



new mexico center  
for language access

MULTILINGUAL INTERPRETING  
AND TRANSLATION  
CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

# Newsletter

Issue IV



★ Happy nEW Year! ★

Court interpreter and interpreter trainer Yuliya Cloud talks about team interpreting in the courts.



When we think of court proceedings court interpreter is not one of the first players that comes to mind. But there are proceedings that are only taking place because the presence of an interpreter provides the necessary language connection.

Having an interpreter facilitates the due process in the courts and it is becoming more and more common to see staff interpreters being hired. They ensure due process not just for the non-English speaking defendant; it is due process for all of us. With the help of the interpreter the courts are able to function and either find the defendant not guilty and move on to look for the person who is guilty indeed or put a perpetrator behind bars for everyone's safety.

It takes more than being bilingual to work as an interpreter and even after many years of schooling and training it takes two to do the job right in a long proceeding. When interpreters are working in simultaneous mode there is no time to get distracted or allow the mind to wander. As much as looking up to waive hello can throw the interpreter off. While everyone else in the courtroom has the luxury to pause to think before they speak, the interpreter doesn't – s/he is the voice of several people at once. If one speaker is pausing – the other is speaking, so there is no time to stop.

The common practice is to have two interpreters if the proceeding takes more than two hours. The interpreters then switch every half hour or so. However, it does not mean that interpreters are actually on a break when they are not actively interpreting. It is simply a relief from 100% concentration that allows the interpreter to take a breath and look up any words that have been encountered. Maybe there was something that was not interpreted perfectly, or that interpreter had doubts about. It is also the time to be the fallback for your teammate, who is now working with the

100% concentration.

In a good team, interpreters have learned to synchronize their work very well and as soon as the active interpretation is over it is time to pick up the dictionary. Interpreters who have worked together for some time develop a sense of what term may be of difficulty to their partner and try to rescue them by looking it up before the time comes to say it. Usually none of these worries and arrangements are obvious to anybody who is not paying close attention.

The switching in the interpretation should also be seamless. The switch of the voice tone is already distracting for the end-user. If part of the text is lost in addition, it may cause further distraction and disrupt the proceedings.

To work together as a well-oiled machine, interpreters should take quite a few factors into consideration.

First of all, the arrangement of equipment has to be thought out in advance.

Sometimes only one microphone may be available to two interpreters. That means, if the timing is tight during the switch, there may be glitches with the equipment. It will take time for the new interpreter to adjust the volume controls to work with their voice. In some cases something as simple as the microphone cable coming unplugged from being tangled in the clothing can cause a long uncomfortable pause.

For those reasons as well as in order to make the switch go easy on the listener it is best to avoid switching in the middle of a speech. If it is a closing argument or opening statement it is best to have the same interpreter.

Next come the gestures interpreters use to indicate that they want to switch.

While it seems that it shouldn't be that complex, the cases of miscommunication do happen. What happens then is the interpreters try to speak two different newly invented sign languages. They try and try to understand and clarify what they mean by adding more gestures and changing facial expressions. While this communication is taking place, the quality of the interpreted output of the active interpreter goes down dramatically. It is extra embarrassing if this dialogue goes so far that the judge and others in the courtroom have to pause in observation of the silent play.

This situation is most easily avoided if the interpreters agree in advance that they will switch either:

- ✓ at the 30-minute mark, or
- ✓ as soon as a specific segment of the proceedings is over, or
- ✓ as soon as the active interpreter asks for it.

The person actively interpreting should rule on the issue. S/he may be too tired to go on and the teammate should be prepared to take over at any time. There should never be arguing about switching while it is happening. Even if you don't feel tired at the time, you should switch and follow the schedule that had been agreed on before. The feeling of tiredness will come later and pacing yourself is a good idea. Following the schedule without argument allows you to look professional and does not disturb the proceedings.

Like with any profession, proper planning and practice is everything. If you are working with someone for the first time do not be shy to politely bring up the issues you need to discuss. This is exactly not the time to wait to cross that bridge and it will make all the difference in the world. The reason why the other interpreter is not bringing it up may be as simple as you have read the article on how to do this right and they didn't 😊.

# Professional Development Classes

## Advanced Spanish for Language Professionals (SPAN 293 – online)

**This is an online 3-credit course offered through UNM Los Alamos.** The course's main focus is to improve students' advanced Spanish language oral and written skills. Topics include: advanced use of language, terminology, collocations, prepositions, grammar, pronunciation, colloquialisms, idioms, and Hispanic culture. Heritage speakers, translators, interpreters and advanced Spanish students are ideal candidates to this course. This is an online course. **Requisite:** NMCLA admission process required. **Next class begins on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011** Registration: [www.la.unm.edu](http://www.la.unm.edu) 505-661-4688

## Advanced English for Language Professionals (ENGL 298 – online)

**This is an online 3-credit course offered through UNM Los Alamos.** The course's main focus is to improve students' advanced English language oral and written skills. Topics include: advanced use of language, terminology, collocations, prepositions, grammar, pronunciation, colloquialisms, idioms, and American culture. Translators, interpreters and advanced ESL students are ideal candidates to this course. This is an online course. **Requisite:** NMCLA admission process required. **Next class begins on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011.** Registration: [www.la.unm.edu](http://www.la.unm.edu) 505-661-4688

## English-Spanish Criminal & Procedure Law Terminology I (online)

This class introduces students to the most common terms of criminal and procedure law, the legal concepts behind them and how to translate legal terms based on a model of functional equivalency. The class will greatly enhance students' terminological knowledge and prepare them for classes in consecutive and simultaneous court interpreting. **Duration:** 4 weeks. **Next class begins on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## Justice System Interpreting (online)

This class introduces students to fundamental legal concepts and terminology, and the NM and federal legal systems. The class includes intensive practice in the three modes of interpreting with a high degree of specialization. **Duration:** 8 weeks. **Requisite:** NMCLA admission process required. **Next Class begins on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.**

## Medical Interpreting (online)

This class introduces students to fundamental medical concepts and terminology, and basic anatomy and physiology. The class includes intensive practice in the three modes of interpreting with a higher degree of specialization. **Requisite:** NMCLA admission process required. **Next Class begins on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.**

## Mentorship Program (face-to-face – online)

### Program includes:

1. Face-to-face intensive training session at UNM School of Law
2. Practice simultaneous interpreting examination (administered under the same conditions of the consortium's examination + rating/feedback from instructor).
3. Court observation
4. Volunteer program at UNM Law Clinic
5. Interpreting for jurors at UNM School of Law Mock Trials
6. Online test preparation with instructor

**Program starts on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Requisites:** Must have taken NM Court Interpreter Orientation in 2010 or 2011. Must have passed the Consortium Written Examination. NMCLA admission process required.

## Intensive Face-to-face Training Session

### Sessions include:

1. Professionalism and marketing of language services
2. Overview of final examinations
3. Intensive practice in the three modes of interpreting
4. Practice simultaneous examination (administered under the same conditions of the consortium's examination + rating/feedback from instructor)
5. Mini mock trial
6. Interpreting for jurors
7. Language-specific session

**Dates:** June 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2011. **Requisites:** same as Mentorship Program.