

# What language barrier?

Using a trained interpreter to communicate  
with non-English speakers

Refugee Health Study Day  
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# Outline

- Who is Interpreting NZ?
- Why use a trained interpreter?
- How do I know I need an interpreter?
- How do I work effectively with one?
- How do I monitor an interpreter's performance?
- How do I engage an interpreter?
- Q & A

# Who are we?

## Our Vision:

Aotearoa is free from language barriers

- We provide trained interpreters, assessed as competent
- 28 years in Wellington: not government-funded but charging fees, allowing us to keep investing in interpreter training.



# What do we do?

- Offer 24:7 services, including holidays, in more than 70 languages
- Onsite, telephone & video interpreting – around NZ & overseas
- Training courses & resources
  - aspiring interpreters
  - user agencies
  - trainees e.g. nurses, doctors, specialists in training
- Interpreter professional development – ongoing learning
- Aiming to professionalize the industry – working in close association with NZSTI



# Why use an interpreter?

- Relevant legislation:
  - New Zealand Bill of Rights Act (1990)
  - Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act (1992)
  - Human Rights Act (1993)
  - The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (1996, reviewed 2004)

**Code of  
Health  
and  
Disability  
Services  
Consumers'  
Rights**

**Right 5**

**Right to Effective Communication**

“Every consumer has the right to effective communication in a form, **language**, and manner that enables the consumer to understand the information provided. Where necessary and reasonably practicable, this includes the right to a **competent interpreter.**”

