

Interpreting and Translating

What is the difference between an interpreter and a translator? Do interpreters and translators have a qualification? Why is it important to use a professional interpreter as apposed to a clients friend or family member? As the need for interpreters rises quickly in our diverse community, we understand that there are many questions and uncertainty for first time users of interpreters.

What is the difference between an interpreter and a translator?

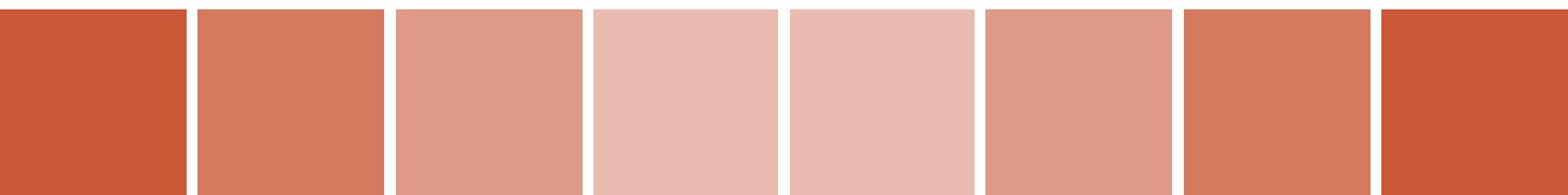
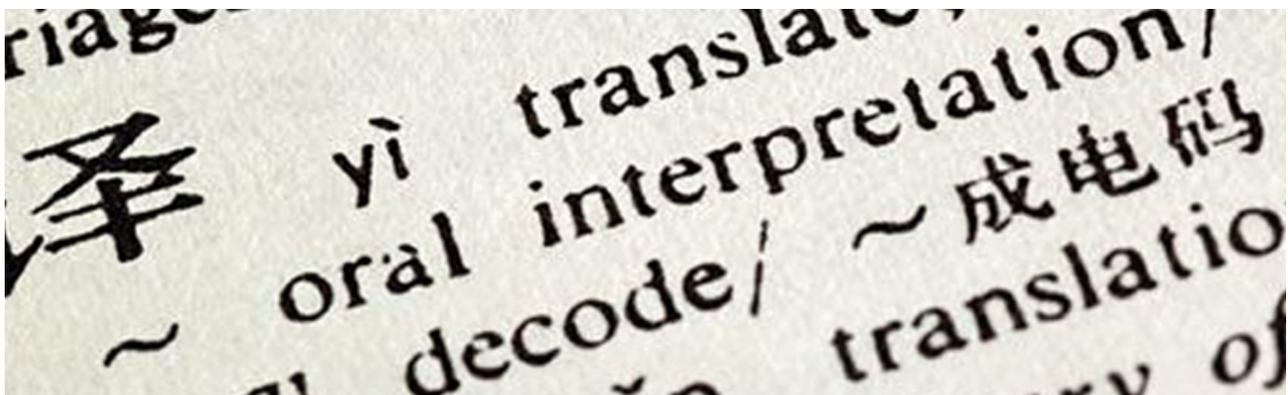
It is important to note the difference between interpreting and translations. Interpreters work with spoken and signed languages while translators work with written languages.

If you need to arrange a face-to-face meeting, an appointment, phone call, or anything involving spoken communication you will need an interpreter.

If you need application forms, policy documents, correspondence and anything involving written communication to be converted from English into another language you will need to engage a translator.

Interpreters may be able to assist to interpret a form or written correspondence at an appointment but it is appropriate to negotiate with your client as to their preferred means of communication.

Please note, eligible organisations are able to access uncapped translating for the purposes of correspondence with clients, however, general information brochures and materials are capped at \$5,000 per organisation.



Effective Use of an Interpreter

There are a few things you should be aware of to make the most effective use of an interpreter.

Being informed of appointment purpose

Tell the interpreter the goal of the appointment. This can be done in the notes section of the booking form or at a pre-meeting 10 minutes prior to the appointment. This will help the interpreter prepare for the appointment and all parties will be better understood.

Positioning

Where the interpreter sits or stands depends on the situation and the language being used. For a spoken language interpreter, sitting comfortably between the two speakers is appropriate to aid the easy flow of communication. Sign language interpreters will usually sit beside the speaker and opposite the deaf person. This enables the deaf person and the interpreter to 'see' each other's signs easily and allows the deaf person to have eye contact with both the speaker and the interpreter. It is best to let the client direct you as to where is best to sit.

A sign language interpreter may also request a change of lighting, such as drawing curtains or turning a light up to allow the deaf person and the interpreter to see each other clearly.

Using your own language skills

Staff and service providers may speak some words of another language. It is fine to use your skills to greet a person and establish rapport, such as expressing pleasure at seeing someone again. However, once the appointment begins it is best to leave bilingual skills to the accredited interpreter or translator that has been booked specifically for this purpose.

