



# INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION:

Power Tools for  
Sharing Power in  
Grassroots Leadership  
Development

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## INTRODUCTION

This piece is intended to document El Centro Hispano's experience using interpretation and translation as tools for grassroots leadership development among the Latino community in Durham, North Carolina. It reviews the history and context of our work with the grassroots Latino community, and explains the parallel development of our understanding of:

- a) Latino leadership development,
- b) cross-race community work, and
- c) the impact of language on both.

What is presented is a picture of what we have learned thus far; our understanding and skills are works in progress. We invite folks to take what is useful, and to provide us with feedback from other experiences.

## OUR CULTURAL CONTEXT

The experiences documented in this writing speak from the context within which El Centro Hispano has operated, and it is worth noting that our context is not representative of the entire spectrum of cross-race and cross-language communities that exist in the USA and the world.

Our learning process has involved mostly the following folks:

1. Non-USA-born, recent immigrant, Latino Spanish-speakers who usually do not also speak English
2. USA-born, Southern, African-American English-speakers who usually do not also speak Spanish
3. USA-born, Southern, white English-speakers who usually do not also speak Spanish

Bearing in mind these folks in our story, and our primary focus on work between English->Spanish in the Southern USA, we hope

nevertheless that the learnings we can share will be adaptable to cultural contexts beyond our own experience.

## OVERVIEW OF EL CENTRO HISPANO

El Centro Hispano (ECH, or "El Centro") began in 1992 as a joint project between the Episcopal and Catholic churches in Durham, North Carolina, with the aim to minister to the small Latino community there. The project focused on ESL, tutoring, a women's sewing group, and cultural festivities. In 1995, the local Catholic Social Ministries obtained an Americorps intern position to work with the project. In 1996, two more Americorps volunteers joined the first one and the ESL teacher, and this group began working to make El Centro Hispano an independent community center with a mission for social change.

In 1997, El Centro Hispano obtained independent 501(c)(3) non-profit status, and began to expand. Today, programs include:

- > El Café de Mujeres—a women's leadership development program,
- > Hablemos de Nuestra Salud—a women's health education program,
- > Jóvenes Líderes en Acción—a youth leadership development group,
- > Proyecto LIFE—an HIV/STD education and prevention program,
- > Information and Referral Center, including immigration and legal referrals,
- > Education programs of ESL, GED in Spanish, small business courses, etc.
- > Translation and interpretation assistance for area organizations,
- > And a variety of other collaborative activities with other community organizations.

The Latino population in Durham has grown from a small number of families in 1992, to its current level of 17,000+, as reported in the 2000 census. This change represents a 729.6% increase in the Durham County Latino population from 1990 to 2000. This figure

indicates the level of North Carolina's Latino population growth across the state, considering that of the top 10 counties of Latino growth in the country, four of them are located in North Carolina.

Accordingly, El Centro Hispano has expanded its base to reflect the growing Latino community in Durham. In 1999, the center became a membership-based organization, anticipating up to 1,500 members. At the end of 2002, the membership has grown to over 6,000, working with a staff of approximately 14 people, at least 12 of them from the Latino community.

## WHY LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT AT EL CENTRO HISPANO

El Centro Hispano's mission is to strengthen the Latino community through leadership development, educational programs and collaboration with other local organizations. Our constituents are primarily Spanish-speakers, although Durham is rich with the presence of indigenous languages from Latin America, as well.

**A COMMUNITY'S STRENGTH DEPENDS IN LARGE PART ON THE STRENGTH OF ITS CULTURE, AND LANGUAGE IS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF ONE'S CULTURE, BOTH IN TERMS OF CULTURAL TRANSMISSION AND REGENERATION.**

For El Centro Hispano to successfully complete its mission, the daily work of office activities, programs, relationship building, and leadership development must be done in Spanish. And so it is: all of our staff meetings, community gatherings, trainings, forums, workshops, written documentation, etc, are all carried out in Spanish. This allows our community members to fully participate in the Centro that belongs to them, and to take on leadership roles in ways that preserve and respect their cultural life. While we believe that knowing English is very helpful for navigating life in the USA, we firmly believe that speaking English should not be a prerequisite for being a leader.

However, El Centro Hispano also operates in the larger context of Durham, North Carolina, the South, and the USA, all of which have a predominance of English-speakers. Our constituents have to negotiate their daily life through English-speaking surroundings, and it is part of our mission to collaborate with other organizations in community activities, the majority of them English-speaking. So how do we successfully honor the cultures of the Spanish-speaking leaders of our El Centro context within the English-speaking context that surrounds them?

Like many organizations with a similar quandary, we looked to translation and interpretation to resolve the conflict. Interpretation and translation are tools of cross-language and cross-race work. We quickly learned, however, that translation and interpretation are tools that can be wielded to achieve different political goals. They can be used to maintain the status quo of power and privilege between peoples or they can be used to transform race relationships and empower marginalized groups.

We have gone through a learning process in cross-language and cross-race grassroots leadership development (GLD) that began in 1995 and continues today, as we approach the beginning of 2003. The way in which we have used interpretation and translation at various points in our GLD work is reflective of our own learning about grassroots power and cross-race work. We would like to review the five types of interpreting and translating tools that we have used (and still use today), discuss what we have learned from each, their respective advantages and disadvantages for grassroots leadership development, and comment on how we think they are best applied in cross-race work.

**TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION ARE TOOLS THAT CAN BE WIELDED TO ACHIEVE DIFFERENT POLITICAL GOALS. THEY CAN BE USED TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO OF POWER AND PRIVILEGE BETWEEN PEOPLES OR THEY CAN BE USED TO TRANSFORM RACE RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWER MARGINALIZED GROUPS.**

It is important to emphasize that the interpreting and translating that we will discuss is limited to our own experiences with language issues in grassroots leadership development. There is a wealth of knowledge available regarding numerous other kinds of interpretation for different endeavors (medical, legal, diplomatic, governmental, business, religious, etc). It is hoped that reading about our experiences with interpreting and translating will encourage folks to explore on their own this vast field of study on cross-language strategies, and thus increase popular awareness and enthusiasm about moving beyond “language barriers.”

The five kinds of interpreting and translating that El Centro has used in grassroots leadership development are:

- > **INTERPRETER ADVOCACY:** Individual bilingual volunteers assisting individual Spanish-speakers to navigate service agencies, community meetings, etc. (*also referred to as Community Interpreting*)

- > **CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION:** Using bilingual volunteers or professional interpreters to interpret by repeating the interpretation “out loud,” in little pauses after each speaker.

- > **SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION:** Using special audio equipment (microphone and headsets) that allows interpreters to interpret meetings at the same time as the speakers were talking, without interrupting the flow of the discussion.

- > *one-way interpretation (passive)*—interpreting simultaneously only into Spanish, and then ‘consecutively’ when needed into English

- > *bi-directional interpretation (interactive)*—interpreting simultaneously into both Spanish and English with everybody wearing special headsets; a simpler version of how the United Nations handles language in their assemblies

- > **COMPREHENSIVE WRITTEN TRANSLATION:** conscientiously analyzing all the written components that go with a program or event, and producing each document fully in both English and Spanish, in writing that is culturally inclusive

of all targeted readers. Intentionally producing both English documents that are translated into Spanish, and Spanish documents that are translated into English.

- > **MULTILINGUAL SPACE:** Combining bi-directional simultaneous interpreting with comprehensive document translation and multilingual facilitation, in order to integrate cross-race efforts in English and Spanish, shifting power away from traditionally dominant cultural norms in the USA, and intentionally using language to collectively build political analysis and cross-race allies among grassroots leaders.

**IT IS HOPED THAT READING ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCES WITH INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING WILL ENCOURAGE FOLKS TO EXPLORE ON THEIR OWN THIS VAST FIELD OF STUDY ON CROSS-LANGUAGE STRATEGIES, AND THUS INCREASE POPULAR AWARENESS AND ENTHUSIASM ABOUT MOVING BEYOND “LANGUAGE BARRIERS.”**

We have reviewed each of the above language tools from the following angles:

- > how it works
- > the resources it requires
- > the upside
- > the downside
- > its contribution to leadership development
- > when it’s OK to use

While it is true that we relied on different language tools more heavily in different stages of our learning, it is important to note that each one of them has its place in cross-language work, and we continue to use each kind of language tool today, but with a greater consciousness of when it is appropriate and how to use it to maximize leadership development potential.

## INTERPRETER ADVOCACY

In the beginning of El Centro Hispano's activities, there was a big need to provide language assistance on an individual basis. Few community services or groups had bilingual staff, and Spanish-speaking community members needed help navigating many basic community activities, such as getting a doctor's appointment, enrolling their children in school, calling to initiate phone service in a new house, etc. We began doing what we called Interpreter Advocacy.

### > HOW IT WORKS

To address recurrent language needs, we would call on anyone who was bilingual and send them with our community members to assist in interpreting whatever needed getting done. Then, as now, we often organized students in the universities to help out as part of their service learning programs.

Volunteer interpreter advocates usually had (and still have) set hours that they are at El Centro Hispano and help individual community members make phone calls, troubleshoot problems they are having with a variety of consumer issues (housing, insurance, health, employment, education, etc). In the days when there were few bilingual employees in many places, the volunteer interpreter-advocates frequently had to speak to the agency on behalf of the community member, and oftentimes really advocate for their situation.

It is much more common in recent years that an interpreter-advocate's job will be to help community members find the resources on their own, and encourage them to make calls on their own, given the many agencies that now have bilingual staff with whom they can deal directly. The advocate steps back into a support role, doing less interpreting and more helping folks orient themselves to a new local system, and strategize how to get their needs met in it. They step in as interpreters only when communication breaks down, and as advocates only when it is clear that the Latino community

member is being mistreated by the agency s/he is dealing with.

### > THE RESOURCES IT REQUIRES

Interpreter advocacy requires very little in terms of financial resources. You need bilingual folks with the desire to help the community, time to volunteer, solid knowledge of the local area (or a willingness to learn about it), and hopefully reliable transportation.

