



## Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2011

### I29 Communicating Effectively Through the Use of an Interpreter During Face-to-Face Interactions

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain an effective practice for the use of interpreters during face-to-face interaction. This approach has been used with a variety of cultures such as Spanish, Polish, and Middle Eastern subjects during criminal investigations. The concept of this interviewing approach is to focus the cognitive and behavioral mechanisms used during communications to the same communicative path between for greater communicative efficiency.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by allowing attendees to gain an immediate interpreter protocol allowing greater investigative control and communicative efficiency with subjects of different cultures during interviews and interrogations.

During interviews and interrogations sessions, interpreters may tend to take over control of these interactive sessions between subject and investigator. Due to this intended or unintended control, the communicative paths between investigator and subject may be altered, as well as investigative strategy adversely influenced and hindered.

While assigned to the Chicago Police Polygraph Section during the 1990's, a polygraph examination regarding a sexual abuse investigation was administered. The investigation involved multiple Spanish speaking offenders in which the sexual abuse had been on-going for several years. A Spanish interpreter was used and positioned in the conventional Interpreter Protocol for polygraph examinations, criminal investigative interviews, and interrogations. The conventional Interpreter Protocol had the interpreter sitting in front of the subject and the examiner sitting to the side of both the subject and interpreter. The examiner would verbally relay a question to the interpreter and the interpreter would relay the question back to the subject and then relay to the examiner the subject's response. For the rest of this explanation, the examiner will be referred to as the inquisitor for the commonality of understanding as the Interpreter Protocol can be used in a variety of face-to-face interactions outside the administration of polygraph examinations.

During the interview session the inquisitor realized the interaction between the interpreter and subject was taking longer than normal for basic questions. As the conversation in Spanish continued on between the interpreter and subject, the inquisitor asked repeatedly what was the subject saying. Finally the inquisitor interjected and demanded what was being said. The interpreter stated, "He is telling me he is sorry and wants to tell the truth now," the inquisitor was concerned about any legal issues as well as allowing the subject an objective offering of fact and immediately repositioned the interpreter behind the inquisitor. Thus, a revised approach of Interpreter Protocol was established and identified as the Crime Lab Interpreter Protocol (CLIP), or simply Interpreter Protocol.

The inquisitor now sits in front of the subject with the interpreter sitting behind the inquisitor in a somewhat diagonal position with the interpreter's side almost touching the inquisitor's back area. The inquisitor will cue the interpreter by the slightly tilting back of the head, on this cue the interpreter will speak into the ear of the inquisitor as the subject speaks in their foreign tongue. The inquisitor will respond to the subject verbally as the interpreter speaks out loud in Spanish to the subject at the same time. This practice of both the inquisitor and interpreter speaking at the same time may appear unconventional or confusing for communications; but, if the interpreter and inquisitor are

in-sync the conversation between subject and inquisitor will follow the same communicative path. Due to the consistent efforts of the inquisitor, the subject will begin to follow the same communicative path of tonality in voice, gestures; etc., as both progresses through the interaction. During the Interpreter Protocol, subjects may attempt to talk or look at the interpreter, but the inquisitor's natural body position and slight movements will counter these attempts, and the body of the inquisitor will naturally shield the interpreter from view of the subject. During the face-to-face interaction the subject and inquisitor will begin to interact with each other as in a normal face-to-face interaction on the same communicative path. Enhancement to the Interpreter Protocol can increase due to the inquisitor's having knowledge or insight into the subject's particular culture.

During debriefings of interpreters after the Interpreter Protocol was administered, two consistent responses were expressed by interpreters: (1) "it was the most intense interpreting I have ever done," and, (2) "it was like I was not in the room and looking through a two-way mirror watching the interview."

The inquisitor also experienced similar intuitive feelings to the Interpreter Protocol, as if no interpreter was in the room and subject and inquisitor were carrying on a viable conversation between each other. Both subject and inquisitor become aligned to the same communicative path in which speech, gestures, nuances of the behavioral and cognitive mechanism of communications are exchanged as in any normal face-to-face



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interaction.

The positive results in positioning the interpreter behind the inquisitor and the interpreter is not looking at the subject, but only hears verbalization of the subject, speaks only those words used by subject and inquisitor, will minimize any aversive outside influences affecting the interaction as well as allow the inquisitor to maintain direct control of the communicative processing. Another contribution of the Interpreter Protocol can be demonstrated in court, the inquisitor can exemplify a sincere concern for a fair and impartial interactive session without any physical coercive mannerisms between subject and inquisitor.

The Interpreter Protocol can be an intense interactive strategic session, as the interpreter and inquisitor become in-sync with each other, this session can bring a communicative efficiency not normally experienced during investigative interviews and interrogations. **Interpreter Protocol, In-Sync, Communicative Path**