INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

**ISO
13611**

Interpreting — Guidelines for community interpreting

Interprétation — Lignes directrices pour l'interprétation en milieu social

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information.

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*.

Introduction

This International Standard was developed in response to a worldwide need to accommodate linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity of people who interact via oral and signed communication. In every nation of the world, there are groups of people who do not speak the language of the majority, regardless of whether they live in their country of citizenship or birth. These linguistic minorities access services through community interpreters, also called public service interpreters (See Annex A for further details). Community interpreting is essential for members of linguistic minorities who wish to exercise their right to communicate and access services. Community interpreting puts the minority language speaker, who seeks access to a community service, on the same footing as a native speaker of the societal language. The growing cultural and ethnic diversity adds specific challenges to the requirement of delivering services to consumers who do not share the societal language(s). In both urban and rural areas, speakers of the societal language and linguistic minorities communicate effectively, deliver, and access services through community interpreters.

Given the diversity of our world, encounters in which participants do not share a language are becoming more and more common. Community interpreting is a means by which service providers can ensure that the same access to quality of services is offered to all linguistic communities, regardless of their culture or language.

Community interpreting has become established as a professional type of interpreting. There are various codes and standards for specific settings (e.g. healthcare interpreting), but there are currently no universally agreed rules or standards for community interpreters, who are called to work in many different types of community settings.

It is important to stress that interpreting differs from translation as it deals mainly with oral or signed communication rather than written communication. Community interpreting occurs in a wide variety of dissimilar settings and should not be confused with other types of interpreting.

Interpreting — Guidelines for community interpreting

1   Scope

This International Standard establishes criteria and recommendations for community interpreting during oral and signed communication that enables access to services for people who have limited proficiency in the language of such services. Community interpreting occurs in a wide variety of private and public settings and supports equal access to community and/or public services.

This International Standard addresses community interpreting as a profession, not as an informal practice such as interpreting performed by friends, family members, children, or other persons who do not have the competences and qualifications specified in this International Standard or who do not follow a relevant Code of Ethics.

This International Standard is a guidance document. It establishes and provides the basic principles and practices necessary to ensure quality community interpreting services for all language communities, for end users, as well as for requesters, and service providers. Furthermore, it provides general guidelines that are common to all forms of community interpreting. This International Standard is applicable to settings wherever speakers of non-societal languages need to communicate to access services. The settings vary and can include, among others, the following:

— public institutions (schools, universities, community centres, etc.);

— human and social services (refugee boards, self-help centres, etc.);

— healthcare institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.);

— business and industry (real estate, insurance, etc.);

— faith-based organizations (rituals, ceremonies, etc.);

— emergency situations (natural disasters, epidemics, etc.).

Interpreting that enables access to services may include services provided in legal settings (police stations, courts, prisons, etc.) that facilitate equal access to justice. In some countries, legal interpreting, a broad field that includes court interpreting, is not considered part of community interpreting. This International Standard does not supersede national standards or legislation which addresses any sector of interpreting, including court or legal interpreting (See Annex A for further details).

This International Standard also provides guidance for the provision of community interpreting services. As a result, this International Standard addresses and refers to all parties involved in facilitating any communicative event that enables access to community services, such as members of linguistic minorities, community interpreters, community-interpreting service providers, public institutions, and other stakeholders who provide services to diverse linguistic communities.

2   Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1   Concepts related to interpreting activities

2.1.1
interpreting, verb
rendering a spoken or signed *source language* (2.4.5) message into a spoken or signed *target language* (2.4.6) in real time

2.1.2
community interpreting
public service interpreting
bidirectional interpreting that takes place in *communicative settings* (2.2.3) among speakers of different languages for the purpose of accessing community services

Note 1 to entry: Community interpreting may involve both private and public services provided by private or public *interpreting service providers* (2.3.1). Community interpreting is not limited to accessing social services and includes, for example, services to tourists and disaster victims.

