

## **Interpreting and Translation: A way to end social exclusion**

Imagine: waking up one day and everything around you is in another language: the words of your beloved ones, the channels on TV, music on the radio, people on the streets, and signs on the road... All is new and maybe can become scary, isn't it? Probably, if this occurs, you are one of the thousands of immigrants who face this every day.

We live in a multicultural and cosmopolitan society in constantly changing. There are people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Many foreign people in the country use the public services offered in it: health, safety, justice, education... As users of these services, they have the right to be understood and understand how to benefit from them, as well as their organization and system. At that time the interpreter's work in the public services is necessary, as you can imagine.

Maybe, when you think of an interpreter or translator, you have the image of a person inside a cabin with some helmets passing ideas between the languages of the people who form the auditorium. The image of the interpreter is often associated with international conferences with personalities from different countries. However, interpreter's profession is not always performed under these conditions. Although, it is true that all these professionals have many common characteristics; It is true that the working conditions of the interpreter of the public services are not as sometimes as we can assume.

At this point, you must be aware of the importance that an interpreter has in medical consultation, in the care of emergencies of a hospital, in psychological therapy, in a courtroom with a judge... We can put ourselves in the skin of the immigrant: what would happen if we go to a foreign country and we are sick, without knowing the language to explain what happens to us and no one is able to understand us? And, if a person who says they understand our language and does not have enough level to cope with the situation? Could It not trigger this in a more serious health problem? If we think of other scenarios we will be able to reach the same conclusion, what would happen if an interpreter working for the police does not correctly interpret the statement of a detainee?

The interpreter can meet users in difficult situations with which he or she feels identified because he or she shares some traits such as lived experiences, nationality, ethnicity, etc. In addition, the interpreter can be faced with a particularly delicate situation, psychological consultation, with difficult conversations in the emotional field and with a patient psychologically affected. These consultations, longer than normal medical consultation, have special characteristics in communication that make the interpreter's work especially complicated: the professional is less active because it should allow the patient to express himself with total freedom. Silence is very important in these consultations and it is not necessary to try to fill it with clarifications or words of encouragement because in this way it would interfere in the medical communication - patient and the progress of the therapy would be obstructed. In General, the interpreter of the public services will work in a multicultural and multilingual situation in which the assistance is required. Often these circumstances are special to be given in spaces for social assistance and humanitarian aid.

## **Ulysses Syndrome**

A syndrome that affects immigrants is "Ulysses Syndrome." It appears when the person who arrives in a foreign country suffers prolonged stress and high doses. It is logical that the foreigner feels stress for the speed at which he must adapt to his new country, but it is true that when that stress cannot be controlled and provokes a state of constant anxiety and nervousness, the immigrant will be in trouble to lead a normal life. This immigrant syndrome can also affect the interpreter, especially if they both share origins or experiences. To a large extent, Ulysses' syndrome affects the immigrant and the interpreter, if this is foreign, because both suffer or have suffered some of the duels that affect the foreigner: the duel for family and friends, for the language, the duel for Culture, the duel for the land, the mourning for the status, the duel for contact with the ethnic group. Something that is more accentuated when immigrants live in situations of need or illness and don't feel the support of their closest relatives; It can also happen that this type of duel arises because the person feels guilty for having left relatives in their country of origin also in difficult circumstances. The duel for the mother tongue refers to the learning of a new language in the country of arrival and thus to part in a certain way of his, in addition in some cases, the immigrants must adapt to a new language, Thirdly, there is a duel for culture, which arises during the adaptation of the immigrant to new customs and ways of acting that can be very different from his own.

## **Foreign and Mental Health**

Although the foreign communities show a predisposition similar to mental health conditions, when compared to the rest of the population, there are unfortunately differences in access to treatment and the quality of treatment they receive. This inequality exposes them to a higher risk of having a mental health condition or an episode of crisis. As a community, people from Latin America are less likely to seek counseling & psychiatric treatment for their mental health. The community usually does not talk about mental health problems. There is little information about it. Many do not seek treatment because they do not recognize the symptoms of conditions or because they do not know where to find help. This lack of information increases the stigma associated with mental health conditions. Many do not seek help for fear of being categorized as "crazy" or as someone with a mental health condition, as this may cause shame. They tend to be reserved and do not share in public the problems they face in their home.

## **Understanding the culture**

Beliefs, culture, and language are key in all aspects of our lives, including our mental health. Cultural competence is the capacity of a doctor to recognize and understand the role of culture (yours and his) in treatment, and how to adapt it properly to help in the best way. To find a Latino Mental health professional, can be difficult or not possible because the percentage of Latin American providers is very small. Fortunately, the requirement for professionals to learn how to treat people from diverse communities is getting bigger. However, many providers still do not have cultural competence and do not know how effectively to help and serve Latin American effectively, because are sensitive to cultural differences. The mental health provider has an important role to play in the treatment, so it is important to be sure that they can work and communicate well with the patient.

Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go. The fact is much more than that: the work of the interpreter on health, justice or education represents the guarantee of citizens to access to public services and therefore implies: an indispensable tool in the fight against social exclusion. For more information, contact Family Service of the Chautauqua Region (716) 488-1971.