Since most of the interpreter advocates work as volunteers, an organization that works with them would do well to have the resources to coordinate, train, and appreciate volunteers. It is especially important to train interpreter volunteers to carry out their tasks in ways that reflect the mission of the organization. In the case of El Centro Hispano, this has meant spending time with volunteers orienting them to our goals and methods in Latino leadership development.

**AND SINCE MANY OF OUR INTERPRETER ADVOCATES ARE NOT FROM THE LATINO COMMUNITY ITSELF, WE SPEND TIME TALKING WITH THEM ABOUT THEIR ROLE AS ALLIES IN LATINO SELF-EMPOWERMENT, RATHER THAN "DOING FOR THE COMMUNITY WHAT IT CAN DO FOR ITSELF."**

### > THE UPSIDE

Interpreter advocacy is very helpful in handling individual life situations, building one-on-one trust with community members, and keeping the organization's pulse on what are the pressing issues being faced by the community. Interpreter-advocate volunteers still work in El Centro Hispano's Information and Referral Center, and keep track of the community problems that folks are seeking help with. This kind of combination of service, relationship building, and documentation has provided the groundwork for various successful community driven campaigns that have resulted in: increased bilingual 911 operators and police officers, improved bilingual service at the local Department of Social Services, improved customer service at the local Departments of Motor Vehicles, and



the establishment of the Latino Community Credit Union. Thus, interpreter advocacy can provide the fodder from which Latino grassroots leaders can take collective action.

> **THE DOWNSIDE**

Although interpreter advocacy helps indirectly build community strength, it is not really a central pillar of strategic leadership development, nor of building a broad base of politically conscious Latino grassroots leaders. As was the case initially with El Centro Hispano, many interpreter advocacy efforts have no consciousness of:

- > the power/control that the interpreters can assume or be thrust into involuntarily, nor
- > the content or quality of the interpreter's verbal transfers, nor of
- > whether this kind of interpreting was building up any leadership / cross-cultural skills on the part of the Spanish-speakers or the English-speakers they dealt with.

**OFTENTIMES VOLUNTEER INTERPRETERS DO NOT GET TRAINED IN THEIR ROLE AS INTERPRETERS, AND FREQUENTLY INTERRUPT, JOIN IN THE CONVERSATION AS A PARTICIPANT, OR FEEL FREE TO MODIFY MESSAGE CONTENT, OR EVEN SPEAK FOR THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS THEMSELVES.**

This puts the interpreters in control of the communication and relationship building—folks will tend to develop a relationship with the interpreter rather than with the person that they were trying to talk to via the interpreter. It also does little to help Spanish-speakers use their cross-cultural encounter as an opportunity for leadership, empowerment, or skills building.

> **ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Initially, El Centro Hispano had not thought at all about the possibility that the way in which we were interpreting for potential leaders impacted the kinds of relations and power dynamics already inherent in their cross-cultural encounter. By this we mean that in the USA, a person who speaks English is given an advantage over a person who does not. Recent immigrant Latinos who do not speak English are more vulnerable compared to other English-speaking residents, something that is further exacerbated by limitations in local cultural orientation and residency rights. Dynamics of social power and racist oppression are structured against them.

By not thinking about this, interpreter advocacy could merely replicate the social oppressions that already exist, which usually oppress and exclude recent immigrant Latinos. This means missed opportunities to use language-crossing in any way that might transform the situation or the relationships between the people being interpreted for, or help the different parties learn from each other and build ally relationships between them.

Although we now work hard to train and raise the political consciousness of our interpreter advocate volunteers, we do not depend on Interpreter Advocacy as grassroots leadership tool by itself; its contribution is more indirect by providing the individual service and support that new leaders may need in order to get started.

**INTERPRETER ADVOCACY CAN PROVIDE THE FODDER FROM WHICH LATINO GRASSROOTS LEADERS CAN TAKE COLLECTIVE ACTION.**

> **WHEN IT'S OK TO USE**

Today, we feel that interpreter advocacy is best used as “service-with-empowerment-in-mind,” as is done in El Centro’s Information and Referral Center. In El Centro’s case, our understanding of leadership development now informs how we approach service activities, and we also use

interpreter advocacy, to the extent possible, as an opportunity to coach and encourage Latino leaders to speak up for themselves in spite of language barriers.

## CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION

As El Centro Hispano grew and began organizing larger community forums with English and Spanish-speaking participants, we had to get more organized in our interpreting: we had to designate a specific person to do interpreting and nothing else (no facilitating, no note taking, no participating). We started using consecutive interpreting in group meetings, and with it, we also began to pay more attention to how interpreting could impact Latino power and voice.

### > HOW IT WORKS

In consecutive interpreting, also called sequential or “side-by-side” interpreting, the speakers talk for a short chunk and then pause for the interpreters to interpret the chunk, and so alternate back and forth. Because our grassroots leaders were speaking up in public in these events, the need to honor the integrity of their voices and messages became more evident, and thus more was at stake in the quality of the language transfer.

To make consecutive interpreting work, the interpreters have to take very seriously their charge to fully render the speaker’s message and remove themselves and their participation from the discussion. Consecutive interpreters will always speak in first person when interpreting, and in third person in those moments when they need to speak for themselves. An example of this might sound like:

**SPEAKER: “AS MAYOR OF DURHAM, I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TONIGHT.”**

**INTERPRETER (IN SPANISH): “AS MAYOR OF DURHAM, I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TONIGHT.”**

**SPEAKER: “I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RECOGNIZE MS. (NAME UNCLEAR) FOR HER ASSISTANCE.”**

**INTERPRETER: “INTERPRETER DID NOT CATCH THE NAME AND ASKS FOR REPETITION PLEASE.”**

**SPEAKER: “I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RECOGNIZE MS. WORTHROP-ARTEAGA FOR HER ASSISTANCE.”**

**AND SO ON.**

Hopefully however, in an interpreted situation, everyone will make the extra effort to speak loud and clear, to avoid causing the Interpreter to ask folks to repeat themselves.

Furthermore, if a speech is being interpreted, the presenter and the interpreter should check in with each other, and hopefully do a quick rehearsal of their rhythm in switching off Speaking/Interpreting. If possible, they can also plan in advance where the pauses between them will be. This way the interpreted speech can be presented as smooth and tight, keeping everyone engaged and included the whole time.

Regardless of the specific situation, consecutive interpreters should have a very high attention to detail and a near photographic memory, one that can retain what they hear and render it fully into the other language after a few moments of listening. To manage the flow of interpreted discussion, they need to be able to be on top of who speaks when, without turning into a moderator or otherwise dominating the space.

### > THE RESOURCES IT REQUIRES

Consecutive interpreting doesn’t require much in the way of physical resources—no special audio interpreting equipment. It does require folks who are experienced at consecutive interpreting and managing a discussion flow that moves forward in chunks.



These interpreters may serve a community organization as volunteers, or they may charge for their services. However, if an interpreter is at the level where they charge for their services, they will more likely recommend using simultaneous interpreting for a workshop or other gathering, instead of consecutive interpreting (*see next section*).

> **THE UPSIDE**

Consecutive interpreting offers the following advantages:

- > Everyone is able to participate more, in their language of choice
- > Both languages are more equally represented in the discussion
- > Spanish is brought to the table as a language on equal footing with English

Furthermore, consecutive interpreting is advantageous in that it requires no special equipment, and it can accommodate any number of participants.

> **THE DOWNSIDE**

Consecutive interpreting for group settings also has certain disadvantages, such as:

- > Repeating every comment sequentially makes the process take twice as long
- > It is tricky to get into a rhythm between speaker and interpreter, so that neither one speaks too long or too short, flow of discussion is often choppy
- > Participants usually listen when their language is being spoken, and may disengage when the other language is being spoken
- > Participants tend to look at the interpreter and not at each other, still building relationships with the interpreter and not with each other
- > Its still very easy for the interpreter to “take control” of the meeting, basically assuming the role of speaker/moderator and sidelining the people who they are interpreting for

> **ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Consecutive Interpreting, when used well, allows Spanish-speaking Latino leaders to speak up publicly, and have their voices heard in the public space before a non-Spanish-speaking audience. For many grassroots leaders who have recently immigrated to the Southern USA, they may be speaking publicly here for the first time, which can be very empowering.

Consecutive interpreting can allow a group to share power and responsibility among the participants; everyone gets to speak up in the language of their choice, and everyone has to wait for the interpreter in order to hear or be heard. Folks across race and culture have at least in common that the choppy stop-start discussion is equally inconvenient to everyone. On the flip side, however, both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking grassroots leaders are building some level of cross-cultural and cross-language competence by communicating via consecutive interpreting.

Its best contribution, however, comes when consecutive interpreting is used appropriately: it is best for public speeches, and communications that are short. To try and use consecutive interpreting for a day-long leadership workshop would be counterproductive, and could easily give grassroots leaders a negative attitude toward cross-language work.

> **WHEN IT'S OK TO USE**

In our experience, consecutive interpreting is most useful with very big crowds and for limited periods of time, hopefully not more than 5-10 minutes. It is best for speeches to an audience rather than for a more intimate interactive discussion. (It is worth mentioning that, while we have relied on consecutive interpreting only for large groups, it remains the standard form of interpretation used for other one-to-one interactions, especially medical interpreting between provider and patient.)

**EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING:**

Durham CAN (Congregations, Associations, and Neighborhoods), a local organization founded through the IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation) and of which El Centro Hispano is a member, uses consecutive interpreting for public speeches made in Spanish during its general assemblies. The assemblies usually have ~300 people in attendance, with about 100 of them Spanish-speakers. In Durham CAN’s commitment to operate multilingually, they always have part of the agenda presented in Spanish and part in English. During the English-led sections, El Centro Hispano uses simultaneous interpretation to interpret into Spanish. But when the agenda is led in Spanish, we have a consecutive interpreter at the podium with the speakers. The interpreters and the Spanish-language presenters always rehearse in advance their language switching, so that the section with consecutive interpreting is as polished as possible.