2.1.3
consecutive interpreting mode
interpreting where the rendering of speech is performed into the other language at appropriate pauses or intervals during the interaction

Note 1 to entry: Consecutive interpreting mode is best suited to community interpreting and it is considered the default or most common mode.

Note 2 to entry: The intervals can be arranged beforehand between speakers and the *community interpreter* (2.3.3).

Note 3 to entry: The ability for *note-taking* (2.1.7) is recommended for consecutive interpreting mode.

Note 4 to entry: More time is recommended for interpreted *communicative events* (2.2.2) using consecutive interpreting mode.

Note 5 to entry: Community interpreters are allowed and sometimes even encouraged to request clarification when it is apparent that an end user has difficulty understanding a particular concept during the interpreted session.

2.1.4
simultaneous interpreting mode
interpreting where the rendering of a speech into another language is done at the same time as the speaker/signer is delivering the speech

2.1.5
chuchotage
simultaneous interpreting mode (2.1.4) where the rendering is whispered

Note 1 to entry: Chuchotage is sometimes used when sound equipment is not available or when the audience is too small to justify the use of sound equipment.

2.1.6
healthcare interpreting
medical interpreting
community interpreting (2.1.2) that occurs when individuals are accessing services that deal with medicine and/or healthcare and where *community interpreters* (2.3.3) facilitate communication between patients and their families, healthcare providers, and healthcare administrators

Note 1 to entry: The *communicative setting* (2.2.3) can be a doctor's office, a house call, a hospital, a health clinic, or other medical or healthcare institution.

2.1.7
note-taking
interpreting (2.1.1) technique used to aid the *community interpreter's* (2.3.3) memory and attention by noting important terms, links, and data

Note 1 to entry: The important information for noting can include items such as dates and figures.

2.1.8
sight translation
process of rendering written content in the *source language* (2.4.5) into the *target language* (2.4.6) in oral or signed form in real time

Note 1 to entry: Sight translation occurs frequently in *community interpreting* (2.1.2) (e.g. sight translating of medical test results, administrative forms in government institutions, etc.).

2.1.9
remote interpreting
interpreting (2.1.1) using specialized equipment to communicate between the parties

2.1.10
telephone interpreting
remote interpreting (2.1.9) using specialized telephone systems

2.1.11
video interpreting
remote interpreting (2.1.9) using specialized television screens/monitors

2.1.12
relay interpreting
interpreting (2.1.1) that occurs when an interpreter's source input comes from another interpreter's rendition rather than directly from the speaker

Note 1 to entry: When there are several target languages in a meeting and the interpreters of those languages do not all understand the language of the speaker (e.g. Urdu), a source language interpreter renders the text to a language common to all interpreters in the meeting (e.g. from Urdu to English) who then interpret into their respective target language (e.g. from English to French, German, Italian, Nahuatl, Spanish, Welsh, etc.).

2.2   Concepts related to interpreted communicative events

2.2.1
communicative event
event during which information is transmitted between two or more parties

Note 1 to entry: Intention, form, gist, gesture, pauses, silences, and tone used in a communicative event can affect the transmitted information

2.2.2
interpreted communicative event
communicative event (2.2.1) where *interpreting* (2.1.1) facilitates communication of at least three participants

EXAMPLE 1   A doctor-patient interview in which the doctor speaks the societal language and the patient is a speaker of a minority language.

EXAMPLE 2   A parent-teacher meeting where the teacher and the parents do not share the same language.

Note 1 to entry: The language used in an interpreted communicative event can be signed or spoken.

Note 2 to entry: For details on the three parties, see 3.1

2.2.3
communicative setting
physical or virtual area where an *interpreted communicative event* (2.2.2) takes place

Note 1 to entry: Sometimes *community interpreters* (2.3.3) work face-to-face and sometimes remotely using technology such as video or teleconferencing

EXAMPLE   A village meeting or school teacher-parent conference.

