THE ROLE OF THE INTERPRETER IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

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Objectives

Understand what SLPs do and the nuances of interpreting for them

Identify ways in which interpreters can help render a linguistically accurate message for SLPs to analyze

Be aware of tasks interpreters may be asked to do to aid in speech/language evaluations

Realize the immense need for interpreters that are familiar with SLP practices and jargon

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What does an SLP do?

An SLP is not just a speech therapist, they are a highly trained medical professional that you may be called upon to interpret for.

SLPs work in schools, private clinics, skilled nursing facilities, rehab centers, acute care facilities, general hospitals, and even the NICU.

SLPs assess, diagnose, and treat disorders of speech, language, swallowing, cognition, voice, resonance, pragmatics, and more.

In 2019, 60% of SLPs' clinical time was spent providing services to adults, especially in treatment of swallowing disorders and dementia.

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WE NEED MORE INTERPRETERS IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY!

- Over 85% of SLPs are white (some surveys find it as high as 91%).
- Only 8% of SLPs speak another language, and only 4% possess the necessary training to be considered bilingual service providers (BSPs) and provide services without the need of an interpreter.
- Only 2% of SLPs are considered bilingual service providers in Spanish.
- Evaluation of a bilingual or multilingual child necessitates the evaluation of that child's skills in *each* language they speak. To diagnose a speech or language disorder, an SLP must collect data that demonstrates problems in all of the child's languages.
- Functional speech/language therapy must also target all languages a patient or client speaks.
- **SLPs need to partner with other language professionals to meet the needs of children and adults with communication disorders.**

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There are unique nuances of interpreting for SLPs.

- Both interpreters and SLPs are professionals specializing in language and communication.

- The information SLPs need to collect from their patients is often *based* in language or communication aspects.

- Many of the patients that SLPs see and treat have problems *producing* speech or language to be interpreted. These patients may talk especially slow or fast, be very quiet, mispronounce sounds, or other abnormal patterns of speech. At times, they may be very difficult to understand and interpret for.

- Most of the assessments SLPs administer are standardized, and when conducted with interpreters must be done with additional care.

- SLPs sometimes need to give cues, such as the first sound in a word, to help people come up with the word. When the SLP does not speak a patient's language, these cues sometimes need to come from the interpreter.
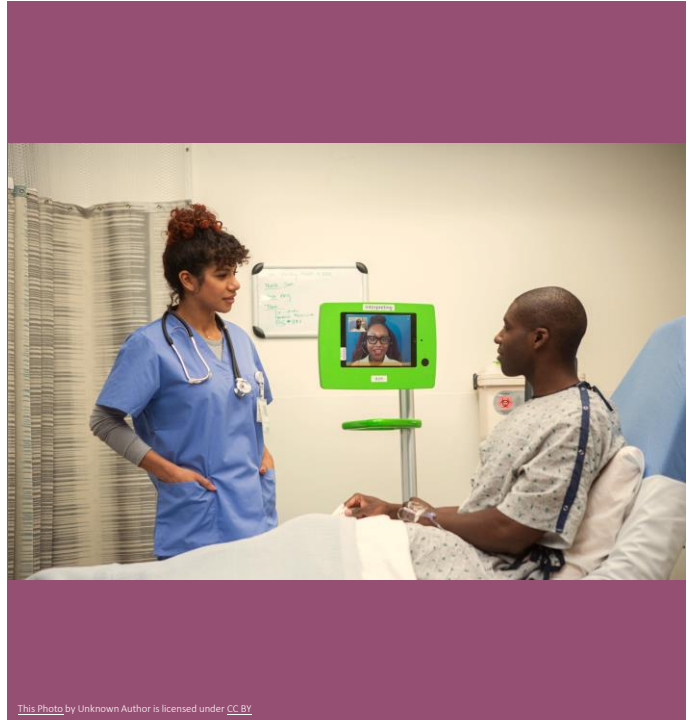
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Pre- and post- session discussion is critical.

