Today in the United States, medical, legal, and conference interpreters are the most well-known interpreting fields (specializations). However, there are many others emerging, such as educational interpreting and conflict zone interpreting. In this section, we explore diplomatic interpreting, liaison interpreting, business interpreting, and community interpreting (social service, law enforcement, and educational interpreting).

First, diplomatic interpreting occurs at large, prestigious bodies such as the United Nations and at minor-level diplomatic encounters. Consecutive interpreting (where the interpreter waits for a party to stop speaking before interpreting) is common in this sector. Diplomatic interpreting often needs to focus on and accurately convey nuances in meaning, including evasive answers and delicately crafted statements. Unlike in some interpreting specializations, where interpreters work for two parties, diplomats sometimes have an interpreter for each party, for political or security reasons.

Similar to diplomatic interpreting, liaison interpreting requires great flexibility.

Liaison interpreters need to be able and willing to move from location to location through tours, visits, and travel. In liaison interpreting, interpreters often use different modes of interpreting. Accomplished interpreters may use mobile interpreting equipment.

Third, business interpreting is a wide field that includes many sub-specialties. Business interpreters may be on calls between engineers discussing car specifications, a supplier and manufacturer, a wholesaler and a retailer, or different departments of a multi-national company. Business interpreters need to constantly be aware of how to position themselves in conference rooms to properly hear, control the flow of the conversation when necessary, and ensure conditions for optimal interpreting. One particular challenge for business interpreters is maintaining transparency in meetings or conference calls with many speakers.

Lastly, community interpreting is a catch-all term that includes different areas such as social service, healthcare, law enforcement, and educational interpreting. Community interpreting is often a relatively comfortable place for some interpreters; however, it requires a lot of practice. Just as there is a wide range of settings in community interpreting, there is also a wide range of ethical pitfalls into which unwary interpreters may fall.

4

MODALITY OF INTERPRETING

LEARNING GOAL

After successful completion of the Modality of interpreting section, participants will be able to do the following:

- Identify the three different Modalities of interpreting and describe the differences between in-person, telephonically, and via video modalities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Using the above goals, participants should also be able to do the following upon successful completion of this section:

- Understand the differences between in-person, telephonic, and video remote interpreting modalities.
- Distinguish between all of the three different modalities.
- Easily differentiate between spoken and signed communication.
- Identify the best-known modality of interpretation (On-Site Interpretation).
- Understand the impact of COVID-19 on interpreting and the increase need for remote interpretation (OPI and VRI).
- Identify the differences between the OPI and VRI.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND WORDS

- Modality of Interpreting
- On-Site Interpretation
- face-to-face interpretation
- OPI
- VRI
- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Physical presence
- Telemedicine appointments
- LEP Limited English Proficient Patient
- Auditory interpretation
- COVID-19 Pandemic

Interpreting can happen in-person, telephonically, or via video, but it must involve spoken or signed communication. In the United States, the most common form of signed communication is American Sign Language (**ASL**) and the most commonly-interpreted language pair is Spanish<>English.

In-person, telephonic, and video-remote interpreting are collectively known as **modalities** of interpreting. The best-known modality of interpretation is On-Site Interpretation; this involves traveling to the location where the person needs assistance and providing face-to-face interpretation.

There are also remote modalities of interpretation that do not require the physical presence of either one or all parties, such as Video Remote Interpretation (VRI), Over the Phone Interpretation (OPI) and interpreting for Telemedicine appointments when the three parties (LEP, provider and interpreter) are in different locations. VRI is a method in which an interpreter works from a computer with a camera and interprets through the screen. OPI is similar, except the interpreter will only provide auditory interpretation rather than being seen or seeing the person who needs interpretation services.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a rise in the need and demand for remote interpreting modalities.