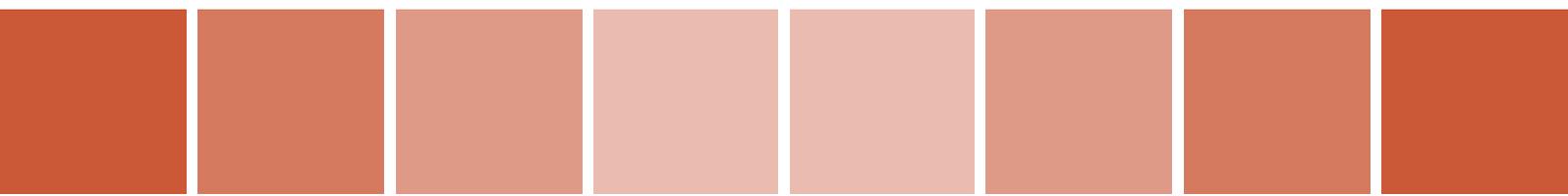
Who to address and eye contact

When meeting with the client for whom you have booked an interpreter:

- Address the client, not the interpreter.
- Maintain primary eye contact with the client.
- An interpreter will continue to interpret at all times. If you wish to have a private conversation with another person in the room, step out and discuss the issue, leaving the interpreter with the client.

Important points when working with interpreters

- Speak normally. The interpreter will tell you if you are speaking too quickly or they need you to stop.
- Spoken language interpreters may direct you when to stop and start speaking, allowing them time to interpret your message to the client.
- Sign language interpreters generally interpret simultaneously, which means they will sign at the same time that you speak. Avoid over use of jargon, slang or idiomatic expressions.
- Listen without interrupting.



- Allow a little more time for a meeting, adding 15 minutes for every hour.
- Do not assume that a client's nodding indicates either understanding or acceptance of what you have said. It can merely indicate respect.
- At times an interpreter will ask for clarification of a term, and at that point will address you directly.
- The interpreter will at times take longer than you expect, which is required when cultural explanation is required to give complete meaning to a situation.
- Relax. Interpreters are professionals and the goal is to ensure that all parties understand each other clearly. If you are unsure of anything, just ask.
- An interpreter can be a cultural aide who is able to give you cultural feedback that increases your understanding of reactions and responses. You are entitled to cultural interpreting as a way of clearly understanding the interaction.

What the interpreter will NOT do

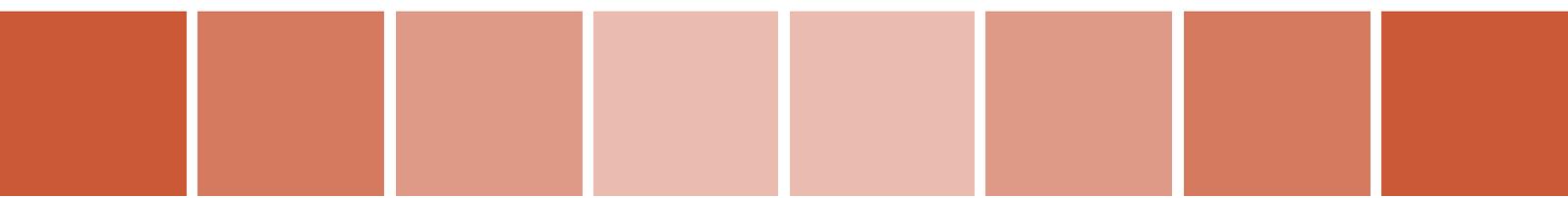
- The interpreter will not side with the non-English speaking client. The interpreter is an impartial professional who is there for the benefit of both parties.
- The interpreter will not interject or offer their own opinion.
- The interpreter will not enter into private discussion with either the client or the service provider but will interpret every word that is spoken or signed.
- The interpreter will not act as a 'witness' to any forms or declarations.

Are the Interpreters used accredited?

Yes. Interpreting is a complex skill set and accredited interpreters have completed rigorous training and testing to ensure their skills are of a nationally recognised standard. Accredited interpreters are also required to abide by a code of ethics and are accountable for their actions and their interpretations.

In Australia interpreters and translators are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translations and Interpreters. SWITC only uses NAATI accredited personnel.

Your client has a right to ethical, professional, accurate and confidential interpretation and as such, the SWITC program will endeavour to only use accredited or recognised interpreters for all translations bookings. Some languages in Australia are not yet included in NAATI's accreditation program. In instances where an accredited interpreter cannot be confirmed for your booking, and an unaccredited interpreter is the only available interpreter for the appointment, a SWITC booking officer will be in contact with you to discuss your options to ensure that the most appropriate interpreter is booked for your client.



Why use a professional interpreter?

When you engage a lawyer, a doctor or a tradesperson you have an expectation that the person doing the job is trained, qualified and has specialist expertise in their field. An interpreter and translator is no different.

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Interpreting and translating is complex, therefore accredited interpreters and translators have completed rigorous training and testing to ensure their skills are of a nationally recognised standard. Accredited interpreters and translators are also required to abide by a code of ethics and are accountable for their actions.

Bilingualism (knowing two languages fluently) does not necessarily mean a person is able to interpret or translate information. It can often be tempting to use a family member or friend to interpret or translate information but this should be avoided at all costs. They may not have the necessary fluency in both languages or the ability to interpret accurately. They are also not bound by ethical constraints such as impartiality and confidentiality.

Your client has a right to ethical, professional, accurate and confidential interpretation. Through our expert partner organisations, SWITC can provide the appropriate interpreter or translator for the job.

