

Interpretation: Instructions for Priesthood Leaders

Introduction

Church units throughout the world are becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual. This can create challenges for you as a leader as you try to meet the needs of individuals within your unit boundaries. Language interpretation provides one source of help with these challenges.

It is important for you to recognize the language needs of members, including those who use sign language. Whenever possible, you will want to address those needs by drawing upon the language talents of other members in your unit. In this way you can help to ensure that members "hear the fulness of the gospel in [their] own tongue" (D&C 90:11).

These instructions include basic information about interpretation for stake, district, ward, and branch leaders. The principles and procedures given have general application, but you must determine how to provide interpretation for your members adapted to your local circumstances.

Settings

You will find that interpretation may be needed in a variety of settings, such as:

- Stake, district, ward, or branch conferences.
- Sacrament meetings.
- Priesthood and Relief Society meetings.
- Sunday School classes.
- High council, bishopric, and presidency meetings.
- Leadership training meetings.
- Interviews.
- Home teaching and visiting teaching.
- Ward activities.
- Missionary discussions.

Interpretation may be needed only for a very brief conversation between two people, or it may be needed for a two-hour meeting with hundreds of people present. The subject matter to be interpreted may be highly sensitive or nothing more than the exchange of pleasant greetings. It could be for a one-time event or for an ongoing need such as providing assistance to an individual in a Sunday School class every week over an extended period. You will need to structure the interpretation according to the specific needs.

Methods of Interpretation

The method of interpretation used will vary according to the setting. There are two principal methods of interpretation: consecutive and simultaneous.

Consecutive Interpretation

In consecutive interpretation, the speaker and the interpreter take turns. The speaker says a sentence or two and then pauses as the message is interpreted into another language. Consecutive interpretation may be used in, but is not limited to, situations such as those listed below:

Church meetings. An interpreter stands next to the speaker and repeats the message of the speaker in the target language.

Interviews. The interpreter provides two-way interpretation. He interprets the words of the priesthood leader for the member and also the member's words for the priesthood leader.

Missionary discussions. An interpreter provides two-way interpretation for full-time missionaries as they teach investigators.

Note: Any time you use consecutive interpretation, you need to allow extra time because everything must be said twice: first in the source language and then in the target language.

Simultaneous Interpretation

In simultaneous interpretation the speaker does not pause but speaks at a normal rate of speed. The interpreter listens to a few words or phrases and then begins to interpret as the speaker continues. Simultaneous interpretation may be used in a variety of situations, such as those listed below.

Church meetings or classes (with a transmitter). An interpreter is located in a booth or an area away from the main speaker. The interpreter uses a transmitter and interprets for members in the audience who are equipped with receivers and headsets.

Church meetings or classes (without a transmitter). An interpreter sits behind or next to an individual or group of people requiring interpretation. In a hushed voice, the interpreter repeats the words of the speaker or class teacher in the target language.

Sign language interpretation. Individuals who communicate by sign language are usually accustomed to interpreting simultaneously in any setting.

Selecting Interpreters

For some types of interpretation, an informal request may be all that is necessary. In other cases you may wish to make an assignment or even extend a formal calling. As you consider your local needs, the following guidelines will help you know how to select people to serve as interpreters.

Worthiness and Spirituality

Worthiness criteria for interpreters are the same as for other Church callings. Temple worthiness may be required for some interpretation assignments, while it may not be necessary for others. It is important, however, to remember that the interpretation of tongues is a spiritual gift and that interpreters should be worthy of the guidance of the Spirit in their service.

Gender of the Interpreter

Whenever possible, the interpreter should be the same gender as the speaker. This is particularly important when interpreting at priesthood, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings and for General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies.

Language Skills

Ideally, interpreters should have excellent skills in the target language and the source language. Sometimes, however, you may not have a large pool of potential interpreters and you may have to assign a person whose skills are not as strong but who is willing to learn.

Using Multiple Interpreters

Interpretation is physically and mentally taxing. In long meetings, an interpreter can tire quickly and might leave out relevant detail, interpreting only a portion of what the speaker says. In such settings it is often wise to assign two or more interpreters to work as a team.

Providing Support to Interpreters

There are three important things you can do to support interpretation in your unit:

1. Seek to identify and meet interpretation needs.

You may not be fully aware of all the members in your unit who need interpretation services. One way to be better informed is to include this subject as an agenda item in your council meetings. Also, depending on circumstances, it may be justified to assign responsibility for interpretation to a counselor, an executive secretary, an auxiliary leader, or someone else in your unit.

2. Provide interpreters with needed information in advance.

One of the most important keys to successful interpretation is preparation. An interpreter needs notice of an interpretation assignment as much in advance as possible in order to be fully prepared. Interpreters need to know the time and location of the event, the nature of the audience, and the subject matter to be discussed. It is extremely helpful to provide them with specific terminology and copies of handouts that will be used. If the speakers plan to use electronic media presentations, it is valuable for the interpreters to view them ahead of time.

3. Provide interpretation equipment as needed.

Providing equipment for interpretation can be very simple. Sometimes, all that is needed is a place for the interpreter to be seated or a portable microphone. In other cases the use of transmitters and receivers may be justified. If you need to purchase such equipment for a meetinghouse, it can be approved by the stake presidency and ordered by the physical facilities representative. Always be sure that any equipment needed by interpreters is in proper working order and that they are instructed in its use.

Suggestions for Speakers Who Use Interpreters

Prior to an Interpretation Assignment

- Well in advance of the needed interpretation, share with the interpreter as much information as possible. Include such things as topics and scripture references you will cover and any humor, poems, references, hymns, and questions that you may use.

In Interviews

- Face the person you are interviewing, not the interpreter, and speak as if he or she spoke your language.
- If it appears that the interpreter or the person being interviewed has misunderstood you, rephrase the same idea.

When Using Consecutive Interpretation

- If only one microphone is provided, share it with your interpreter.
- Do not speak with your head turned away from the microphone.
- When the interpreter is speaking, look at the audience.
- Pause after complete sentences rather than after phrases or clauses.
- If you invite questions or comments from the audience, request that a backup interpreter for each language be stationed in the audience with a portable microphone.

Checklist for Making an Interpretation Assignment

1. Determine the nature of the assignment.
 - a. Languages needed
 - b. Number of interpreters needed for each language
 - c. Number of people who need interpretation
 - d. Interpretation method to use
 - e. Need for interpretation equipment

2. Assign interpreters well in advance and provide information to them.
 - a. Agenda and theme of meeting
 - b. Audience for whom the interpretation is intended
 - c. Outlines of talks, lessons
 - d. Scriptures, songs, or poems that will be used
 - e. Specialized vocabulary lists
 - f. Training on the use of equipment

3. Arrange for equipment and technical support.
 - a. Transmitters and receivers
 - b. Lapel microphones or portable microphones
 - c. Set-up and testing of equipment
 - d. Monitoring of equipment during operation