Best Practices in Working with Interpreters

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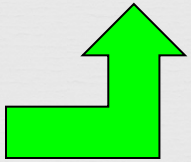
Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail

Harold R. McAlindon

Improve Systems at all Levels

Improve Cultural and Linguistic Access and Services

Improve Provider Knowledge and Skill



Building the Case

- Meaningful communication is essential to access and service delivery
- Gives hope, improves quality, outcomes and client satisfaction
- Reduces disparity
- Risk management
- Good business practice

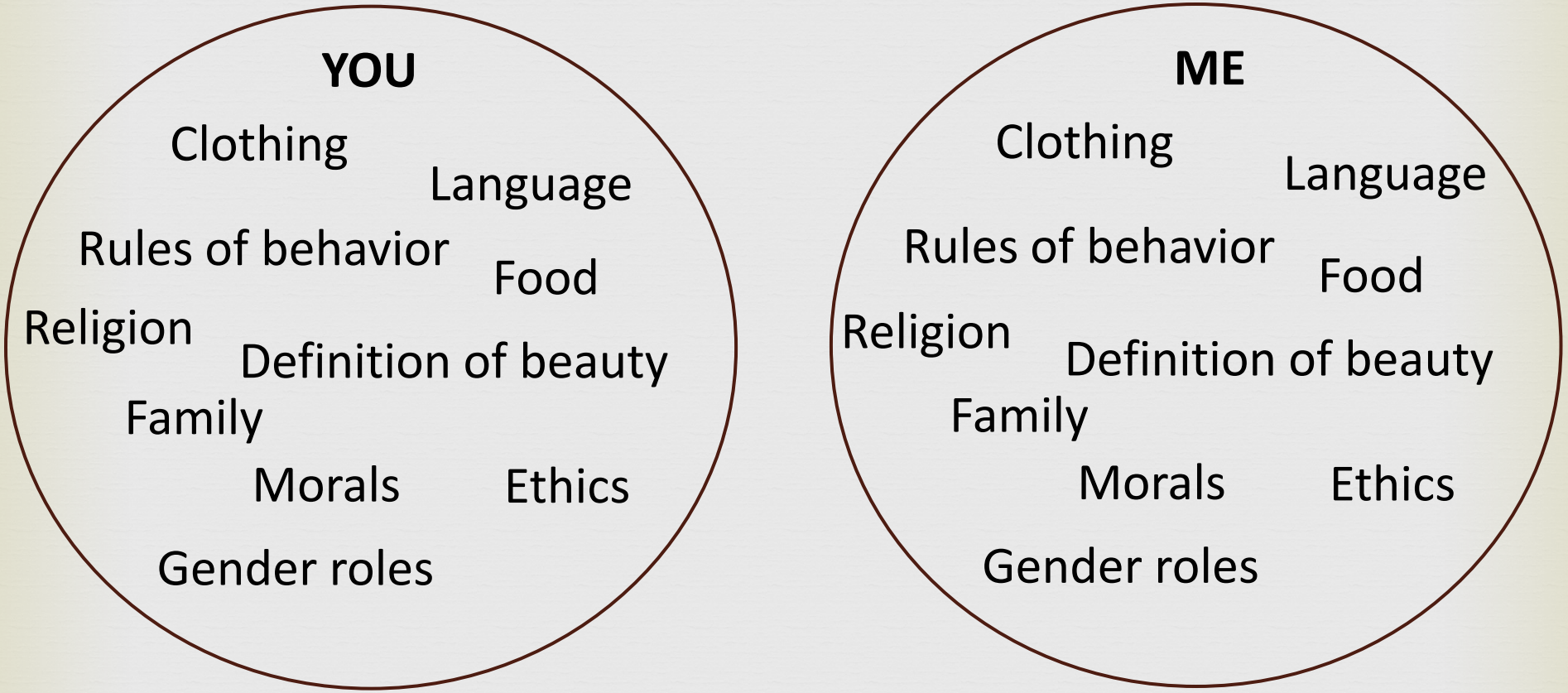
Office of Civil Rights Title VI

- No person in the United States of America shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color or **national origin**.
- Outlines the responsibilities of providers who receive federal financial assistance.