Pre-session

- The SLP should familiarize the interpreter with any jargon that might be related to the session, giving them time to prepare translations.

- The SLP should explain to the interpreter the rules and guidelines of any assessments that will be administered and their role in those assessments.

- The SLP and interpreter should discuss how certain features of speech or language should be interpreted or documented for later discussion and analysis.

Post-session

- The SLP and interpreter should discuss the presence, type, and frequency of errors that the interpreter heard during the session.

- The SLP may ask the interpreter questions about observed features of the patient's language. While the interpreter does not make any diagnostic decisions, they play an important role in the SLP's collection of accurate linguistic data.

- The interpreter may need to educate the SLP on communicative or social norms that they are aware of, such as cultural pragmatic features.

- The SLP may ask you to transcribe the patient's speech and/or indicate errors you observed.

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Transcribing a Language Sample

- Rewrite the sample word for word in the language the client used, including any and all errors:

Bueno, el gato está atrapada en un árbole. Y un persona va a buscar gato. Pero no ve. Luego el gato bajando y correr.

- Circle or highlight errors.

Bueno, el gato está atrapada en un árboles. Y un persona va a buscar gato. Pero no lo vea. Luego el gato bajando y correr mucho y lo ven correr pero no pueden.

- Discuss with the SLP the types of errors you observed in the client's native language.
  - Noun/adjective agreement (gender)
  - Article/noun agreement (number)
  - Article/noun agreement (gender)
  - Missing article
  - Incorrect conjugations
  - Incorrect verb tense
  - Run-ons/incoherent sentences

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Intricacies of Atypical Speech and Language

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Interpreting Speech and Language with Accuracy

Semantic Errors: Interpret the word the client produces exactly, even if it is incorrect.

Phonetic and Phonological Errors: Discuss with your SLP beforehand how phonological errors should be interpreted. Options include interpreting the word as normal, then adding in a statement about the error you heard, or making notes of errors you hear for later discussion. Attempting to replicate the error in English is not always transferable or practical.

Morphological Errors: If morphemes are omitted, either omit those same morphemes in your interpretation or make a note for later discussion. The same principle applies to morphemes that are substituted.

Fluency Errors: It is acceptable and accurate to replicate fluency errors (such as stuttering) in your interpretation, but make a note of the sound and position in which the error was produced. A fast way to do this for further analysis is to write the word down and circle the part in which you heard a fluency breakdown.

Praxis Errors: If meaning can still be derived from words, interpret the words as they were intended to be said and make a note of the praxis problems. If the word is completely unintelligible, do not interpret the word or indicate to the SLP that a non-word (neologism) has been produced.

Prosodic Errors: The interpreter should make note of prosodic errors they hear for later discussion. Attempting to replicate the error in English is not always transferable or practical.

Filler Words: Need not be interpreted unless requested by the SLP.

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Interpreting During Standardized Assessments

- Oftentimes, an interpreter will be requested to give a standardized assessment with the SLP. These assessments collect data about an individual's speech, language, or other abilities.

- While it is critical that the speech-language pathologist train an interpreter on how to administer any form of assessment, it is especially imperative that an interpreter is trained by the SLP on how to administer any norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests, as they must be administered exactly as instructed per the testing manual. (Shipley & McAfee, 2009, p. 9)

- Moreover, providing any additional cueing (such as body language, directionality of eye gaze, or gestures) also renders the results invalid. (ASHA, 2012b)

- Different assessments do allow different types of cues. Depending on the assessment, these cues must be given in a very specific manner. The SLP should train the interpreter on giving cues if applicable.

- Lack of interpreter training on assessment administration is a threat to the validity and reliability of results. Proper training ensures that the SLP gains accurate data about a client's speech and language abilities.

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Interpreting for Patients with Aphasia

- **Aphasia** is an acquired neurological condition that affects a patient's ability to map language to concepts in the brain.

- **In people with aphasia, intelligence is intact.** They may just have trouble getting words out or understanding incoming words because of the disconnect between the language and their thoughts.