# Risks (cost) of not providing

**Health**

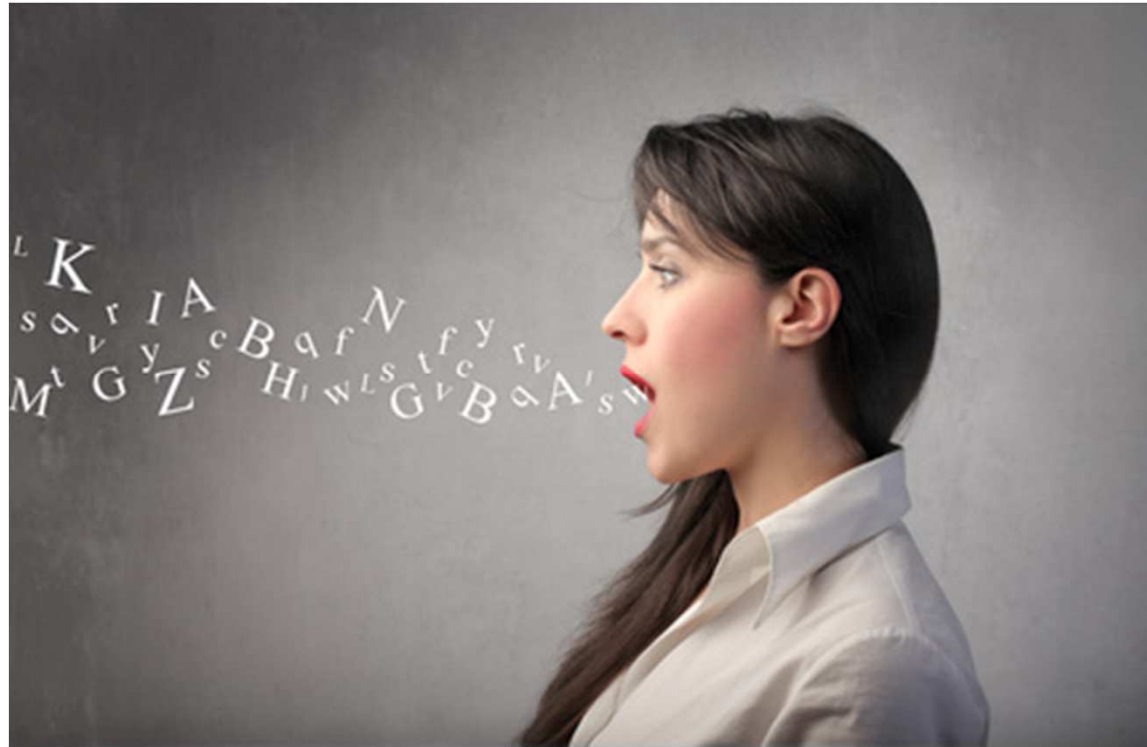
**Life**

**Reputation**

**Re-work**



# Can you do your job effectively?





# Why choose a trained interpreter?

Skills essential for interpreting include having a precise understanding of

- English and other language
- paralinguistic signals
- knowledge of topic
- context
- culture

# Why a trained interpreter?

## Non-linguistic considerations:

- Absolute impartiality; no conflict of interest
- Complete confidentiality
- Keeping the outcome and dynamics of the interview unchanged despite their presence
- A binding code of ethics and practice
- Cultural awareness

# INZ Interpreter Training

## Candidates should

- Have excellent command of English
- Have excellent command of other language
- English test
- Other language test
- Interview



# INZ Interpreter training cont.

- 50 hour course
  - Management
  - Specialised vocabulary
  - Note-taking, memory training
  - Ethical principles, role boundaries
- Oral assessment
  - Dialogue interpreting (live)
  - Sight interpreting

# Your preference?



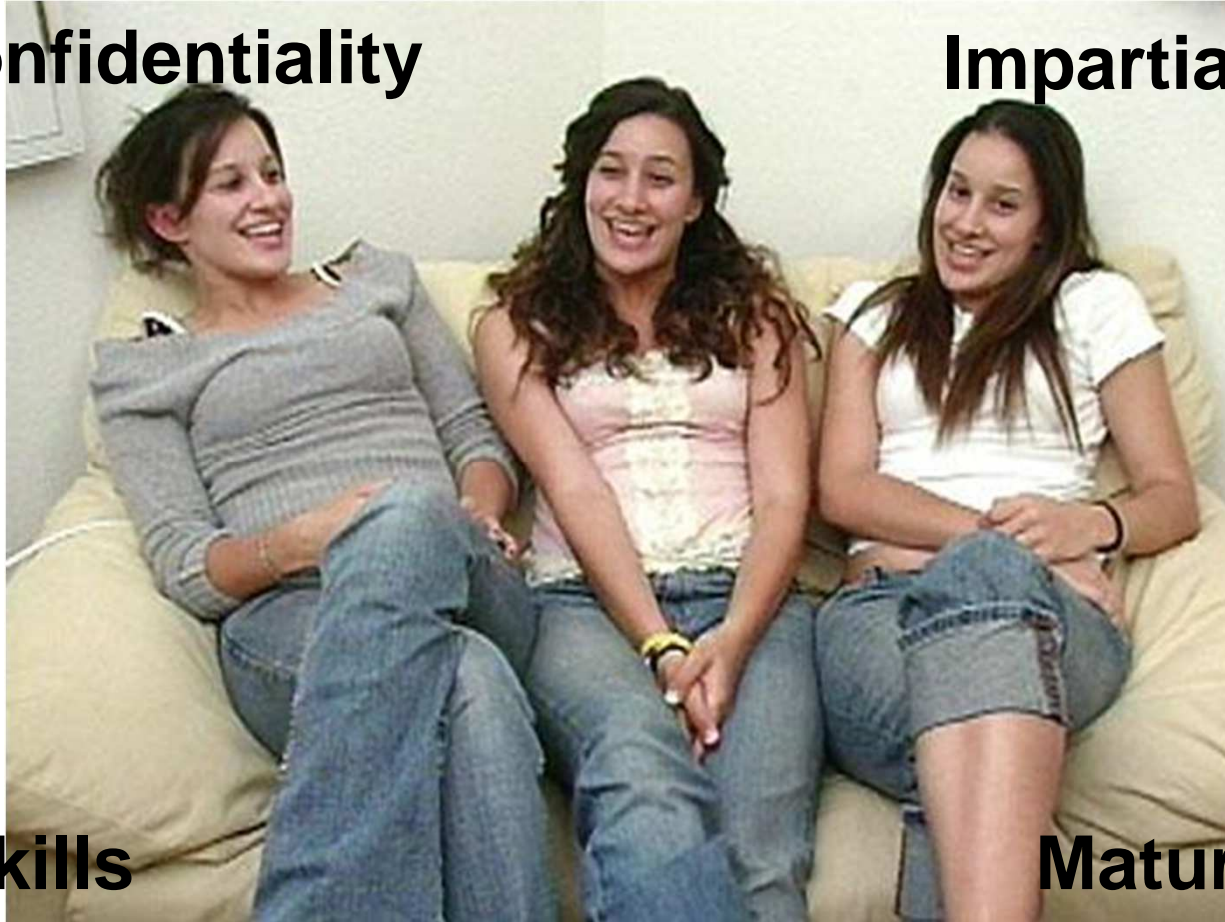
**Training is essential to ensure full and accurate transfer of message**