Definitions

- Interpreters vs. Translators
- Culture
- Linguistic Competence
- Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence



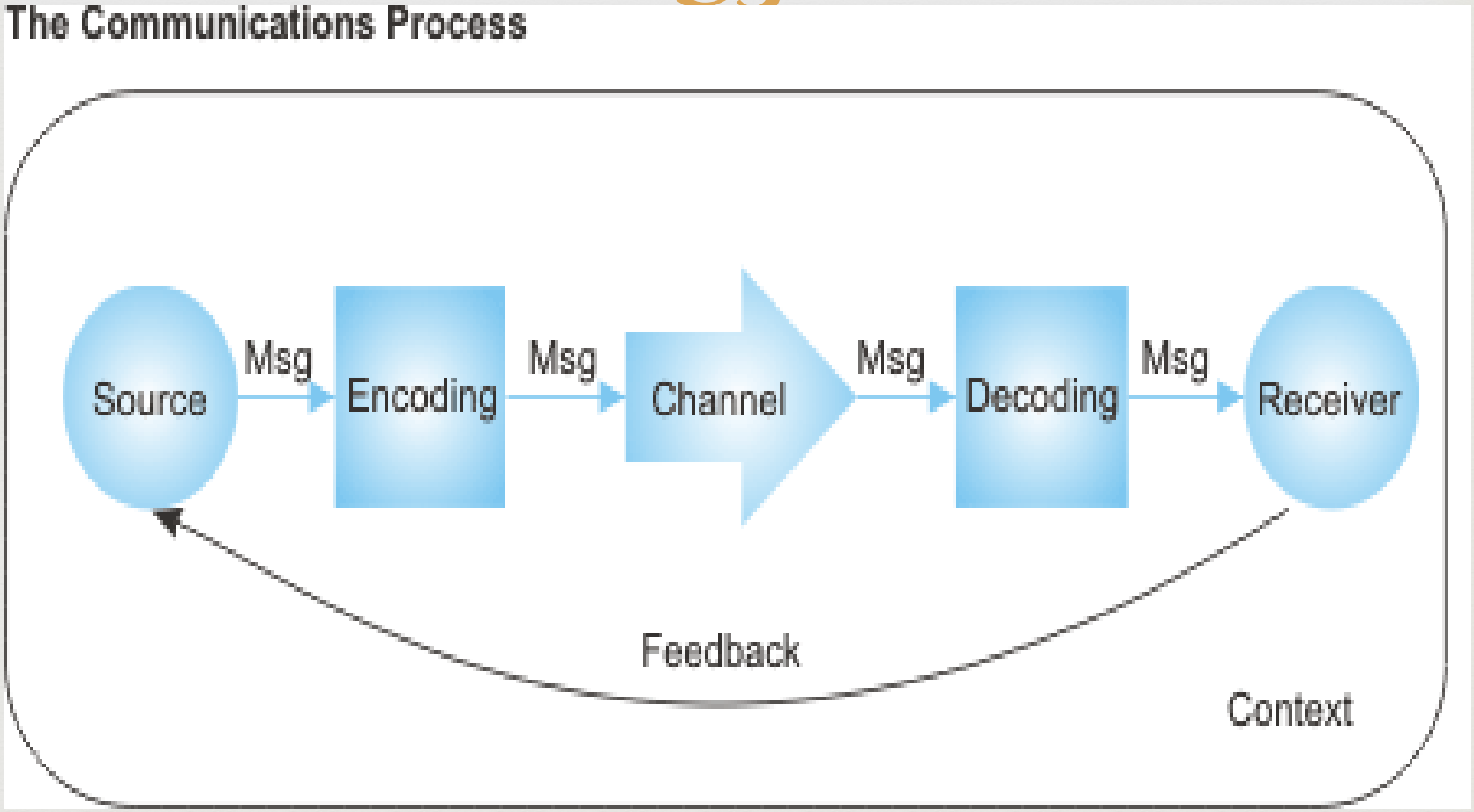
"To see beyond the boundaries of your own cultural interpretations" -- Adopted from Walker, 1991

Worldviews

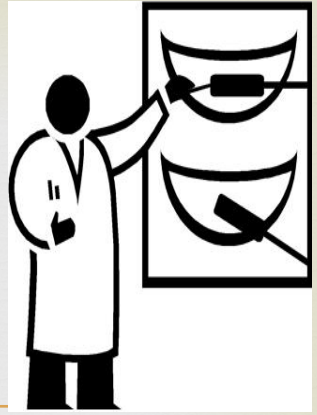
- Philosophy of Life - Our "experience with social, cultural, environment, philosophy and psychological dimensions."
- World views are composed of attitudes, values, opinions, and concepts and also affect how we think, make decisions, behave and define events.