## **SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION**

In the summer of 1998, the Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network (REJN) asked El Centro Hispano to help interpret a conference that they were holding. We arrived and they handed us microphone-transmitter and receivers with headphones and said: “Now talk at the same time that the speakers are talking.” Cross-language work for El Centro Hispano was never the same again; we had been introduced to Simultaneous Interpreting. We were most grateful for the guidance of a colleague from Tlatolli Ollin, an interpreter collective based out of Mexico City, who was able to coach us through the nuances of simultaneous interpreting work.

**> HOW IT WORKS**

Simultaneous interpreting is not rocket science, but it is a good bit more complicated to coordinate than the other forms of interpreting previously discussed. We will discuss simultaneous interpreting in much greater detail than the

previous language tools, because for us it has had the most positive impact on Latino grassroots leadership development. In a nutshell it works like this:

In a group event with both English and Spanish speaking participants, those folks who don’t understand the language of the program are given small walkman style “receivers” –plastic, electronic boxes that are about the size of a deck of cards, which has a volume control, sometimes a channel control, and headphones. Then there are two interpreters who have a transmitter with microphone. Those North Carolina organizations that own interpreting equipment tend to use portable transmitters that are also about the size of a deck of cards. They are also battery operated as opposed to a wall plug-in type. (although wall lug-in types are also available)

The transmitter has a microphone (either hand-held or the kind that fits over the head like telemarketers wear) and the interpreters speak quietly into the microphone, and their voice is heard

through the receiver-headphones worn by the folks who need interpretation. The interpreter’s job is to completely repeat the message of the talkers

in the group, rendering it into the language of the listeners, and to do so at the same time that the speakers are talking. Simultaneous interpreting has virtually no delay (not more than 2–4 seconds) in getting the message from one language to into the other. The speakers do not pause to wait for the interpreter, nor do they alternate turns talking between speaker and interpreter, as is done in consecutive interpreting.

The interpreter must listen to the speaker’s talking in English, process what they are saying, and re-utter it in Spanish all at the same

**FOR A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FOR SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING, PLEASE SEE: BULLETIN 3: EQUIPMENT, LOGISTICS & AFFORDABLE STRATEGIES FOR BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL MEETINGS BY THE JEFFERSON CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.**

time. This is an intense, mental multi-tasking job that requires very high levels of mental concentration on the part of the interpreter. In order to give the interpreters a mental break and a chance to rest their jaw muscles from the constant talking, they work in pairs and alternate turns about every 20-30 minutes. Simultaneous interpreters must have special skills to work “simultaneously”—it is not enough to simply be bilingual.

**> THE RESOURCES IT REQUIRES**

It is clear that specially skilled simultaneous interpreters are required to make this language tool work. Most simultaneous interpreters will work on contract for a fee—details about pricing budgets for simultaneous interpreting will be reviewed later on.

Simultaneous interpreting also requires the aforementioned audio equipment with transmitters and receivers. These may be purchased, rented, or borrowed, and many times simultaneous interpreters will provide them as a part of their contract. When using the equipment, the organizers will need to arrange a table to put it on. A seemingly small detail, until you find yourself spreading electronic equipment all over the meeting room floor.

To organize simultaneous interpreting for an event, another essential resource is time. It simply will not work to plan a workshop and try and tack on interpreting at the last minute. Good interpreters will want to be contacted at the beginning of the planning, so that they will have time to discuss with the organizers the special arrangements needed in a multilingual setting.

**HOWEVER, THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO TAME A DRAGON ~ (AND THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO DO SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING)**

We would like to continue discussion of simultaneous interpreting by analyzing the two distinct ways in which it has been done at El Centro Hispano (although there are many more ways to do it, especially when working with 3+ languages in the mix). We have done simultaneous interpreting both in the passive, one-direction mode (English>Spanish only), and the more inter-active, bi-directional mode (switching directions back and forth English<>Spanish). Each mode carries certain values and outcomes for grassroots leadership development, and so are worth examining separately.

## **ONE-WAY SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING (PASSIVE)**

**> HOW IT WORKS**

The same as the above description for simultaneous interpreting in general, but listening receivers are only given to the Spanish-speakers, who in our context, have tended to be fewer in number than the English-speakers. Simultaneous interpreting is provided only from English>Spanish, and should a Spanish-speaker wish to talk, then the interpreters change to consecutive interpreting, repeating “out loud” after the Spanish-speaker.

**> THE RESOURCES IT REQUIRES**

Same as for simultaneous interpreting in general.

**> THE UPSIDE**

Passive, one-way simultaneous interpreting does not have the advantages that bi-directional interpreting does. It is best only as a last resort when there are not enough listening receivers to hand out to all the folks in the group, or when there are so few Spanish-speakers in relation to English-speakers (for instance a ratio of 1 Spanish-speaker for every 20 English-speakers) that trying to get the majority of English-speakers to use bi-directional simultaneous is not going to fly.

**> THE DOWNSIDE**

Giving interpreting headphones to the Spanish-speakers allows them to listen to everything passively, but doesn't really allow them to speak up and join in the discussions in a spontaneous way. When Latino leaders want to say something in Spanish to the group, they have to stop the discussion flow, and the interpreters turn off the microphone and interpret for them using the awkward, choppy consecutive interpreting mode. Even with interpreters who have the skills to make consecutive interpreting as smooth as possible, this method keeps the Latino leaders from really integrating into the group as a participant, bonding equally with everyone else.

Using passive, one-way simultaneous interpreting constructs a dynamic where the Latino leaders are seen by the other participants as passive listeners, rarely speaking up and connecting with the rest of the group. This is especially evident in workshops and gatherings that result in participants bonding with each other, joking and laughing. The Spanish-speaking leaders may laugh at the jokes translated to them, but the rest of the group never gets to really experience the special social and cultural contributions that the Spanish-speaking participants have to share, because to share it via disruptive consecutive interpreting is many times too intimidating for folks who may already feel like 'strangers in a strange land.'

**> ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

One-way, passive simultaneous interpreting does allow Spanish-speaking leaders to have some access to growth and training opportunities, which is a positive contribution. But it is, as mentioned, limited in its ability to fully integrate Spanish-speaking leaders into the larger grassroots leadership forum.

In addition, the passive simultaneous interpreting does not involve the English-speakers in any dynamic way. While participating in Spanish in an English-based group greatly challenges newcomer Latinos to take risks in a

cultural setting outside their own comfort zone, using passive simultaneous interpreting does little to engage English-speakers in new cross-cultural ground: the Spanish-speakers don't feel encouraged to speak up too much, and when they do, the English-speakers will still more likely connect with the interpreter doing consecutive interpreting, and not the Spanish-speaker doing the talking.

With passive simultaneous interpreting, the presence of Spanish-speakers doesn't tend to challenge the social structure or dynamic in the group, as the Latino leaders will often appear to be quiet folks sitting together at one side of the room, grateful to be invited but in no way affecting the way in which the group operates. The style and tone of facilitation, the content, and cultural references in the discussion do not incorporate Latino cultural norms or customs. Thus, passive simultaneous interpreting denies the English-speaking grassroots leaders opportunities to develop their own cross-cultural skills outside of dominant USA cultures.

**> WHEN IT'S OK TO USE (SEE THE UPSIDE)**

However, even if one-way simultaneous interpreting is the only option available, both English and Spanish speakers will be able to develop cross-language skills and confidence over time. One good example of this is the Organizational Diversity Cluster of the Babcock Organizational Development grantees in the 1999-2001 Grassroots Leadership Development Institute. This cluster had mixed Spanish and English speaking participants, and in its regular meetings always used passive simultaneous interpreting from El Centro Hispano.

We did not notice how savvy and comfortable the English-speakers had become with interpreting until we went to a gathering that included grantees from all the clusters: the English-speaking participants from the other clusters demonstrated some confusion and wariness when exposed to simultaneous interpreting; but the English-speaking participants from the Organizational Diversity cluster

were all completely at ease and had markedly stronger relationships with the Spanish-speakers, and markedly higher levels of cross-cultural awareness and competence. Not only did the English-speaking participants gain these skills over time, with time the Spanish-speaking leaders also developed confidence to speak out via consecutive interpreting and not worry about interrupting anything. A key factor in this success can be attributed to the fact that, in addition to being repeatedly exposed to interpreted gatherings, the same participants regularly met throughout the program, and were also well facilitated in their cross-cultural bonding and relationship-building process.

## BI-DIRECTIONAL SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING (INTERACTIVE)

### > HOW IT WORKS

The same as the description for simultaneous interpreting in general, but listening receivers are given to everyone in the room who is not fully bilingual in both English and Spanish.

The interpreters then change the direction of the interpretation (English>Spanish or Spanish>English) based on whatever language a speaker is using at a given moment. If a speaker is talking in the language that you understand, you listen to them directly. If they are speaking in the language that you do not understand, you listen to the interpretation on the headsets that you have on.

In El Centro's case, the same interpreters almost always switch between English and Spanish, using the same channel. It is possible to arrange bi-directional interpreting such that one interpreter works English>Spanish on one channel, and a separate interpreter works Spanish>English on a different channel. Then folks tune their receivers to the channel that has the language they need. However, this level of complexity has proven beyond the needs and resources of El Centro Hispano. We just put everybody on the same channel, the interpreter

switches languages back and forth on that channel, and folks listen or not as they need.

### > THE RESOURCES IT REQUIRES

Same as for simultaneous interpreting in general. However, it is important to make sure that the interpreters will be able to switch back and forth seamlessly between English and Spanish.

### > THE UPSIDE

The majority of the advantages in bi-directional simultaneous interpreting are found in its contribution to leadership development, discussed below. But from a technical standpoint, bi-directional simultaneous has the following benefits:

- > Virtually no "translation lag time," no matter what language is being spoken
- > Spanish-speakers are free to join in spontaneously like everyone else
- > There's no overtone that Spanish is a "handicap"
- > Participants look each other in the eye, bonding with each other and not the interpreter

### > THE DOWNSIDE

While simultaneous interpreting keeps everyone in the loop of the conversation at the same time, it does require paying a bit more attention to what's going on. Simultaneous interpreting implies that two folks are always talking at the same time (the speaker and the interpreter); the listener has to decide whom to listen to, and filter out the other voice when not needed. It can also be uncomfortable for participants to wear earphones all day long, mentally connecting the voice in your ear with the face talking in front of you. This requires more concentration, less zoning out, and the responsibility for staying engaged falls more directly on the participant's shoulders. Again, Spanish-speaking leaders at El Centro Hispano have been fully familiar with this higher level of responsibility for their engagement in the group, but it may be new for English-speakers. And we have experi-

enced some recalcitrance from some English-speakers on account of it.

