Technical Specification

ISO/TS 6253

Requirements and recommendations for training programmes in community interpreting

Exigences et recommandations pour les programmes de formation en interprétation de service public

First edition
2024-09

COPYRIGHT PROTECTED DOCUMENT

Contents

Page

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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 document 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).

ISO draws attention to the possibility that the implementation of this document may involve the use of (a) patent(s). ISO takes no position concerning the evidence, validity or applicability of any claimed patent rights in respect thereof. As of the date of publication of this document, ISO had not received notice of (a) patent(s) which may be required to implement this document. However, implementers are cautioned that this may not represent the latest information, which may be obtained from the patent database available at www.iso.org/patents. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Language and terminology*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with other interpreting standards, principally ISO 13611, ISO 18841, ISO 20228 and ISO 21998, with the objective to form the basis for community interpreting training programmes.

Interpreters render spoken or signed content from a source language to a target language in oral or signed form. Community interpreting training varies significantly worldwide, while there is a growing demand for interpreters in public services, healthcare, law enforcement and other communicative settings. This document addresses the necessity of standardized requirements and specific recommendations for community interpreting training, including comprehensive guidelines on learning outcomes and curricula. It aims to improve community interpreter education and promote comparability in training programmes.

This document provides both a foundation for the design and development of new programmes and serves as a reference for existing programmes. It is intended to support educators, educational and training institutions, community interpreters and users of community interpreting services, including public-sector organizations and language service providers (LSPs) that provide training programmes for interpreters as a service or product, to assess the usefulness and relevance of training programmes designed to prepare community interpreters to provide their services.

This document also supports organizations, and educational and training institutions in the recruitment, hiring and retention of community interpreter educators.

This document does not address existing programmes within post-secondary institutions. Additionally, it does not aim to define the qualifications of academic staff and administrators in post-secondary institutions.

Requirements and recommendations for training programmes in community interpreting

1 Scope

This document specifies requirements and recommendations for the core competences taught in training programmes in community interpreting.

This document also identifies the core competences of educators who deliver training programmes in community interpreting.

This document is applicable to signed languages and spoken languages, and addresses consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting, including whispered interpreting, as well as sight translation.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

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

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
'A' language
primary *language* (3.16) or its strict equivalent of which the *interpreter* (3.12) has complete command and into which the interpreter interprets from all their other 'A' languages, *'B' languages* (3.2) or 'C' languages

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.8]

3.2
'B' language
language (3.16) in which the *interpreter* (3.12) is proficient, but which is not their primary language or its strict equivalent

Note 1 to entry: An interpreter interprets into this language from one or more other languages.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.9]

3.3
communicative event
encounter between two or more parties during which information is transmitted

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.32]

3.4
community interpreter
public service interpreter
interpreter (3.12) qualified to perform *community interpreting* (3.5)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.28]

3.5
community interpreting
public service interpreting
interpreting (3.13) that enables people to access services available to society as a whole, and which they would otherwise be unable to access owing to a *language* (3.16) barrier

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.27]

3.6
consecutive interpreting
mode (3.21) of *interpreting* (3.13) performed after the speaker or signer pauses

Note 1 to entry: *Interpreters* (3.12) can use *note-taking* (3.22) to help in rendering lengthy passages.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.13]

3.7
content
information in any form

EXAMPLE   Text, audio, video.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.1.2]

3.8
continuing professional development
CPD
continuing education
maintaining, improving or increasing knowledge and skills related to a professional activity

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.2.6]

3.9
course
distinct set of teaching and learning activities, designed to meet defined learning objectives or learning outcomes

Note 1 to entry: A course is sometimes referred to as a credit-unit or a subject.

[SOURCE: ISO 29995:2021, 3.6.10]

3.10
educator
person who performs teaching activities

Note 1 to entry: In different contexts, an educator is sometimes referred to as a teacher, a trainer, a coach, a facilitator, a tutor, a consultant, an instructor, a lecturer or a mentor.

[SOURCE: ISO 29995:2021, 3.2.16]

3.11
healthcare interpreting
medical interpreting
interpreting ([3.13](#)) of health-related communication between patients, accompanying persons and treatment providers, or administrators, who do not use the same *language* ([3.16](#))

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.29]

3.12
interpreter
person who interprets

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.1.13]

3.13
interpreting
interpretation
rendering spoken or signed information from a source language into a target language in spoken or signed form, conveying both the meaning and *language register* ([3.17](#)) of the source language *content* ([3.7](#))

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.1.11]

3.14
interpreting service provider
ISP
interpreter ([3.12](#)) or organization making *interpreting* ([3.13](#)) available to a client

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.20]

3.15
interpreting tutor
person who offers additional support to individual learners or small groups of learners through extracurricular or in-class activities aimed at strengthening *interpreting* ([3.13](#)) competences

Note 1 to entry: Interpreting tutors can share the same *working languages* ([3.32](#)) as the student(s), but this is not essential in all cases.