Communication

Cycle of communication



Types of communication



- Communication is exchanging information in the form of messages, symbols, thoughts, signs and opinions. There are many different types of communication, depending on the medium used for communication or the way in which information is exchanged. There are four basic types of communication: verbal, non-verbal, written and visual

Effective communication

- is all about conveying your messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. It's also about receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible

Active listening

- Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well you listen has a major impact on communication, and on the quality of your relationships with others.
- We listen to obtain information
  We listen to understand.
  We listen for enjoyment.
  We listen to learn.

Active listening cont.

- Given all this listening we do, you would think we'd be good at it! In fact we're not. Research suggests that we remember a dismal 25-50% of what we hear.
- That means that when you talk to your boss, colleagues, customers or spouse for 10 minutes, they only really hear $2\frac{1}{2}$-5 minutes of the conversation.

Communication skills

- Good communication skills require a high level of self-awareness.
- By understanding your personal style of communicating, you will go a long way towards creating good and lasting impressions with others.

Barriers to Communication

- **Linguistic**: differences in spoken language.
- **Register and experience with concepts**: Complex language that may not be understood by someone with limited education.
- **Cultural**: difference in culture that lead to dissimilar expectations of behavior that affect both the meaning of the communication and the quality of care.
- **Demographics**: region of origin, dialect, education, age, gender, marital status, religion, etc.
- **Systemic**: Complexity of system and systemic problems that create briers to effective communication.

Situations when an interpreter should be called

- Interpreters should be called in all instances where significant information needs to be elicited from or conveyed to the client

Preparation

- Identify the appropriate language or dialect (e.g., people born in China may speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien or any of numerous other languages. Telephone interpreter service can help to determine this
- Consider client's ethnicity, religion, education and literacy

During the meeting
use professional interpreters

- Maintain control of the meeting at all times
- Avoid talking to the interpreter, speak directly to the client
- Brief the interpreter whenever possible prior to the meeting
- Pause often, allow the interpreter time to interpret
- Children, family members, friends or chance interpreters should not be asked to interpret
- Minimize usage of telephone interpreting services

Roles an Interpreter Can Take to Overcome Barriers

- Direct or Conduit
- Explainer or Clarifier
- Culture Interface
- Educator
- Advocate or Fair Play

- In a cooperative relationship only

Modes of Interpreting

- Consecutive/taking turns - most common, less confusing, more accurate
- Simultaneous/together - most useful when interpreting for one person to a large group. Useful during emergencies
- Sight Translation - reading from a document written in another language, as if it was written in English (or vice versa). Consent forms, discharge instructions etc.
- Summarization/high points. Not recommended, very subjective

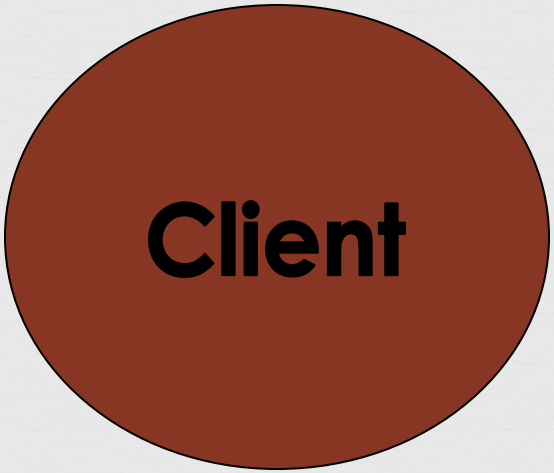
Interpreter Skills

- Useful tools
- Allow to facilitate interpreted session
- Difference between trained and chance interpreters

Pre-session

- Ground rules
- Establishes parameters
- Builds trust

Positioning



1st person interpretation

- Accurate
- Complete
- Reported speech

Mental Health Interpreting

- Mental health interpreting is a unique and highly specialized field in which vocabulary and words in general carry a great weight
- Pollard and Dean (2003) explain that "Psychiatry is unique among the medical fields in that most of the symptoms are conveyed by or through communication, and communication also is the primary method and nature of treatment."

