



Interpreters in Forensic Interviews of Children

A Bibliography

July 2024

**Championing and Strengthening the
Global Response to Child Abuse**

nationalcac.org | 256-533-KIDS(5437) | 210 Pratt Avenue NE, Huntsville, AL 35801

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Preferred citation: National Children's Advocacy Center. (2024). Interpreters in Forensic Interviews of Children: A Bibliography. Huntsville, AL: Author.

This project was supported by a grant awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Scope

This bibliography lists publications that cover issues related to the use of interpreters during forensic interviews of children.

Organization

Publications include articles, book chapters, reports, and research briefs and are arranged in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online.

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Interpreters in Child Forensic Interviews

A Bibliography

Koponen, L., Magnusson, M., & Ernberg, E. (2024). [Swedish interpreters' views and experiences of interpreting child forensic interviews](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 149, 106605. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106605

Background: Child forensic interviewers have expressed concerns regarding the quality of interpreter-mediated child forensic interviews. However, research on interpreters' perspectives on these interviews is scarce and specialized education for interpreters limited. Objective: This mixed-methods study aimed to explore interpreters' experiences and knowledge of interpreting child forensic interviews. Participants and setting: A total of 130 Swedish interpreters with different authorization statuses responded to a digital survey about interpreting child forensic interviews. Methods: Qualitative data were analyzed with reflexive thematic analysis and content analysis, and quantitative data with descriptive and inferential statistics. Results: Interpreters reported challenges concerning children's limited language skills, the emotional effects of interpreting child forensic interviews, the limited access to information before interviews, and the complex balance between following interpreters' ethical guidelines and adjusting for situational demands. Regarding practical conditions, interpreters preferred interpreting in person instead of via telephone. Interpreters' general knowledge of child forensic interviewing did not differ between interpreters with different authorization statuses ($F(2,108) = 0.80, \omega^2 = -0.002, p = .45$), except from views on using leading questions ($H(2) = 17.34, \eta^2 = 0.14, p < .001$) and whether interpreters may clarify terms to child interviewees ($H(2) = 8.02, \eta^2 = 0.06, p = .02$). Conclusions: It is crucial to consider interpreters' perspectives when striving to improve the quality of interpreter-mediated child forensic interviews. Interpreters should be provided sufficient information to prepare and assess their suitability. Interpreters should also be offered education in interpreting child forensic interviews and given appropriate service structures to support their wellbeing.

Dando, C. J., Taylor, P. J., & Sandham, A. L. (2023). [Cross cultural verbal cues to deception: Truth and lies in first and second language forensic interview contexts](#). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1152904. DOI:10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1152904

Introduction: The verbal deception literature is largely based upon North American and Western European monolingual English speaker interactions. This paper extends this literature by comparing the verbal behaviors of 88 south Asian bilinguals, conversing in either first (Hindi) or second (English) languages, and 48 British monolinguals conversing in English. Methods: All participated in a live event following which they were interviewed having been incentivized to be either deceptive or truthful. Event details, complications, verifiable sources, and plausibility ratings were analyzed as a function of veracity, language and culture. Results: Main effects revealed cross cultural similarities in both first and second language interviews whereby all liar's verbal responses were impoverished and rated as less plausible than truth-tellers. However, a series of cross-cultural interactions emerged whereby bi-lingual South Asian truth-tellers and liars interviewed in first and second languages exhibited varying patterns of verbal behaviors, differences that have the potential to trigger erroneous assessments in practice. Discussion: Despite limitations, including concerns centered on the reductionary nature of deception research, our results highlight that while cultural context is important, impoverished, simple verbal accounts should trigger a 'red flag' for further attention irrespective of culture or interview language, since the cognitive load typically associated with formulating a deceptive account apparently emerges in a broadly similar manner.

Vredeveltdt, A., Given-Wilson, Z., & Memon, A. (2023). [Culture, trauma, and memory in investigative interviews](#). *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 1–21. DOI:10.1080/1068316X.2023.2209262

Police investigators, immigration officials, and other investigative interviewers often interview individuals from different cultural backgrounds about potentially traumatising events. Much of the work on the impact of negative life events on memory has overlooked

cultural differences. In this article, we integrate insights from legal, clinical, and cross-cultural psychology to shed light on cross-cultural investigative interviews about negative life events. We review how negative life events may be experienced and expressed differently around the world, highlighting the limitations of the Western ‘trauma’ model. Next, we consider how culture and negative life events may interact to influence memory reporting in investigative interviews. We identify barriers to disclosure and effective communication in interviews, including the role of interpreters. Finally, we propose how research findings on culture, trauma, and memory can be incorporated into the recently adopted Méndez Principles for investigative interviewing.