3.16
language
systematic use of voice, characters, symbols or signs by which to communicate

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.1.1]

3.17
language register
language ([3.16](#)) variety used for a particular purpose or in an event of language use, depending on the type of situation, especially its degree of formality

Note 1 to entry: A person usually has more than one language register in their linguistic repertoire and can vary their use of language register according to their perception of what is appropriate for different purposes or domains.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.2.2]

3.18
language service provider
LSP
person or organization who provides language-related services

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.4.1]

3.19
language tutor
person who offers personalized assistance to learners in the form of extracurricular or in-class activities to enhance their linguistic competences

3.20
legal interpreting
interpreting (3.13) at communicative settings related to the law

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.25]

3.21
mode
established method for the delivery of *spoken language interpreting* (3.29) and *signed language interpreting* (3.26)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.11]

3.22
note-taking
technique in *consecutive interpreting* (3.6) used by *interpreters* (3.12) for remembering, conceptualizing and summarizing information

Note 1 to entry: Note-taking is highly individual and can involve a mixture of symbols, abbreviations, words and diagrams.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.14]

3.23
programme
consistent set of *courses* (3.9) designed to meet defined learning objectives or learning outcomes, and leading to recognition

Note 1 to entry: Recognition can take the form of a degree, a certificate of completion, participation or achievement, a badge, diploma and other forms.

[SOURCE: ISO 29995:2021, 3.6.11]

3.24
sight translation
sight interpreting
rendering written source language *content* (3.7) into the target language in the form of *spoken language* (3.28) or *signed language* (3.25)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.17]

3.25
signed language
language (3.16) which uses a combination of hand shapes, orientation and movement of the hands, arms or body, and facial expressions

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.1.7]

3.26
signed language interpreting
interpreting (3.13) between two *signed languages* (3.25) or between a signed language and a *spoken language* (3.28)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.3]

3.27
simultaneous interpreting
mode (3.21) of *interpreting* (3.13) performed while a speaker or signer is still speaking or signing

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.12]

3.28
spoken language
language (3.16) expressed orally

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.1]

3.29
spoken language interpreting
interpreting (3.13) between two *spoken languages* (3.28)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.2]

3.30
translation
rendering source language *content* (3.7) into target language content in written form or *signed language* (3.25)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.1.9]

3.31
whispered interpreting
chuchotage
simultaneous interpreting (3.27) where the *interpreter* (3.12) speaks very quietly in close proximity to participants

Note 1 to entry: Whispered interpreting is used for *interpreting* (3.13) to a very small number of listeners, ideally one or two.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.15, modified — Note 2 to entry deleted.]

3.32
working language
language (3.16) from or into which an *interpreter* (3.12) is qualified to interpret

Note 1 to entry: An interpreter's working languages are classified as *'A' language* (3.1), *'B' language* (3.2) or 'C' language.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2023, 3.4.7]

4   Basic principles of community interpreting

4.1   Nature of community interpreting

Community interpreting enables a person to communicate using their own language or another language agreed among the parties of the communicative event. The languages may be either spoken or signed.

Community interpreting takes place in a communicative event of at least three parties:

a)   One or more persons seeking access to services available to society as a whole and which they are unable to access owing to a language barrier.

   EXAMPLE 1   A parent who needs to communicate with a teacher.

b)   One or more persons using the language of service delivery.

   EXAMPLE 2   A public service employee, a counsellor or a teacher using the language in which the services are delivered.

c)   One or more community interpreters who provide interpreting services.

Community interpreters are proficient in two or more languages (spoken, written or signed) and can interpret between people using those languages. This includes proficiency in the language registers of these languages.

Community interpreters provide their services within a range of public service settings, each characterized by specific rules and regulations.

In several countries, community interpreting includes services provided in legal or healthcare related communicative events, with acknowledgement that these services require additional training.

4.2 Nature of training programmes in community interpreting

Training programmes in community interpreting are taught by educators that meet the required competences identified in Clause 7. Training in community interpreting can include learners with varying language proficiencies and diverse experiences in community interpreting. The inclusion of learners who do not initially meet the entry requirements can be necessary due to demands arising from demographic shifts and fluctuations in migration patterns, which affect the public sector's capacity to deliver services equitably. To promote inclusivity for all learners and support educators, training programmes can involve language tutors or interpreting tutors.

Variables affecting training can include the availability of training in certain language combinations, end-user policies and practices, government regulations, market forces and general awareness of the community interpreter's role and profession.

5 General competences for community interpreters

General competences for community interpreters are listed and defined in ISO 13611:2024, 4.4. They are listed below for reference only:

— linguistic competences;

— interpreting competences;

— information acquisition competences;

— interpersonal and intercultural competences;

— technical competences.