# Why not use family or friends?

**Confidentiality**

**Impartiality**



**Skills**

**Maturity**

# Is an interpreter needed?

- ***“DO... YOU... NEED... AN... INTERPRETER?”***
  - Does the client understand the question?
  - Over-estimating his/her own language skills
  - Under-estimating the demands of the situation
  - What if the client says ‘no’?
- Whose needs are we looking at?
- So YOU decide

# How do I use an interpreter?

The basics:

- Speak directly to the client as if the interpreter is not there
- Speak clearly and unhurriedly
- Take turns to speak
- Pause every couple of sentences
- Wait until the interpreter has finished before continuing





# Phone interpreting tips

- Tell the interpreter exactly who is in the room with you
- Use a speaker phone so all can hear everything
- Stay within range of the microphone
- Be careful when pointing or using hand gestures - tell the interpreter the details
- Use a video app for the audio if your phone is not great.

# Be aware of role boundaries

- Removing the language barrier their **only** role
- The interpreter will remain impartial, so
  - Avoid asking for comment or opinion
  - Avoid engaging in personal conversation
- Maintain control – check the client's understanding yourself
- Everything said will be interpreted – don't ask interpreter to summarize or report

# Bad signs

- The interpreter giving personal opinion, advice or information
- The interpreter taking sides
- The interpreter taking control
- The interpreter making decisions for the parties
- The interpreter having unreported side conversations with the parties

# Staying in control

- Interpreted message much shorter/longer than the original:
  - Ask what has been omitted/added
- Interpreter having unreported side conversation with client:
  - Ask what it is about
- Interpreter answering on behalf of client:
  - Tell him/her to interpret the question and the answer
- Interpreter giving unsolicited information or opinion:
  - Tell interpreter to keep to interpreting

# Useful indicators - language

- The interpreter using direct speech
- The interpreter using idiomatic English
- The message in target language is not extraordinarily longer/shorter than in source language

# Useful indicators – the client

- Responses relevant and meaningful
- Smooth flow of information in both directions
- No indication of puzzlement or confusion
- Emotion/body language matching the message

# Good signs

The interpreter

- takes note of dates, numbers, lengthy statements etc.
- asks for repetition/clarification
- reports side conversations to both parties
- alerts the conversing parties to possible miscommunication due to cultural differences

# Working with interpreters

<http://otago.ac.nz/working-with-interpreters>

Working with Interpreters for Primary Care Practitioners

An eLearning Module

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# To engage an interpreter

Phone 0508 468 377 any time

E-mail [request@interpret.org.nz](mailto:request@interpret.org.nz)

Book online: [www.interpret.org.nz](http://www.interpret.org.nz)

Always phone if it's urgent