Resistance from English-speakers has presented itself in various forms, from

- > flatly refusing to put on the earphones; to
- > frequently removing them and consistently being unprepared for when a Spanish-speaker wishes to talk; or
- > interrupting the interpreter to make her repeat everything because the participant wasn't listening or zoned out for a minute; or
- > interrupting the discussion because their receiver's battery got low (instead of quietly getting up and going to the designated battery-changing station in the room).

On the flipside, Spanish-speakers in the room may have the opposite problem, never speaking up for their needs at all. It is relatively common for a Spanish-speaker whose receiver battery has gone dead to continue to suffer in silence, not hearing any of the interpreting nor following any of the discussion, in order to avoid disturbing or interrupting anyone. The social or cultural basis for this is beyond the scope of this writing, however, it is important for organizers to keep an eye out for anyone with headphones who looks disoriented, in order to assist them with the equipment, or perhaps handle another issue that has gone unaddressed in the group.

**> ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Unlike the previously discussed types of interpreting, bi-directional interactive simultaneous offers real development opportunities for both immigrant Latino leaders and their fellow USA-born grassroots leaders.

**FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING LATINO LEADERS.** Bi-directional simultaneous interpreting basically eliminates the “language barrier” in a group settings, and frees Spanish-speakers to participate as spontaneously as English-speakers. Given the marginalization in the United States of folks who do

not speak English, this removal of the language barrier helps “de-stigmatize” speaking Spanish. When it is no longer seen as a “handicap” to participate in Spanish, then it is possible to feel proud of one’s culture and feel welcomed to share more.

In our experience, we have seen Latino leaders who had previously been exposed to cross-language workshops via passive one-way simultaneous—who really never said much in them—come into a gathering with bi-directional interpreting and just completely “come out of their shell” so to speak.

**PREVIOUSLY SILENT LATINO PARTICIPANTS WOULD BEGIN DEBATING ENGLISH-SPEAKERS, TELLING LONG STORIES ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES THAT MOVED ENGLISH-SPEAKERS TO TEARS, CRACKING FUNNY JOKES THAT HAD EVERYONE ROLLING ON THE FLOOR, AND OFFERING UP INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES THAT WERE RECEIVED WITH MANY A HEARTY “AMEN!” FROM ENGLISH-SPEAKERS WHO WERE LISTENING TO ALL THIS THROUGH HEADPHONES.**

**FOR USA-BORN GRASSROOTS LEADERS.** The resistance to bi-directional interpreting shown by USA-born English-speakers highlights the potential contribution to their leadership learning curve. In this country’s social and cultural context, most USA-born English-speakers are not often exposed to environments where English is not the dominant language. Not having everything happen in one’s own language is a phenomenon that new immigrants

are intimately familiar with, but is one that native English-speakers in the USA tend to be uncomfortable with.

For many USA-born English-speakers, it seemed only natural to interrupt the process if it wasn’t happening in the language that they

**IN OUR EXPERIENCE, ASKING THE ENGLISH-SPEAKERS TO PARTICIPATE BY LISTENING THROUGH INTERPRETING HEADPHONES HAS BROUGHT OUT THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH THEY HAVE INTERNALIZED A SENSE OF PRIVILEGE TO ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE AROUND THEM.**



were most comfortable with. Reflecting on this is in itself an experience in dismantling racism, examining internalized assumptions of privilege and exploring how one could assume that it's be possible to be “multicultural” without being asked to adjust or expand one’s sense of what feels “natural” and “comfortable.”

This process of reflection on cultural and racial hegemony has proven a powerful tool for USA-born grassroots leaders who wish to work collaboratively and respectfully with other cultural groups in their community. It has fostered cultural competence, with practical, on-the-ground experience for grassroots leaders, often times making them more culturally competent than any “world traveling expert.” And this cultural competence in turn provides the tools to honor the cultural wholeness of everyone in the experience, recent immigrant cultures and USA-grown cultural riches alike.

> **WHEN IT'S OK TO USE**

**WE BELIEVE THAT BI-DIRECTIONAL, INTERACTIVE INTERPRETING SHOULD BE USED WHENEVER POSSIBLE IN MULTILINGUAL SETTINGS.**

Because its strength lies in its ability to promote interaction and dialogue, it works best in groups that are small enough to facilitate such interaction—many would say that groups of less than 30 folks are ideal for this.

It is also best when there at least some balance between the numbers of English-speakers and the numbers of Spanish-speakers. No matter how engaging the group dynamic, it is never easy to be the only one there who is participating in another language. Ideally, any group wanting to use bi-directional interpreting would have at least a quarter or a third of the participants speaking Spanish, in order to fully feel and welcome their presence and language contribution.

**ONE-WAY SIMULTANEOUS**

- > Interpreter does simultaneous English into Spanish only.
- > Interpreters use consecutive interpreting when a Spanish speaker wishes to talk.
- > Only English-speakers participate in “real time.”

**BI-DIRECTIONAL SIMULTANEOUS**

- > Everyone who is not bilingual wears headphones.
- > Everyone participates in real time in the language of their choice.
- > Interpreter switches between English and Spanish.

## COMPREHENSIVE WRITTEN TRANSLATION

When talking about translation, it should be clear that we are talking about **written documents**, and not the verbal communication of interpreting. There are many different approaches to translation, but each of them addresses the need to render the written message

**TRANSLATION WORKS TO RENDER THE WRITTEN MESSAGE IN ONE LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER LANGUAGE, WITHOUT LOSING ANY OF ITS CONTENT, MEANING, OR INTENT.**

in one language into another language, without losing any of its content, meaning, or intent.

El Centro

Hispano has always had to deal with written message translation, as community members have always come by the offices to seek help understanding a letter they received in the mail, or that was sent home from school with their children. It seems that the written message is too often overlooked in planning activities meant to include recent immigrant Latino participants. In our experience, it is fairly common

**IT IS FAIRLY COMMON THAT THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE FULL TRAINING MANUALS AND PACKETS OF READING MATERIALS IN THEIR LANGUAGE, AND THE ONLY THING AVAILABLE FOR THE SPANISH-SPEAKERS IN THEIR LANGUAGE IS A COPY OF THE DRAFT AGENDA AND A ONE-PAGE SUMMARY OF THE REST OF THE MATERIALS.**

that the English-speaking participants receive full training manuals and packets of reading materials in their language, and the only thing available for the Spanish-speakers in their language is a copy of the

draft agenda and a one-page summary of the rest of the materials.

Other times, a flyer has been “translated into” Spanish (with no thought about its marketing appeal to Latino cultures), but nothing else has been prepared to receive Spanish-speaking participation: not the registration form, nor the evaluation form, nor any of the role play materials, nor the Power Point presentation, nor the flipchart write-ups nor any other

handouts. This gross oversight should provide insight for well-meaning but frustrated groups that have complained: “It seems Latinos just don’t want to participate with us.”

### > HOW IT WORKS

Comprehensive written translation is simply the idea of collecting every single document that is related to a program or event, and producing it in both English and Spanish (or in all the languages of the participants). It is what the United Nations does in the six official languages of its operations. It requires organizers to step back and analyze the whole collection of their materials, and plan a system for producing them in both languages.

Written translation is a tricky business; writing is usually so much more than just words. It is also tone, register (from local slang to high falutin’ academic talk to legalese to poetry, etc), aesthetic connotation, graphic layout, and style, all of which affect the end “take-home” message of the piece. Just as thoughtful organizations will carefully choose good writers to do their big jobs of grants, reports, letters, and other documentation, they should also choose with equal care the writers charged to translate each document into a different language. And just as thoughtful organizations will have a system for collaboration on the rough drafts and editing for their written work in one language, so should they have the same drafting and editing team-system set up for translation of documents into another language.

The process of figuring out which documents need translation can feel like an exercise in deductive reasoning. For example:

### **A GROUP WANTS TO DO A SURVEY AMONG ITS MEMBERS...**

- 1) The survey must be written in Spanish as well as English.
- 2) It comes with a cover letter that must also be translated.
- 3) When the surveys come back in, the Spanish responses will need translating back into English for the whole staff to review.

4) If the surveys are compiled into a report that goes back out to the respondents, then the report must also be produced in English and Spanish.

Figuring out where translation is needed in each step of the program is not only good for cross-language work, it supports good planning in general.

**EXAMPLE OF WHAT COMPREHENSIVE TRANSLATION IS NOT:**

A good-hearted community organization once asked El Centro Hispano to translate into Spanish a cover letter that was to accompany a gift that they were sending to each family in their program. The organization was anxious that the process be inclusive of all the families, and wanted very much to have the letter in Spanish so that Spanish-speaking homes would understand the purpose of the gift. The gift was a children's reading book meant to encourage parents and children to read together. However, the book was only in English. In selecting which book to give, the organization had not thought to search for a book that was published in both English and Spanish, although such books were commonly available.

**> THE RESOURCES IT REQUIRES**

Few organizations will have the internal staff capacity to produce all their documents in both English and Spanish with equal levels of quality. To do so in-house would require having on staff more than one native Spanish-speaker, and in particular native Spanish-speakers who

**WE HAVE SEEN ESTIMATES THAT VARY FROM \$0.06/WORD TO \$0.25/WORD.**

received their formal education in both Spanish and English. Such qualifications are very hard to find, so many organizations will rely on translation companies to whom they contract out their translation work.