6 Constituent elements of training programmes in community interpreting

6.1 General

The competences specified in ISO 13611 are the basis for the training programmes in community interpreting. Such programmes shall teach the knowledge, skills and attitudes central to the professional responsibilities of the community interpreter, while maintaining a flexible and responsive approach.

Curriculum resources and planning should be developed by local educators teaching in interpreting training programmes. They should relate to local and regional situations, and reflect the stage of development of the interpreting industry in that region.

Curricula can address the specific linguistic communities that are accessing community interpreting services in a specific local or regional setting. Curricula are sequenced as follows:

— language development modules;

— introduction to the interpreting profession;

— interpersonal and intercultural dimensions;

— ethics;

— critical thinking and decision-making;

— role;

— interpreting skills and knowledge;

— professional identity and continuing professional development.

6.2 Linguistic competences

Learners of community interpreting shall enter any training programme with at least an 'A' and a 'B' language. Training programmes can include an entry-level assessment of language skills to aid in course planning. Additional support may be provided to enhance existing linguistic competence.

Building linguistic competence should include activities to promote:

— recognizing linguistic varieties of the working languages (e.g. dialects, regional varieties, idiomatic expressions);

— recognizing the range of language registers used within an assignment, including features such as prosody, irony or sarcasm;

— developing terminology in the working languages that is relevant to community interpreting settings.

6.3 Interpreting competences

6.3.1 General

The components given in 6.3.2 to 6.3.5 are designed to build interpreting competences that enable the learner to render spoken or signed content from a source language to a target language in oral or signed form, conveying both the meaning and language register of the source language content. The components are sequenced to build on prior learning.

6.3.2 Community interpreting practice

An overview of the practice of community interpreting shall include:

— introduction to community interpreting as a profession;

— the role and responsibilities of parties involved in communicative events with community interpreters, including the scope of practice and professional boundaries;

— communicative events in which community interpreting occurs and associated setting-specific rules and regulations (e.g. legal, healthcare or educational settings).

6.3.3 Foundations of interpreting

Training programmes shall include both a theoretical framework and practical application of the following components:

— introduction to translation and interpreting theory and practices;

— overview of cognitive and interaction models (see Annex A) used to support effective interpreting;

— introduction to consecutive and simultaneous interpreting.

6.3.4 Interpreting skills

6.3.4.1 General

The learner shall acquire the skills necessary to interpret in a communicative event, including sight translation, consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting. The community interpreter shall also acquire the terminology associated with various communicative settings.

6.3.4.2 Sight translation

Sight translation practices.

EXAMPLE   Conveying information in official documents drafted in the source language to the target language.

6.3.4.3 Consecutive interpreting

Consecutive interpreting training shall comprise:

— introduction to consecutive interpreting including note-taking;

— working with dialogue typical in community interpreting settings;

— introduction to memory practice activities without the use of notes;

— effective consecutive interpreting techniques (e.g. use of notes to support memory);

— interaction management techniques (e.g. pausing participants to deliver the interpreting or to seek interpreter clarifications);

— self-assessment practices in order to improve the interpreting performance.

6.3.4.4 Simultaneous interpreting

Simultaneous interpreting training shall comprise:

— introduction to simultaneous interpreting including whispered interpreting;

— decision-making processes to determine when to use simultaneous and when to use consecutive interpreting within a given communicative event;

— interaction management techniques (e.g. signals to pause participants);

— effective preparation, such as obtaining and reviewing material in advance;

— self-assessment practices in order to improve the interpreting performance.

6.3.4.5 Teamwork strategies

Teamwork refers to two or more interpreters collaborating in an assignment. This can be the combination of a spoken and signed language interpreter or a team of deaf and non-deaf interpreters. Teamwork activities can include:

— discussing before the assignment how to work effectively as a team, for example:

  — switching from active to support roles;

  — monitoring the interpreting accuracy;

  — error correction;

  — problem-solving and conflict management strategies;

— acquiring the information necessary to prepare for the assignment;

— applying strategies to ensure smooth transitions between interpreters;

— providing mutual support to maintain the accuracy of interpreting;

— discussing after the assignment how the applied strategies for effective teamwork were utilized, and any improvements needed for future assignments.

NOTE   Teamwork among interpreters is sometimes called "co-interpreting".

6.3.5   Ethical guidelines and codes of conduct

Training programmes shall include ethical guidelines for interpreters and interact with the applicable codes of conduct or terms of practice to support a more comprehensive learning and application of ethical principles. This includes the following components:

— introduction to ethical guidelines and frameworks;

— confidentiality;

— impartiality;

— accuracy and fidelity;

— maintenance of role boundaries;

— professional accountability;

— creation of a professional development plan in order to engage in continuing professional development.