2.3 Concepts related to people or organizations involved in interpreting

2.3.1
interpreting service provider
ISP
person or organization supplying *interpreting* (2.1.1) services

Note 1 to entry: An ISP may be a single independent *community interpreter* (2.3.3), an agency, a private or public company, an institution, or a department within an institution such as an *interpreting* (2.1.1) department within a hospital.

2.3.2
interpreter
language professional who conveys a message produced in a *source language* (2.4.5), be it spoken or signed, into a *target language* (2.4.6), spoken or signed, in real time, and whose task is to convey every element of the message

Note 1 to entry: Elements of a message can include content, intention, form, gist, gesture, pauses, silences, tone, etc.

Note 2 to entry: A professional interpreter will always observe the relevant code of ethics of the profession as well as the standards of practice.

2.3.3
community interpreter
interpreter (2.3.2) who facilitates communication, in any *communicative setting* (2.2.3), be it private or public, between two or more speakers who do not share a common language, for the sole purpose of accessing community or public services

Note 1 to entry: A community interpreter should hold a degree in interpreting or in a field related to his/her work, or should have specific qualifications and exhibit *interpreting* (2.1.1) skills, demonstrating experience, observing the relevant code of ethics of the profession and earning income from *interpreting* (2.1.1).

2.3.4
client
person or organization requesting a language service from a language service provider

Note 1 to entry: The client is usually the person or organization that asks for *community interpreting* (2.1.2) or *translation* (2.5.3) on behalf of the *end users* (2.3.5). The client and *end user* (2.3.5) can be the same person or organization in some situations.

Note 2 to entry: Whether a contract is entered into between the client and an *ISP* (2.3.1), or the *end user* (2.3.5) and an *ISP* (2.3.1), will depend on the circumstances of each *communicative event* (2.2.1).

EXAMPLE   A community interpreting service.

2.3.5
end user
person or group of persons who ultimately need and use the language service requested

Note 1 to entry: The end user is often not the same as the *client* (2.3.4).

2.3.6
linguistic minority
group of people who might not read, write, speak, or understand the language(s) of the society where they reside well enough to obtain meaningful access to community or public services

2.4 Concepts related to language, language content, and language competences

2.4.1
societal language
language that is spoken or signed by the majority of the people in the society in which they live

2.4.2
non-societal language
language that is not spoken or signed by society at large, or is not the language of a territory or region

Note 1 to entry: Non-societal language can have less status than the societal language (2.4.1).

2.4.3
A language
working language that the *interpreter* (2.3.3) or *translator* (2.5.2) has declared as the strongest or most dominant/active language in his/her language combination

2.4.4
B language
working language in which the *interpreter* (2.3.3) or *translator* (2.5.2) is highly fluent and which s/he has declared as the second strongest active language in his/her language combination

2.4.5
source language
language of the source from which content is rendered into the *target language* (2.4.6)

2.4.6
target language
language into which *source language content* (2.4.7) is rendered

2.4.7
source language content
anything representing information or knowledge in the *source language* (2.4.5)

2.5 Concepts related to translation as differentiated from interpreting

2.5.1
translate, verb
render written source language content into target language content in written form

2.5.2
translator
language professional who *translates* (2.5.1)

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:—[1], 2.4.3, modified]

2.5.3
translation
process of rendering source language content into target language content in written form

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:—[1], 2.1.2]

3 Basic principles of community interpreting

3.1 Nature of community interpreting

Community interpreting facilitates communication between users and providers of public, private, and other community services who do not share the same language (either spoken or signed) for the purpose of accessing services offered in the community. It occurs mainly in institutional (governmental and non-governmental) settings such as hospitals, doctors' and solicitors' offices, community agencies, social welfare, faith-based organizations, housing or employment agencies, schools, and police stations.

Community interpreting involves the transfer of signed, verbal, and non-verbal messages in real time. The language of one user group (the provider) is usually the societal language(s) of the country. The

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1) To be published.