Contract translation can be very expensive, but prices vary greatly according to the bulk of

work contracted, as well as the overhead of a particular company. Translation companies most often charge by the word of the target language (the language they are translating into), although some will charge by line or by page. Prices vary

greatly, as does quality. It is worth it to check around. Lower prices are usually for the translation of massive documents of hundreds of pages, where perhaps the ratio of billable work time to

unbillable administrative time is lower. Higher estimates may be for documents with technical language or needing quick turn-around times. The adage of "you get what you pay for" is especially true with translation. The cheapest translation estimate may not be the best choice for quality or ethics; the lower prices may come at the expense of adequate editing and proofing time, or at the expense of fair salaries paid to translators, if the company hires translators only as contingent laborers with no benefits.

In general, when organizations use outside contractors, it is very important to establish a relationship with the translators, so that they know as much as possible about your work and the purpose of your translations. Each translation done by an outside contractor should be reviewed by a native speaker on staff; contractors are not immune from mistakes in terminology, tone, and meaning.

In sum, comprehensive translation requires time, planning, and a budget to pay for it. It cannot be done in the last three days before a workshop. It requires a staff person to coordinate translation through outside contractors, at the least. And at the best, it requires a team of talented in-house translators, who may have to do translation and nothing else as part of their

**BUT HOW DO I PLAN THE BUDGET? FOR BALLPARK FIGURING OF TRANSLATION COSTS, \$50/PG IS A SAFE ESTIMATE. FIGURE OUT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES YOU THINK WILL BE TRANSLATED IN A YEAR (IT MAY BE MUCH MORE THAN YOU THINK!), AND MULTIPLY IT BY \$50/PAGE. IT GETS EXPENSIVE! AN ORGANIZATION WITH TALENTED IN-HOUSE TRANSLATORS HAS A TREASURE ON THEIR HANDS.**

job description. Some creative organizations may want to share translation staff between them, where their respective bilingual writers form one inter-organizational team to proof the translations of each organization, thus mutually increasing efficiency and lowering costs.

**> THE UPSIDE**

When an organization makes the commitment to produce all its documents in the languages

**EL CENTRO PRODUCES ITS BUDGETS WITH THE LINE ITEMS IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH, SO THAT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO UNDERSTAND AND MONITOR HOW THE MONEY GETS USED.**

of its grassroots constituents, it is making the political statement that everyone deserves access to the same information. Grassroots

Spanish-speaking leaders are not just getting a summary, while their English-speaking counterparts are getting the whole story. This puts participants on more equal ground, and places Spanish as a language as equally legitimate as English in leadership activities.

Having all documents in both English and Spanish makes it easier for both English and Spanish speakers to access the organization and know what it does in the community. It is further an act of transparency and empowerment. For example, El Centro produces its budgets with the line items in both English and Spanish, so that everyone has access to understand and monitor how the money gets used.

**> THE DOWNSIDE**

Translation is tricky to do right, people get can pretty emotionally attached to choice of words and self-identification with their respective native tongues. As was mentioned once in a major translation journal, “everybody has something to say about your copy,” even years after the document has been published.

Translation is also costly and time-consuming. It is incredibly detail oriented and is suited to those types of folks who find it interesting to agonize over how to best express “outreach,”

“poetry slam,” or “school tracking” in Spanish, or how to express “animador,” “huesero,” or “comadre” in English. The skills needed to be a good verbal interpreter and the skills needed to be a good translator are very different! Both need to be fully bilingual and very creative thinkers. In addition, however, interpretation requires quick thinking on one’s feet and excellent speaking skills, and translation requires methodically ordered thinking and excellent writing skills.

**> ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

When all materials are available to everyone in the language of their choice, folks can more fully participate in the leadership development curriculum. Seeing both English and Spanish up on the flip chart or around the room reminds folks of the diversity they are a part of, and makes the Spanish-speaking participants feel more welcomed and considered in the group process.

Having all the materials available to everyone in both languages means that Spanish-speakers are better positioned to take on a leadership role within the multilingual group, as opposed to being passive listeners. Also, by making the info available in two languages to everyone, even non-Spanish speakers may pick up copies of the Spanish materials to take back home with them and share with others in their community who may find it useful.

**> WHEN IT’S OK TO USE**

Comprehensive translation is OK to use at all times, in fact the more the better. El Centro staff have been in listservs where the participants would translate even their emails (some folks using a quick-and-dirty free online translation program like Altavista or

**COMPREHENSIVE TRANSLATION EFFORTS BY GRASSROOTS GROUPS IN THE USA ARE BEST USED WHEN THEY STRIVE TO GENERATE ORIGINAL MATERIALS IN BOTH SPANISH AND ENGLISH, NOT ONLY WRITING IN ENGLISH AND THEN TRANSLATING INTO SPANISH.**

Babblefish, if they didn't speak the other language of the group).

It is quite common in the USA to think of “translation” as translating educational information only from English into Spanish. Here it is rare to have access to leadership writing in Spanish to then translate into English. When we think translation of Spanish into English, many folks assume the document being translated must be a birth certificate or some other identification needed to get services in the USA.

These stereotypes imbedded in the idea of “translation” can lead folks to believe that all useful information and knowledge comes from English speakers, who then “translate” it to previously ignorant Spanish-speakers. This limited outlooks prevents USA-leaders from tapping into the vast field of grassroots empowerment work that has originated from other countries, especially Latin America. And it therefore curtails efforts to import literature and audio-visual materials on grassroots leadership development that have been produced in Latin America, and then translate them into English, or to encourage local grassroots Latino groups to produce their own materials in Spanish and then translate them into English.

In certain circumstances, you need to ask permission to translate something, like when the document was not written by your group. It is important to contact the author of any article or book that you want to translate—they may already have it ready in the other language, or they may allow you to translate it under only certain conditions.

And finally, translation is best used when the translators are named along with the author by-line. This serves to help other organizations locate the translators when they see a good translation, and keep translators accountable for their work (so they are not just invisible ghost writers who can never be contacted for corrections or to translate something else).

## MULTILINGUAL SPACE

The final phase of language and power learning at El Centro Hispano can be called the creation of a “multilingual space.”

It comes from the collective commitment by Spanish and English speaking grassroots leaders to work together and share leadership roles, in both languages at all times. This means that the facilitators of a Spanish-English workshop might easily be Spanish-only speakers, or a combination of two trainers one speaking only Spanish, and one speaking only English, who are able to jointly work together and lead the group through a workshop.

**ONE OF EL CENTRO HISPANO'S VETERAN GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISERS WHO SPEAKS PRIMARILY SPANISH, AND ONE OF DURHAM'S VETERAN TRAINERS WHO SPEAKS PRIMARILY ENGLISH, HAVE USED THE MULTILINGUAL SPACE MODEL TO SUCCESSFULLY CO-LEAD GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING TRAININGS, EVEN THOUGH THEY DO NOT SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE.**

### > HOW IT WORKS

It goes without saying that a multilingual space cannot happen without superb bi-directional simultaneous interpretation, yet this is not enough to make it a success. It also requires:

- > A collective commitment by everyone in the group, the facilitators, and the organization, to fully bring both languages and cultures to the discussion table,
- > A shared political analysis of the way language and culture can be used to both empower and oppress, to include and exclude.
- > Co-facilitation with bilingual and bi-cultural facilitators, who can lead the process in both languages, and who can draw out and reflect the group's different cultural reference points, and
- > Comprehensive written translation, so that every single thing on paper for the group is produced fully in both languages.

> **THE RESOURCES IT REQUIRES**

A multilingual space needs the same basic things needed for bi-directional simultaneous interpreting:

- > Special interpreter equipment (with techies to manage it)
- > Skilled and politically educated simultaneous interpreters
- > Politically educated facilitators/trainers, hopefully multilingual/multicultural
- > Organizers committed to creating a multilingual space---from the get-go
- > Preparation of all written materials in both languages, in advance
- > Time for advance planning
- > A budget to pay for the additional translation and interpretation costs

> **THE UPSIDE**

From a political perspective, multilingual space recognizes the imbalance of power and access between the speakers of the different languages in the group; specifically, that English-speakers in the USA have greater access to power, voice, and participation than do Spanish-only speakers. It seeks to use language inclusion as a means to empower the non-English speaking participants who are oppressed in our society, and to encourage the English-speaking participants to reflect on and alter the ways in which their language privilege makes them participants in this oppression.

> **THE DOWNSIDE ~ THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR**

There is very little downside to creating a multilingual space; there is everything to be gained, and very little to lose. However, there are some points to keep in mind in making it work:

As important as it is to bring both Spanish and English to the table in multilingual space, it is also key to be conscious and intentional about including cultural references and norms from each participant group. We discovered

this when we interpreted events in which participants who were leaders in the Civil Rights Movement of the 60's would throw in references to Freedom Riders, Bus Boycotts, Jim Crow, Woolworths, etc. The other participants who were versed in the history of the Civil Rights Movement would nod and affirm the person talking, while the recent immigrant participants would just look confused.

On other occasions, recent immigrant participants would speak about civil war in their country, referring to governmental systems and military operations that USA-born participants had never heard of. In these moments, the facilitators need to gently make sure that the talkers explain their cultural or historical references, to make cultural and historical points understandable in a group with vastly different backgrounds. Facilitators should anticipate the enormous diversity of experiences discussed in a multilingual space, and find ways for the group to make linkages between their unique backgrounds.

> **ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

A multilingual space is where a grassroots Latino leader can most expansively use their leadership and cross-cultural skills. They can lead a group of English-speakers, while they themselves are talking in Spanish, and fully build relationships across race and language. It is in this space that non-Latino grassroots leaders can best experience the fullness of their Latino peers; they experience a group dynamic that reflects both Latino and their own cultural norms, and they both hear and feel the intellectual and emotional contri-

**THE FACILITATORS NEED TO GENTLY MAKE SURE THAT THE TALKERS EXPLAIN THEIR CULTURAL OR HISTORICAL REFERENCES, TO MAKE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL POINTS UNDERSTANDABLE IN A GROUP WITH VASTLY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS.**

**A MULTILINGUAL SPACE IS INHERENTLY MULTICULTURAL AS WELL AS MULTIRACIAL.**



butions that their Latino peers can share.

A multilingual space is inherently multicultural as well as multiracial. It is in this space that grassroots leaders of each race, culture, and language gain experience working together to build broad based alliances for social change.

