

Interpreters in Forensic Interviews of Children

A Bibliography



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Scope

This bibliography lists English language publications that cover issues related to the use of interpreters during forensic interviews of children. International publications are included.

Organization

Publications are listed in date-descending order. Links are provided to open access publications.

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Salaets, H., & Balogh, K. (2019). Interpreter-mediated questioning of minors (imqm): The voice of children and their rapport with interpreters. *Revista de Llengua i Dret*, 71, 27- 44.

This paper focuses on interpreter-mediated interviews with victims, suspects and witnesses under the age of 18 who are vulnerable because of their age, native language and country of presence, with particular emphasis on how to provide the necessary information, support and protection for this group. The paper reports on the results of the European project Cooperation in Interpreter-Mediated Questioning of Minors (CMIQ). As the name suggests, cooperation and teamwork among stakeholders are of paramount importance in interpreter-mediated questioning of minors (ImQM). This contribution will focus on semi-structured interviews conducted by Belgian researchers with twelve Flemish children, boys and girls aged five to 17, of which 11 were hearing and one was deaf. Based on the outcomes of twelve semi-structured interviews with minors, results point to specific perceptions of the interpreter reported by children: the interpreter seems to be the person they turn to when speaking and the person they trust most. Since codes of ethics prescribe, among other things, neutrality and often even ‘invisibility’ on the part of the interpreter, reflection on this topic is necessary. Based on the paramount importance of rapport-building with the child, this paper argues that the role of interpreters should be discussed not only during a briefing, but also in joint interprofessional training. In this way, all stakeholders improve their knowledge of their respective professional roles in ImQM situations, which helps to further tackle contradictory expectations with regard to the role of the interpreter.

Böser, U., & La Rooy, D. (2018). Interpreter-mediated investigative interviews with minors-setting the ground rules. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 13(2), 208-229.

When information is elicited from children in a criminal context, both their ability and willingness to disclose is at stake. In law, the communicative vulnerability of children is manifest in forensic protocols for interviewing children. These are designed to retrieve information in a child-aware fashion, as well as to produce evidence with sufficient integrity to stand up under the scrutiny of the criminal process. This article will consider some of the added challenges of interpreter-

mediated interviews for minors. Drawing on research into monolingual child interviewing, the article proposes how some of the interpreting related aspects of this challenge may be addressed through the adaptation of elements of reflexive coordination in the widely used NICHD child interviewing protocol. The authors call for the databased testing of these adaptations and suggests that modifications of institutional speech genres for bilingual use may be a component of mainstreaming public service interpreting.

Fontes, L. A., & Tishelman, A. C. (2016). Language competence in forensic interviews for suspected child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 58, 51-62.

Forensic interviews with children for suspected child sexual abuse require meeting children “where they are” in terms of their developmental level, readiness to disclose, culture, and language. The field lacks research indicating how to accommodate children’s diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This article focuses on language competence, defined here as the ability of an organization and its personnel (in this case, Child Advocacy Centers and forensic interviewers) to communicate effectively with clients regardless of their preferred language(s). In this qualitative study, 39 U.S. child forensic interviewers and child advocacy center directors discussed their experiences, practices, and opinions regarding interviews with children and families who are not native speakers of English. Topics include the importance of interviewing children in their preferred language, problems in interpreted interviews, bilingual interviews, and current and recommended procedures. Recommendations for practice and further research are included.

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Powell, M. B., Manger, B., Dion, J., & Sharman, S. J. (2016). Professionals’ perspectives about the challenges of using interpreters in child sexual abuse interviews. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 24(1), 90-101.

Interpreters play a crucial role in many investigative interviews with child complainants of sexual abuse; however, little has been written about the interpreting process from the perspective of the interviewers. This study elicited interviewers’ perspectives about the challenges of using interpreters with the aim of understanding how investigative interviews could be improved. The participants consisted of 21 investigative interviewers and prosecutors of child abuse cases (from a range of jurisdictions) who use interpreters on a regular basis. Thematic analysis of semi-structured

interviews with the professionals about the interpreting process revealed two main challenges particular to child abuse interviews, namely the interpreters' lack of preparedness to deal with the traumatic and sensitive nature of children's abuse histories, and an insufficient understanding of 'best-practice' child interview process. The recommendations focus on the need for more specialized training for, and screening of, interpreters, and more extensive use of pre-conferencing to familiarize children with the interpreter-mediated interview process.

Center for Innovation and Resources, Inc. (2011). [Guide for Forensic Interviewing of Spanish-Speaking Children 2nd edition](#). Rohnert Park, CA: Author.

The purpose of this guide is to provide helpful insights and strategies for persons interviewing Spanish-speaking monolingual and bilingual children. It also includes useful information for interpreters and suggestions for how multi-disciplinary interview teams can work together to obtain the best results.

Maddux, J. (2010). Recommendations for forensic evaluators conducting interpreter-mediated interviews. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, 9(1), 55-62.

Courts and forensic psychologists are more frequently working with interpreters as a result of the increasing linguistic diversity in the United States. This article reviews the published literature on how interpreter-mediated communication impacts the reliability and validity of forensic evaluation. Until there are sufficient numbers of multilingual forensic psychologists, the use of interpreters in forensic practice is unavoidable. Therefore, this article provides forensic psychologists with empirically-based recommendations to improve the reliability and validity of interpreter-mediated evaluations.

Fontes, L. A. (2010). [Interviewing immigrant children for suspected child maltreatment](#). *The Journal of Psychiatry & Law*, 38(3), 283-305.

Truter, E. (2010). *Language interpreting during the forensic interview: A social work investigation* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University).

The high incidence of sexual abuse of children requires the professional intervention of forensic social workers. However, the language barrier between the alleged victim of sexual abuse and the forensic social worker often hinders effective service delivery. The role of and need for language interpreters is therefore crucial, yet the use of language interpreters during forensic interviews frequently leads to problems that undermine effective service delivery and may be to the disadvantage of the alleged victim of sexual abuse. These problems need to be addressed and overcome so that the best interests of the child can be met, and justice served.

Fontes, L. A. (2009, Spring). Interviewing immigrant children and families for suspected child maltreatment. *APSAC Advisor*, 7-11.

Fontes, L. A. (2008). The interpreted interview. In *Interviewing clients across cultures: A practitioner's guide* (pp. 140-166). New York: Guilford Press.

Fontes, L. A., & Faller, K. C. (2007). Conducting culturally competent sexual abuse interviews with children from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In K. C. Faller (Ed.), *Interviewing Children about Sexual Abuse* (pp. 164-174). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hiltz, B., & Anderson, J. (2003). [Using interpreters in forensic interviews](#). *Update*, 16(1), 12.

Although there may come a day when forensic interviewers will have the skills to communicate with children in their native tongues, the present reality is that trained, multilingual interviewers are not readily available in many communities. This is especially true of languages not common in specific regions. It has been our practical experience that the best option in these situations is the use of a qualified interpreter to assist the interview process.