- https://vohadmin.github.io/Aphasia_Sim/aphasia-simulations/listening-impairments-simulation-2.html

- There are many different types of aphasia. With expressive aphasias, be patient and give them time to speak. With receptive aphasias, consider the following strategies to make sure that you are understood:
    - Speak slowly and in clear sentences. Avoid using sentences that are linguistically complex or in the passive voice. It is important to do this *without* condescending or adopting a childlike tone.
    - Use a small whiteboard or piece of paper to write down key words. Sometimes it helps for people with aphasia to see the word, in order to supplement their deficits in auditory comprehension.
    - Look for clues about whether they have understood you or not- some people try to hide this.
    - Allow the person to **demonstrate competence** by writing an answer, pointing to a picture, or selecting out of a number of optional answer choices.

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Interpreting for Domains Besides Speech and Language

Cognition
- Understand that deficits in executive functioning, memory, or attention may impact the conversation.
- Be aware that cognitive disinhibition may cause the person to say things that would be considered rude or mean, and that it is a product of their condition.

Swallowing
- Familiarize yourself with complex medical jargon involving the swallowing anatomy and physiology.
- Be prepared to interpret for patient counseling sessions that may be emotional in nature.

Voice
- Be prepared to interpret for patients who may have impacted intelligibility, reduced vocal quality, or who speak very quietly.
- Do not interpret vocal exercises, but do interpret instructions and feedback from the clinician.

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Barriers to the SLP/Interpreter Relationship

For SLPs
- SLPs have limited time to schedule pre- and post-sessions with interpreters, and billing/scheduling software may pose barriers.
- Some SLPs are unaware of the linguistic and cultural challenges interpreters face, and many are not trained in how to work with interpreters properly.
- SLPs have raised concerns about the challenges of over-the-phone or virtual interpreting through a screen, indicating that it impacts effective communication and comprehension between all parties.

For Interpreters
- The field of speech-language pathology is underdeveloped or nonexistent in some countries, and some languages simply don't have translations for our terminology.
- Some cultures that interpreters work with may have negative or challenging attitudes towards disabilities.
- Interpreters have concerns for professional liability if they contribute information used when determining eligibility for special education services, but some employers don't currently provide liability insurance.

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Addressing Barriers and Interpreter Concerns

- Training of both interpreters and SLPs in creating a more optimal interaction.
- Publishing of resources that provide guidelines about the interaction and/or glossaries of terms.
- Incorporation of procedures into best practices guidelines and support from education administration (local, state, and federal government) and higher education.
- Expansion of the role of the interpreter (St. Paul Public Schools as a prime example)
  - Can this model be sustained and replicated across the country?
  - Should the professional's role be given a name other than "interpreter" and have its own code of ethics?
  - Is it ethical for one person to help gather information used to identify a disability and to also interpret for meetings when information is conveyed to parents?

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Resources

- Aphasia Pathway resources for training communication partners with aphasia: https://www.aphasiapathway.com.au/?name=communication-training
- American Translators Association-Dynamic Duos: https://www.atanet.org/growing-your-career/dynamic-duos-how-interpreters-and-speech-language-pathologists-collaborate-to-serve-children-with-disabilities/
- Bilinguistics: https://bilinguistics.com/
- Tactus Therapy glossary (English only): https://tactustherapy.com/speech-therapy-terms-defined/
- English-Spanish Terms in Speech, Language, and Hearing (English/Spanish): https://www.amazon.com/English-Spanish-Terms-Speech-Language-Hearing/dp/B0CV4962ND?ref_=ast_author_dp
- Glosario de logopedia (Spanish only): https://logologopedia.wordpress.com/glosario-de-logopedia/
- Dictionnaire de Logopedie. Les Troubles Acquis Du Langage, Des Gnosies Et Des Praxies (French only): https://www.amazon.com/Dictionnaire-Logopedie-Pedagogique-lInstitut-Linguistique/dp/9042912782

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QUESTIONS

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