A multilingual space is transformative on political, cultural, and personal levels. While the intent is to open the space to make room for the entirety of immigrant Latino colleagues, this process of space-opening tends to throw the doors wide to other cultural influences and backgrounds, as well. Undergoing the political education process that a multilingual space requires also helps groups recognize and integrate the diversity in the room, and can make the space more open for other marginalized and excluded groups, such as African-American, GLBTQ, and youth.

> **WHEN IT'S OK TO USE**

**CASE STUDY OF EL CENTRO'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Our most successful example of a multilingual space is the Board of Directors of El Centro Hispano. Our Board is intentionally designed to be a place where grassroots Latino leaders may spread their wings, engaging in leadership roles

while working closely with non-Latino allies. It is composed of 10 members coming directly from the Latino community that El Centro serves, and five members coming

from non-Latino ally communities. Members rotate on and off the Board over time, but in any given year, the language break down among the members may come out something like this: 2-3 English-only speakers, 6-7 bilingual folks (some preferring English and some preferring Span-

ish), and 5-6 Spanish-only speakers.

The native-English speakers are consistently the ones who have more experience serving on Boards. They are frequently more accustomed to reading budget reports, financial statements, and making big decisions about vision, mission, and large amounts of money than are the Spanish-only grassroots members. However, El Centro Hispano is an explicitly Latino-governed organization; the ally members are there to assist as precisely that: allies.

Given the imbalance in power and access to leadership development opportunities, it could be very possible for the English-speakers to dominate the board meetings and overly influence the decisions made for the organization.

We have countered these imbalances by being very intentional about our use of language and consciousness of power in the meetings. We strongly encourage everyone to speak in Spanish at all times, if they are able. This holds true even when a bilingual person is responding to an English-only person in discussion. This is sometimes difficult to do, but it helps everyone be mindful of the grassroots community members who are at the center of El Centro Hispano's work. There is the common tendency for native-English bilingual folks to switch to English when the discussion becomes intense, like talking about numbers, budget, or sensitive issues. Although the Board has a majority of folks who could speak English, doing so would marginalize the grassroots leaders who only speak Spanish, making them follow a heated discussion through interpretation. No matter how good the interpreters, hearing something out loud in your own language is always a little bit easier to process and feel engaged with. It was unfair to make the Spanish-speakers consistently have to use the equipment when the conversation got hairy or tense.

**GIVEN THE IMBALANCE IN POWER AND ACCESS TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES, IT COULD BE VERY POSSIBLE FOR THE ENGLISH-SPEAKERS TO DOMINATE THE BOARD MEETINGS AND OVERLY INFLUENCE THE DECISIONS MADE FOR THE ORGANIZATION.**

**IN ADDITION TO BEING REALLY INTENTIONAL ABOUT SPEAKING PLENTY OF SPANISH "OUT LOUD" IN THE MEETING, OUR BOARD ALSO DOGGEDLY PRODUCES ALL LETTERS, REPORTS, AND MINUTES IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH.**

The Board makes a point to operate with comprehensive translation: fully producing all reports and minutes in both English and Spanish. There is on staff an assigned person responsible for all translation, and she encourages the Board to produce as many documents in Spanish as possible, which she then translates into English. This is another way to balance the language power, since many times in the USA when we think of translating a document, we assume that we mean translating from English into Spanish. Thinking this way implies that we expect information to come from those who speak/write English, that it will be transmitted to the passive Spanish readers, and that Spanish speakers/writers have little of importance to transmit back to English-speakers. Encouraging Board members to produce their reports, etc in Spanish also helps to preserve Latino culture, because immigrants to this country may find that they have fewer opportunities to write in their native language once they get here.

## CLOSING

In El Centro Hispano's collaborative work with English-speaking ally groups, it would be ideal to operate consistently within a multilingual space (and therefore a space that honors the leadership potential in each culture represented). This would be the most beneficial grassroots leadership contribution that we could offer to both recent immigrant Latino leaders and home-grown leaders from the South in the USA.

The mental, emotional, and cultural expansion that comes with multilingual space also opens up the access to power, allowing it to be shared more creatively among diverse groups working in alliance. This inclusive alliance building provides the needed political education and analysis for grassroots leaders to build a broad-based movement for change.

At El Centro Hispano, we are working to have this kind of social change embrace all the cultures, languages, and wholeness of who we are, every one.

## NUTS AND BOLTS OF MULTILINGUAL SPACE

There are certain things to consider when planning a multilingual space:

- > Full language integration of participants and facilitators
- > Bi-directional simultaneous interpretation
  - > All documents in both languages
  - > Facilitation to incorporate cultural references from all participants

In planning a multilingual space, the trickiest area is usually the organization of bi-directional simultaneous interpreting. For successful bi-directional simultaneous interpretation, you need:

- > Interpreters skilled and trained in simultaneous interpretation
  - > Sufficient interpreting equipment and someone to manage it
  - > Advance planning with the organizers, facilitators, and interpreters

Considering the difficulty that many groups have with finding and using interpretation in multilingual grassroots events, we would like to devote the rest of this writing to the “nuts and bolts” of working with interpreters and planning a multilingual event.

## THE INTERPRETERS THEMSELVES HOW TO FIND THEM

### > UNDERSTANDING THE SKILLS REQUIRED

For organizations new to cross-language work, it can be very hard to determine which bilingual folks would be good at simultaneous work. The difference in skills required for consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, and written translation cannot be over-emphasized. Freelance professional interpreters may adver-

tise simultaneous skills when they really do not have them, while bilingual community members with excellent simultaneous skills may be overlooked because they had never been given the opportunity to try them out.

Simultaneous interpreters have a combination of listening, speaking, concentration, and processing skills that few people possess. Training in simultaneous interpreting can be helpful for building concentration or memory skills, but the trick to it all is the “simultaneity”: the ability to listen in one language and talk in another “simultaneously.” It is sometimes a knack that people either have or don’t have, like having double-jointed thumbs, or being able to roll your tongue or cross your eyes. The skill of “simultaneity” has little to do with language fluency, so not all bilingual people can do simultaneous interpreting, although they may be excellent at consecutive interpreting or written translation.

In simultaneous interpreting, the pressure is very high to be quick, accurate, to honor to the speaker’s meaning, message, voice, and spirit, all the while have a pleasing speaking voice (since your voice represents everyone talking in the room, your voice will be hitting folk’s eardrums for hours at a time, so it should be pleasant to listen to!). If an interpreter falters for even more than a sentence or two, they generally need to hand off the microphone to their co-interpreter until they are back on track. Amongst grassroots simultaneous interpreters, the task can have a feel of being like freestyle rappers in a concert—the pressure is tight and you have think creatively on your feet to be able to keep up because the entire group is depending on you to keep them all together in the moment.

### > FINDING FOLKS BY PERSONAL REFERRAL

Personal recommendation is one of the best ways to find simultaneous interpreters, bearing in mind that the most insightful referrals will come from folks who have actually been in situations where they themselves depended on

the interpreter to understand or participate in a cross-language event. There are also professional interpreter associations in many areas who may be able to provide a list of interpreters in their association, however a referral from someone who has worked with a particular interpreter holds many advantages to contracting someone you know little about.

It is important to note that presently there is no such thing as a blanket “certification” for interpreters; nothing that would be similar to the kind of certification process that doctors, lawyers, or teachers would undergo. North Carolina does have a certification process for Court Interpreters (as do many states), and some medical institutions put their staff interpreters through very intense medical interpreter trainings. The American Translators Association, a private association of professional translators, has an “accreditation exam” that its members may voluntarily take. Interpreters who have passed court certification or private accreditation are demonstrating a professional commitment to their work, and this can lend a level of confidence in contracting them. However, relying on credentials is no substitute for a thorough checking of referrals with any interpreter or translator.

Among social justice community groups in the South, there are very, very few folks who work as full time simultaneous interpreters. Once you identify who they are, they will usually need advance notice of a request to interpret, so that they can arrange their regular job schedule accordingly.

#### > TESTING A NEW INTERPRETER

If the situation arises where an untried interpreter must be used, it is possible to “check” their simultaneity by asking them to take a few minutes and interpret someone talking, the organizer can even just give a spontaneous monologue and have the potential interpreter simultaneously interpret them on the spot. The test should go on for at least 2-3 minutes, and the tester should watch that the new interpreter

does not hesitate, falter, or say ‘Um’ a great deal.

Making these simple observations is possible even if the tester does not actually understand the language that the potential interpreter is interpreting into. However, if a bilingual person is able to monitor the content of what the interpreter is saying, and compare it with the original message, so much the better. In all cases with a new interpreter, it is important to have a back up plan, in case the actual event proves too difficult for them. Such a plan could include a transition to consecutive interpreting, or having a veteran interpreter ‘on-call’ should they be needed.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THEM

### > TERMINOLOGY PREPARATION

It is important to check with the interpreters about the terminology and subject matter of the event. A workshop on legal or financial topics, such as immigrant rights and the globalized economy, may contain terms that even a fully bilingual person may not be well versed in. Make sure that the interpreter receives in advance copies of materials to be used in the meeting, so that s/he may review terminology, content, and ask questions in preparation for interpreting. An ethical interpreter will also let you know immediately if the subject matter is out of their scope of knowledge. For example, the interpreters at El Centro Hispano are not usually well versed in religious terminology, so when churches would call seeking interpreters for their events, El Centro advises them of its own limitations and refers them to a bilingual minister in the area who has good interpreting skills.

### > TEAMS OF TWO

In the meeting itself, interpreters should be contracted to work in pairs, alternating every 20-30 minutes. This is part of what makes interpreting so costly, as each interpreter is paid an hourly or daily rate. Be advised that

any knowledgeable and ethical interpreter will avoid, if not flatly refuse, an interpreting assignment without a co-interpreter.