The module shall also include an understanding of the learner's personal and general value systems, in contrast to the professional value systems, and the ways in which legislation can supersede the interpreter's codes of ethics/conduct.

EXAMPLE   When working in a school environment, interpreters have a duty to report allegations of abuse, despite the need for confidentiality that can be present in their professional codes of ethics/conduct.

6.4   Information acquisition competences

A community interpreter shall have the skills to acquire knowledge to prepare for assignments and pursue educational opportunities which are relevant to their professional practice. Training programmes shall include:

— introduction to basic research skills (e.g. terminology, context and purpose of the interpreted event, protocols and information specific to the site or event);

— employing professional feedback and self-analysis processes in order to identify effective professional development opportunities relevant to the community interpreter's needs and goals.

6.5   Interpersonal and intercultural competences

Interpersonal and intercultural competences include the ability to demonstrate courtesy, tact, empathy, impartiality and professional judgement.

With the aim of supporting an understanding of self and others in these situations and providing the interpreter with the confidence to appreciate the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions, training programmes shall include:

— introduction to equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility and ethical principles as applied to community interpreting;

— introduction to culture, diverse worldviews, values, biases and stereotypes;

— introduction to interpersonal communication as an element of culture;

— exploration of intercultural communication and cultural dynamics;

— contextualizing the work of a community interpreter by exploring the intersections of language, culture and interpreting.

6.6 Technical competences

Community interpreting training shall address the technology that is used in distance and on-site settings. This includes:

— introduction to the relevant technical equipment such as microphones, headphones and interpreter interfaces;

— introduction to audio/video conferencing and interpreting platforms;

— introduction to digital tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) applications that can support interpreting;

— introduction to data security when using the internet and any associated privacy legislation that can have a bearing when preparing materials or providing interpreting services.

6.7 Business practices for community interpreters

In some countries, community interpreters are self-employed, and in other countries they can have full or part-time employment as a staff interpreter. Training programmes shall include the following components to support the successful management of their career:

— overview of language service providers and interpreting service providers and other employers;

— professional practice and career planning;

— overview of the rights and responsibilities of being a self-employed contractor;

— identifying and assessing opportunities for continuing professional development;

— identifying the professional associations that represent community interpreting and any relevant community organizations from the language communities for which one interprets.

7 Competences and qualifications related to educators in community interpreting

7.1 General

Educators in community interpreting shall have the skills required for training programmes involving adult learners with varying abilities, resources and knowledge. Given the nature of community interpreting, educators can work in close consultation with organizations serving migrant populations, community organizations or educational institutions.

7.2 Education and relevant experience

An educator in community interpreting shall hold at least:

— a recognized bachelor's degree in community interpreting from an institution of higher education; or

— a recognized degree in any other field from an institution of higher education and have a combination of relevant experience and training to support their work as an educator in community interpreting; or

— an attestation of competence in community interpreting awarded by an appropriate government or professional body.

EXAMPLE   A positive result in a test for community interpreters held by an international organization or a (government) agency or department or interpreter certification organization.

In addition to the above, educators shall meet the following criteria:

— have experience working with multicultural and multilingual populations;

— demonstrate strong intercultural communication skills while respecting the dynamics of cross-cultural interaction;

— demonstrate the ability to teach collaboratively with colleagues from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds;

— adhere to the principles of social responsibility and equity, recognizing the systemic barriers for users of community interpreting to access public services while demonstrating respect for all individuals;

— engage in continuous self-assessment and pursue professional development opportunities to enhance teaching practices;

— remain current with trends in research on community interpreting;

— remain current with training methods that support community-based education.

An educator in community interpreting should possess experience as a community interpreter in various settings and specializations, and have work experience in one or more of the following areas:

— facilitating professional development, with familiarity in curriculum development and assessment processes;

— utilizing video conferencing and interpreting platforms, applications and other technology related to the field of community interpreting;

— delivering distance education and effectively navigating the online classroom.

An educator in community interpreting shall be aware of:

— the various communicative settings for interpreting, including, but not limited to, public services, such as general financial and social services, community-based programmes, healthcare institutions, legal and law enforcement settings, and mental health facilities;

— theoretical foundations of translation and interpreting;

— ethical principles and decision-making processes;

— local, regional and national protocols for interpreter certification, examination or accreditation;

— employment protocols and procedures;

— strategies in securing employment/assignment contracts;

— community resources, organizations and agencies that have a role in community interpreting in the region in which they are teaching;

— current trends in global and national migration patterns, and migration policies in the country in which the interpreter provides their services.

8   Education and relevant experience of language tutors and interpreting tutors

8.1   General

Training programmes can operate with teams dedicated to providing educational support. Language tutors and interpreting tutors can provide bilingual instruction or feedback, which supports honing of language proficiency or interpreting skills.