In Addition…

- The interpreter must be able to accurately interpret specialized vocabulary used in psychiatric settings in both the source and the target languages
- The interpreter must be aware of psychopathologies, including knowledge of the names of the major mental illnesses
- The interpreter must demonstrate familiarity with assessment methods and understanding of the impact of interpretation when interpreting assessments
- The interpreter must have exposure to treatment approaches and demonstrate awareness of how cultural influences might impact treatment

Ethics

- Code of professional conduct for interpreters
- Rules developed to protect the rights of the client and the interpreter and support effective communication

Key Factors in The Development of the Language Access Initiatives

1. Create a Task Force
2. Research "best Practice" to form basis of formation of policy
3. Develop goals
4. Development of policy which addressed the following:

- Reiterate Federal and State mandates
- Establish relationship to other key policies (i.e. Multicultural)
- Provide process to "qualify" staff who interpret and /or translate
- Establish Linguistic Competency in entire care continuum
- Develop community resources to achieve goals and establishment of partnership designed and focused on achieving goals.

*Joint Commission

- Standard HR.01.02.01 instructs hospitals and healthcare organizations to define and confirm staff qualifications.
- Organizations will be expected to maintain documented evidence proving language proficiency assessment, education, training, and experience for all interpreters that work full time, part time, through an agency, or through a remote telephone or video interpreter service

Generalized breakdown of Interpreter Decision Making

- Logistics 8%
- Laws and Policy 7%
- Socio -cultural 25%
- Ethical Dilemmas 3%
- Linguistic 57%
- Not all decisions are ethical dilemmas, though they contain ethical concerns
- Federal law outweighs state law, which in turn outweighs organizational policy, which in turn outweighs standards of practice

What is an ethical decision?

- **Moral Decision = Right versus Wrong**

- **Ethical Decision = Possible Right versus Possible Right...**

- A decision that is made between two or more right, but competing, solutions that arise in a situation in which the person is torn between two or more conflicting ethical principles or guidelines. An ethical decision, then, involves determining which solution is 'most right' within a particular context

Ethical Dilemma

- When working as an ASL/English interpreter in a medical setting, the medical professional asks about the use of certain street drugs, stressing the procedure will be fatal if the patient has used street drugs at any time in the preceding six months. Although the patient denies any drug use and signs a waiver to permit the procedure, the interpreter has personal knowledge that the patient has used street drugs during the time period stated

Humphrey, Decisions? Decisions! A Practical Guide for Sign Language Professionals, 1999, p. 14

One Possible Right…

- Clarify with the client what is literally being asked, i.e., "Do you understand that the medical professional is asking if you use any kind of drugs – meaning either prescription drugs or street drugs"

Based on the obligation to render the message faithfully. Perhaps the clarification is needed

Another Possible Right…

- Make explicit the medical professional's goal, in that the question is intended to be taken as a warning and that there can be an interaction with the medication

Based on the obligation to render the message faithfully (including implication) and to support the patient's right to informed consent

Yet Another Possible Right…

- Interpret the message literally (and do nothing else)

Based on the obligation to respect autonomy, as well as privacy/confidentiality

There would have to be no threat to the foundation value, ***life***

Yet Another Possible Right…

- Offer to re-interpret the waiver

Based on the obligation to render the message faithfully, to support the patient's right to informed consent, and to respect autonomy

One more Possible Right…

- Express to the medical professional that there is a possibility that the patient may be taking street drugs

Based on the obligation to protect human life

It seems clear that this option may only be used in an extreme case in which the risk would be life-threatening and the patient was extremely weak and vulnerable

2003 JOI, pages 3 and 4, Jack Hoza

Ethics and Professionalism

- "It is the obligation of every interpreter to exercise judgment, employ critical thinking, apply the benefits of practical experience, and reflect on past actions in the practice of their profession.
- The guiding principles represent the concepts of confidentiality, linguistic and professional competence, impartiality, professional growth and development, ethical business practices, and the rights of participants in interpreted situations to informed choice.
- The driving force behind the guiding principles is the notion that the interpreter will do no harm."

NAD -RID Code of Professional Conduct

Ethical Decision-making

- Remove threat to foundation
- Prioritize and minimize action guide conflicts

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- National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University
- Bridging the Gap, Cross-Cultural Health Care Program
- Alabama Department of Mental Health. (2003). Chapter 580-3-24, Mental health interpreter standards
- Pollard, R. Q., & Dean, R. K. (2003). Interpreting/translating in mental health settings
- IMIA materials

Thank You Very Much