> **BRIEF ORIENTATION**

Before beginning any meeting or gathering with simultaneous interpreting, the agenda should include about 3 minutes for the interpreters to give a brief orientation to the participants, covering: how the interpreting will work, how the audio equipment works, where to go for technical difficulties, establish some hand signals for the interpreters to request folks to Talk Louder, or Slow Down, and answer any initial questions folks may have. This is essential for establishing trust with the interpreters, and affirming the collective commitment in the group to work together across their respective languages. The orientation is usually given before folks have their equipment earphones on, so it needs to be repeated in Spanish and English, consecutively.

**EXAMPLE OF INTERPRETER AGITATION**

At a community meeting between residents and police regarding the increase in crime against Latinos in Durham, the meeting was being interpreted using One-Way Simultaneous Interpreting (meaning that only Spanish-speakers were wearing headsets). The residents wanted the city to commit to hiring more bilingual 911 operators, but the officials were dodging the pressure. The Latino residents were looking discouraged, so the interpreter encouraged them to keep bringing up the subject (“Hey, compadre in the red shirt! Ask them again about the 911 operators again! Everybody else applaud after he speaks!”) Fortunately, the interpreter was able to do this without missing any of the formal discussion that he was charged to interpret, and he succeeded in encouraging the residents, who left the meeting with the city’s commitment to hire more bilingual 911 operators.

> **NO PARTICIPATING!**

Interpreters should never participate while on their interpreting shift! No matter how tense or chaotic the discussion, the interpreter must simply render what’s being said into the other language, without interrupting, editing, or adding anything. It is up to the group as to whether they allow the resting interpreter to participate when s/he is off the mike.

However, on rare occasions, some community-organizers-serving-as-interpreters have been known to use their access to microphone and closed circuit receivers to become “interpreter agitators.” This means that in addition to performing their duties of interpreting, they may speak directly to the participants (through the microphone) and encourage them to ask questions or applaud as needed. This is mobilizing, not interpreting.

It is very controversial to use interpreting equipment to both interpret as well as mobilize, and we at El Centro thought long and hard before discussing it here. However, we have to admit that this “dual use” of equipment can be very important in high stakes rallies, protests, or other forums where the power balance is strongly stacked against the marginalized immigrant community.

> **HONOR THE MESSAGE**

When interpreting, interpreters render everything in the same voice as the speaker, in First Person. They should never be heard uttering: “He says that he thinks...” “What she’s saying is that...” If the speaker is a woman who says, “I am the proud mother of three children” then the interpreter repeats in the second language, “I am the proud mother of three children” (and not, “She is the proud mother of three

**EXCEPTION: IT IS FAIRLY COMMON, HOWEVER, FOR INTERPRETERS TO CRACK JOKES ON THE MIKE DURING PAUSES IN LESS FORMAL COMMUNITY MEETINGS, BECAUSE FEW PEOPLE CAN RESIST THE FUN OF HORSSING AROUND WITH SOUND EQUIPMENT THAT LOOKS LIKE A KARAOKE MACHINE.**

children”). In addition, interpreters must interpret absolutely everything that the speaker says. They do not need to be literal, because sometimes being literal “doesn’t translate.” However, even without being literal, it is entirely possible to “completely render the meaning” of any message from one language to another. This is the interpreter’s charge, and fully conveying all of the speaker’s message is extremely important when interpreting for marginalized or oppressed people, for whom being heard by others may be both politically critical and emotionally moving. It can be useful to have a monitor listening to the interpreter, that is, a bilingual person wearing earphones to monitor the interpreter for completeness and accuracy.

**> FEES FOR SERVICE**

Be clear with the interpreters beforehand about their fees and payment arrangements. Us-

**AS OF THE YEAR 2002 IN THE SOUTH, GRASSROOTS SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETER NON-PROFIT FEES FOR SPANISH-ENGLISH RUN ROUGHLY: \$50/HOUR/INTERPRETER (\$100/HR PER TEAM); SOME MAY HAVE DAY-LONG LOWER RATES (\$25-40/HOUR/ PER INTERPRETER, OR \$600+ PER DAY FOR A TEAM OF TWO).**

**INTERPRETERS FOR LESS COMMON LANGUAGES MAY CHARGE MORE.**

**TRAVEL TIME AND ADVANCED PREP TIME MAY BE CHARGED EXTRA.**

ually interpreters serve as independent contractors, and will need to submit an invoice with their Social Security or ITIN number on it, so that the contracting organization may send them a tax form at the end of the year. While interpreting costs may seem extremely expensive for a small organization, the success of a multilingual gathering will only be as good as its interpreters. Poor, or unskilled volunteer interpreters can ruin an otherwise well-planned event.

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO NEGOTIATE, AS MANY INTERPRETERS ARE WILLING TO BE FLEXIBLE WITH NON-PROFITS ON KEEPING COSTS DOWN.**

**> EQUIPMENT TECHIE**

Simultaneous interpreters need to know how to manage the audio equipment they are using, and the organization will need to determine if they want to borrow or purchase equipment. Regardless, it is very helpful to have

**A TIP: THE BATTERY THAT NEEDS CHANGING MOST OFTEN WILL BE THE INTERPRETER TRANSMITTER!**

a specially designated “techie,” who is not one of the interpreters, and whose responsibility it is to monitor the equipment used by the participants, facilitators, and interpreters. This is particularly true for battery failure in portable transmitters and receivers. Some participants will not recognize when their battery is running low, and will suffer through a session with static in their ear, missing important points. This is especially true of recent immigrant Latinos, who may still feel hesitant in a strange environment. The techie’s job will be to observe the group and watch for folks who are fiddling with their equipment and looking “lost,” then go offer them fresh receivers, etc. Most equipment takes 9Volt batteries, which last roughly 8-16 hours in the devices.

In addition, the techies are responsible for handing out and collecting the equipment at each session. For equipment owners: as the receivers can be quite expensive, it is a good idea to have them numbered for easier tracking, and to use a sign-out log to track which receivers are being frequently used. Attached are samples logs that can be used to monitor equipment usage, sign out, battery changes, and loan information sheets.

**> SOUND CHECK**

The techies should do a thorough sound check with the equipment before each event. If equipment is stored with the batteries in them, the batteries may drain of power. Also, in new spaces, the techies should check the audio equipment in the room where the event will occur. Sometimes buildings have interferences that create “dead spaces,” or spots in the room



where the transmission of the interpreting equipment does not work. It is necessary to know these spots in advance, in order to keep out of them.

> **LOGISTICAL CARE**

Given the physical and mental strain of interpreting, event organizers should make sure the

**IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO NUMBER EACH RECEIVER FOR EASIER TRACKING, AND TO USE A SIGN-OUT LOG TO TRACK WHICH RECEIVERS ARE BEING FREQUENTLY USED.**

interpreters have access to water and snacks (and restrooms when possible). If they are to interpret through a “work-

ing lunch,” time should be planned in for them to eat, too. In gatherings with overnight stays, it’s a good idea to put the interpreters in rooms without roommates and away from noisy areas. Due to the high level of concentration required, even mild sleep deprivation can significantly lower an interpreter’s performance during the day, and jeopardize the success of the meeting.

## **OTHER MULTILINGUAL LOGISTICS BEYOND THE INTERPRETERS**

Although it is impossible to have a multilingual event without interpreters, the interpreters are only part of the equation. Below are some common issues that organizers of multilingual events need to bear in mind in the planning stage.

> **EVENT RECRUITING**

Using simultaneous interpreting will do no good for a multilingual event unless the proper investment in recruiting cross-language participants has not been made. Generally this means that the organizers of an event must be connected with Latino centers and groups right from the start, and there should be a bilingual contact person(s) on the planning team to build the personal relationships with potential participants that will make them feel a part of

what is happening. This may be easy for Latino-based organizations, but all groups should bear in mind that everyone needs to feel welcome and connected in order to want to participate, regardless of their language or cultural background.

> **BALANCED PARTICIPATION**

It is no fun to be the only person in the room who does not speak the language. For many organizations new to working with Latinos, it may feel successful to have even one Latino present. But Latino leadership organizations will want to make sure that their leaders are not only “token” Latinos representing their community at the event.

True multilingual space happens when there is an adequate representation of Spanish-speakers at the table, as well as adequate representation of African American, white and other community groups, because representative numbers increase collective voice and power. Also, having full bi-directional interpretation set up for a group of 30, with only two Spanish-speakers, can make everyone feel awkward or put-upon. Language and cultural representation needs to be strategically organized to make all participants feel considered, included, and heard.

> **BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL FACILITATION**

It is most helpful when the facilitators are themselves bilingual—and can facilitate in both languages. Sometimes we mistakenly assume that a bilingual person will automatically feel comfortable to lead a workshop from either language, and be familiar with the needed terminology in both languages. Check this out in advance with your facilitators. Having facilitators speaking in English and in Spanish during the meeting will model that the space is “welcoming” for folks to speak up in whatever language they choose, and reduce the feeling that it is a “handicap” to not speak up in English.

**> ADVANCED PREPARATION**

**AKA: FULL TRANSLATION OF MATERIALS AT ALL TIMES**

As discussed in the section on Comprehensive Written Translation, any multilingual event will need all documents prepared in both languages, with enough copies to go around to everyone. It could be seen as condescending to assume which folks will prefer to have materials in which language, so it's a good idea to just make copies enough for everyone, lay them out on a table and let folks choose for themselves. You never know when someone may take materials in a language that they do not speak, in order to deliver it to a colleague back home who might need it in that language. Better yet, when information can be produced with both languages in the same document (like front in one language and back in the other language), this eliminates the need to choose for others which document they should pick up.

In addition to reading materials in both languages, if flip charts are used, there should be a separate one for each language, and a writer assigned to each one. If an exercise uses script slips for role plays, the scripts should already be typed up in both languages, etc.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following is in no way meant to be a comprehensive list. Rather, it is meant to be a starting off point for further contact and exploration.