Brown, D., Walker, D., & Godden, E. (2021). Tele-forensic interviewing to elicit children’s evidence—Benefits, risks, and practical considerations. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 27(1), 17–29. DOI:10.1037/law0000288

Tele-forensic interviewing (tele-FI; e.g., via video-conferencing software) may be an effective way of increasing the accessibility of skilled interviewers for children who are questioned as part of a criminal or care and protection investigation. The current coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted how critical it is that we have evidence-based procedures to draw upon when traditional face-to-face interviews cannot be used. In this article we discuss the benefits and risks associated with tele-FI, review the small number of studies that have examined its effectiveness for eliciting memory reports from adults and children, and discuss practical considerations that should inform planning for an interview. Tele-FI appears a promising avenue for creating resiliency within organizations, and overcoming factors that might otherwise undermine the reliability of children’s evidence. Available research indicates children’s memory reports elicited in tele-FIs are likely to be as good or better than those from face-to-face interviews, but a more comprehensive evidence-base is needed. Interviewers should be aware of how using this approach may influence their questioning strategies and engagement with children.

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. DOI:10.2436/rld.i71.2019.3257

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.

Tipton, R. (2019). 'Yes I understand': language choice, question formation and code switching in interpreter-mediated police interviews with victim-survivors of domestic abuse. *Police Practice and Research*, 22(1), 1058–1076. DOI:10.1080/15614263.2019.1663733

This article presents the findings of the analysis of authentic interpreter-mediated police interviews with victim-survivors of domestic abuse with a focus on question formation

and delivery, language choice and code-switching. It is set against the backdrop of the forces wide inspection of police response to domestic abuse in England and Wales and implementation of EU Directive EU/2012/29 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims. Drawing on conversation analysis and available police interview guidelines, I show how the voice of the victim-survivor can remain obscured even when professional language support provisions are in place, and shed light on interpreting practices that can limit an interviewing officer's ability to assess risk. I suggest that, while it may not be appropriate for interpreters to be present for the duration of the pre-interview planning phase, it offers a dynamic forum for negotiating approaches to challenges in victim-survivor interviews.

Böser, U., & La Rooy, D. (2018). Interpreter-mediated investigative interviews with minors setting the ground rules. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 13(2), 208-229.
DOI:10.1075/tis.00012.bos

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.
DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.06.014

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.

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. DOI:10.1080/13218719.2016.1197815

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 specialised training for, and screening of, interpreters, and more extensive use of pre-conferencing to familiarize children with the interpreter-mediated interview process.

Mulayim, S., Lai, M., & Norma, C. (2015). *Police investigative interviews and interpreting: Context, challenges, and strategies*. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

Police interviews with suspects and witnesses provide some of the most significant evidence in criminal investigations. Frequently challenging, they require special training and skills. This interaction process is further complicated when the suspect or witness does not speak the same language as the interviewer. A professional reference that can be used in police training or in any venue where an interpreter is used, *Police Investigative Interviews and Interpreting: Context, Challenges, and Strategies* provides solutions for the range of interview demands found in today's multilingual environments. Topics include: What interpreting is, the skills required, and the role of interpreters in any job context Investigative interviewing in law enforcement Concerns about interpreter intervention and its impact on interview outcomes The value of word-based over meaning-based interpretation in police and legal contexts Nonlinguistic factors that can have an impact on the interpreting process The book explores the multi-faceted dynamics of conducting investigative interviews via interpreters and examines current investigative interviewing paradigms. It offers strategies to help interpreters and law enforcement officers and provides examples of interpreted interview excerpts to enable understanding. Although the subject matter and the examples in this book are largely limited to police interview settings, the underlying rationale applies to other professional areas that rely on interviews to collect information, including customs procedures, employer-employee interviews, and insurance claim investigations.

Center for Innovation and Resources, Inc. (2011). *Guide for forensic interviewing of Spanish-speaking children* (2nd ed.). <https://cirinc.org/catta/resources.html>

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. DOI:10.1080/14999013.2010.483343

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. DOI:10.1177/009318531003800304

This article examines challenges posed in forensic interviews of immigrant children when there is a suspicion that these children may be victims of child abuse or neglect. Suggestions are made for interviewers regarding the interview setting, preparations, building rapport, conveying respect, narrative training, pacing the interview, and trauma symptoms that may stem from issues that are unrelated to the abuse.

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

From leading practitioner and educator Lisa Aronson Fontes, this indispensable guide helps professionals conduct competent, productive interviews with clients from any cultural or linguistic background. Packed with practical pointers, chapters walk the reader through each stage of a cross-cultural interview, from preparing before the meeting to writing a fair, accurate report at its conclusion. Diverse client populations and interview contexts are reflected in numerous case examples that bring to life a wide variety of problems and solutions. Fontes draws on extensive real-world experience to present clear-cut guidelines and strategies.

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 University Press. DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195311778.003.0012

Professionals who interview children for possible sexual abuse tend to be white and middle class. At the same time, children and families who require assessment for sexual abuse are increasingly from diverse backgrounds. Professionals need to develop special skills to interview cross-culturally. This chapter describes the need for interviewers to take into account race, class, culture, subculture, religious, and language differences when interviewing children. How these differences can pose barriers for evaluators and strategies for enhancing agency and professional cultural competence are covered.