### **SOME GROUPS INTEGRATING INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION IN CROSS-RACE, CROSS-LANGUAGE WORK: (AND SPECIAL THANKS TO EACH ONE)**

#### **EL CENTRO HISPANO, INC.**

201 West Main Street, Suite 100  
Durham, NC 27705  
Contact: Angelina Schiavone  
Tel: 919-687-4635

#### **JEFFERSON CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**

PO Box 279  
Wolf Creek, OR 97497  
Contact: Beverly Brown  
Tel: 541-955-9705  
jeffctr@internetcds.com  
Publication: *BULLETIN 3: Equipment, Logistics & Affordable Strategies for Bilingual and Multilingual Meetings, December 2001*

#### **HIGHLANDER RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER**

1959 Highlander Way  
New Market, TN 37820  
Tel: 865-933-3443  
Contact: Alice Johnson  
hrec@highlandercenter.org  
johnson@highlandercenter.org

#### **SOUTHEAST REGIONAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE NETWORK**

P.O. Box 240,  
Durham, NC 27702  
Contact: Leah Wise  
Tel: 919-683-4310  
Fax: 919-683-3428  
serejn@rejn.org

#### **TLATOLLI OLLIN, PALABRA EN MOVIMIENTO**

Tabasco 262  
Despacho 202  
Colonia Roma  
México DF 06701  
Tel/Fax: +207-9955

### **RELATED TO INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR TRAINING/ ACCREDITATION/CERTIFICATION:**

#### **NORTH CAROLINA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS, FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROJECT**

<http://www.nccourts.org/Citizens/CPrograms/Foreign/Certification/Classes.asp>

#### **AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION**

225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Tel: (703)683-6100  
Fax: (703)683-6122  
ata@atanet.org  
www.atanet.org

#### **THE CROSS CULTURAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM—BRIDGING THE GAP TRAINING FOR MEDICAL INTERPRETERS**

270 So. Hanford St., Suite 100  
Seattle, WA 98134  
Tel: 206-860-0329 or 206-860-0331  
Fax: 206-860-0334  
<http://www.xculture.org/training/index.html>

### **EQUIPMENT / SUPPORT LINKS:**

**WWW.WILLIAMSOUND.COM:** equipment manufacturer most commonly used in our area, offering radio transmission outside the public broadcasting band.

**WWW.RAMSEYKITS.COM:** equipment manufacturer offering radio transmission within the public broadcasting band. Less expensive, but equipment must be assembled after purchase.

**WWW.PROZ.COM:** professional translator website to exchange term questions, glossary-sharing, job referrals, etc.

**WWW.IBDLTD.COM:** website of i.b.d., Ltd, bookstore specializing in dictionaries and materials for professional interpreters and translators.

**WWW.TRADOS.COM:** manufacturers of TRADOS translation management software, for handling large translation projects.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**TRANSLATION:** the written process of rendering a written document from one language into another

**TRANSLATOR:** a person who specializes in producing written documents from one language into another

**INTERPRETATION:** the oral process of rendering a spoken message from one language into another

**INTERPRETER:** a person who specializes in orally rendering spoken words from one language into another

**CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING:** method of interpretation in which the speaker speaks a few sentences and then pauses to allow the interpreter to repeat them in the other language. The speaker and interpreter alternate turns talking. This method requires interpreters with good memory retention skills, but does not require any special audio equipment.

**SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING:** method of interpreting in which the interpreter interprets the speaker's message at the same time as the speaker is talking. Special audio transmitter equipment is required, and the interpreters need special listening-talking simultaneity skills.

**ONE-WAY SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING:** In group settings with a majority of participants operating in one language (Language A) and a minority operating in a second language (Language B), interpreters use simultaneous interpreting to interpret from language A into B, and consecutive interpreting when it is necessary to interpret from language B into A. Only speakers of the minority language (B) wear interpreting equipment headphones.

**BI-DIRECTIONAL SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING:** In group settings with some participants operating in one language (Language A) and others operating in a separate language (Language B), interpreters use simultaneous interpreting to interpret from A to B and from B to A. Everyone in the room who is not fully bilingual in both A and B languages wears interpreting equipment headphones, so that all participants have access to speak up spontaneously, without waiting for slower consecutive interpretation to “plug them in” to the group dynamic.

In this style of interpreting, the interpreters change their interpreting direction from A>B and from B>A seamlessly, and without pause. Their voices basically serve as a “second track” to the conversation, mirroring everything that is said into its opposite language, so that all discussion currents flow in two languages in ‘real time.’ In this method of interpreting, the interpreters’ presence is the least obtrusive in the group process, and all the participants have greater opportunity to participate fully, spontaneously, and build relationships as equals, in the language of their choice.

**MULTILINGUAL SPACE:** A group setting that is intentionally structured to fully incorporate two or more languages, and therefore cultures, in all aspects of the group process, including but not limited to:

- > the language participants choose to speak in the group,
- > languages spoken by the facilitators,
- > production of all languages each written material, including articles, handouts, meeting notes, and flipchart write-ups, and
- > inclusion of cultural references and customs from each cultural group in the room..

# APPENDICES



## QUICK INTRO FOR INTERPRETING

The following quick orientation to interpreting should take less than 2 minutes to do with the group, and should be done right at the very beginning. It is only sample text, and can be changed to fit groups' needs.

"We want to let y'all know that we are interpreting between Spanish and English today. This is because we have speakers of these two languages with us (at least these two!) and we want to encourage everyone to feel confident and at ease to participate using the words that are most meaningful to them.

We believe that the language we use is intimately connected with who we are, our thoughts, our emotions, our dreams, our cultures, our passions, our politics... everything. We are interpreting these sessions in English and Spanish to help create an inclusive space where each of us may feel free to bring our whole selves into the room.

To make the interpreting as inclusive for everyone as possible, we want to ask folks to please keep the following in mind:

1. Speak at a moderate pace, not too fast nor too slow.
2. Speak in a loud voice, so you can be heard clear across the room.
3. Speak directly to your fellow participants, no need to look at the interpreters.
4. One person talk at a time, interpreters can't choose which one to interpret for.
5. For bilingual folks, please feel free to switch languages as much as you like, but please not within the same sentence. (this is meant to be humorous!)
6. For those using equipment: if there is any trouble with the equipment or its batteries, please come over and get a different set as soon as you notice the problem (please don't suffer in silence!)

7. When you yourself are talking, it's often helpful to pull your earphones off, or turn down the volume, so the interpreter's voice in your ear won't distract you.

8. The language in which the conversation is occurring can switch at any moment, and we want folks to feel at ease to speak in whichever language they want. If the discussion flows into a language that you don't need interpreted, it's fine to turn the volume down, but please keep the earphones close by and ready, should the language suddenly switch again. This is so we don't make any one feel "on the spot" for switching languages, and cause us go scrambling for our headphones and lose momentum because we weren't ready for it.

9. At the end of the day and during breaks, please turn off the equipment to save the batteries.

**IF FOLKS START TALKING TOO FAST OR TOO QUIETLY, WE LIKE TO USE SOME HAND SIGNALS TO LET FOLKS KNOW TO SLOW DOWN OR SPEAK UP. USUALLY WE DO THIS:**

<<< >>> *(demonstrate a hand signal for "SLOW DOWN")*

^ ^ *(demonstrate a hand signal for "SPEAK UP")*

**ARE THESE HAND SIGNALS THAT ARE OK WITH Y'ALL TO USE? (If not, ask the group to agree on their own hand signals)**

**IF THE INTERPRETER STARTS MAKING THESE HAND SIGNALS AND THE SPEAKER DOESN'T NOTICE, BUT OTHER FOLKS IN THE GROUP SEE IT, CAN WE AGREE AS A GROUP TO HELP OUT BY DOING THE HAND SIGNAL, TOO? (hopefully they say 'Yes')**

**ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?" (answer, thank everyone, and continue with workshop)**



*Below is a sample equipment cover letter, that can be reworded to suit individual needs.*

## **PLEASE READ BEFORE USING TRANSLATION EQUIPMENT**

Dear Friends,

Please read this very important information before breaking out the interpreting equipment:

> We are happy to loan our equipment (without charge), however if any part of it is lost or broken you will be financially responsible for its repair or replacement. *(For reference, the transmitter & microphone set is about \$\_\_\_\_. The receiver & headphone sets are about \$\_\_\_\_ each.)*

> Please take a moment to observe how the equipment is packed, both the receiver order and the bundling of the earphones. We would like you to return the equipment packed in the same way you received it. The receivers are numbered and stored in order from 1-50; please note that #22 is not in the box, as it is broken.

> The portable transmitter is programmed to Channel 4. To use, make sure that all the receivers have the channel selector knob turned all the way to the right.

> Both the transmitter AND the microphone must be turned on for it to work.

> Please make sure to turn OFF all of the equipment devices when packing them up, including the transmitter and the microphone.

> If you need to change the batteries PLEASE make sure the little yellow ribbon sticks out the end from underneath the battery—the ribbon is the pull thing that makes it possible to extract the battery out of the case. All the equipment uses 9-volt square batteries. It's a good idea to buy extra batteries for your event, in case you need them.

> We have an equipment log where we document each time a device is used or its battery is changed. This is to help us evenly rotate use of devices and to anticipate battery change needs before they happen *(like in the middle of a big meeting!)*. Please fill out the information columns in the logs for your event, and include any comments or observations you have about equipment troubleshooting.

> In the back of the log are blank equipment sign out lists that you may use if you wish to keep close track of who has equipment. *(Sometimes folks can forget to hand over their receiver when they leave.)*

> Please do not plug any other kind of microphone or earphone into the devices; they are specially rigged just for Williams Sound equipment, and other plugs will break them. *(We learned the hard way!)*

> It's a good idea to do a quick sound check with the transmitter and a receiver, testing the reception around the room you will be in. Sometimes buildings have wiring in the walls that create “dead spots”, places in the room where the transmission doesn't go through, and you should avoid putting the interpreters or any participants in these areas.

Thank you, and enjoy your event!

Questions/Comments: call Whoever at 555-1111.

## INTERPRETING EQUIPMENT USAGE LOG

<b>DATE:</b>								
<b>EVENT:</b>								
<b>TIMES:</b>								
<b>TLR'S:</b>								
<b>CHANNEL 1</b>								
<b>CHANNEL 3</b>								
<b>CH 4 (PORT)</b>								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
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BATTERY CHANGE LOG								
DATE:								
EVENT:								
TLR'S:								
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