

Providing Language Access



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Riddle of the Day

What kind of lion never roars?



Dandelion



Talking to others can feel like a riddle when people don't speak or understand the same language.



Primary Languages in Dane County

- ASL
- Arabic
- Chinese
- Dari
- English
- French
- German
- Hmong
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Pashto
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Turkish
- Vietnamese



Why Language Access Matters

A Fundamental Right in this country.

It is the law.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is clear: If your agency gets federal money, you must help people in their language. No exceptions.

The need is real.

1 in 12 people in the U.S. do not speak English well enough to understand you. That is over 25 million people who could miss critical information.

[Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey](#)

When we get it right:

- People get the help they need — on time
- Families trust us enough to ask for help
- Communities stay safer because people can call 911, report abuse, and understand warnings
- Kids get enrolled in school, parents understand their rights



When we get it wrong, people suffer in silence.

Understand the Differences

Bilingual Worker	Interpreter	Translator
(Employee proficient in two or more languages) - Hired to help bridge language and cultural gaps. Ensuring respectful interactions and consumer understanding. - Does not require interpreter and translation certification. - Screen for culture understanding and speak fluently in the prefer language other than English.	(Spoken Language) - Bridging the language barriers between two different languages with the intent to preserve the original meaning. Some use of possible rephrasing to include cultural references to assist with understanding. - Tested and certified with being able to accurately convey verbal messages between two different languages.	(Written) - The process of converting written content from one language into another language while retaining the original meaning. - Tested and certified with being able comprehend and accurately write the same messages between two different languages.



Best Practices During Meetings

Small changes can change everything for the person across the table.

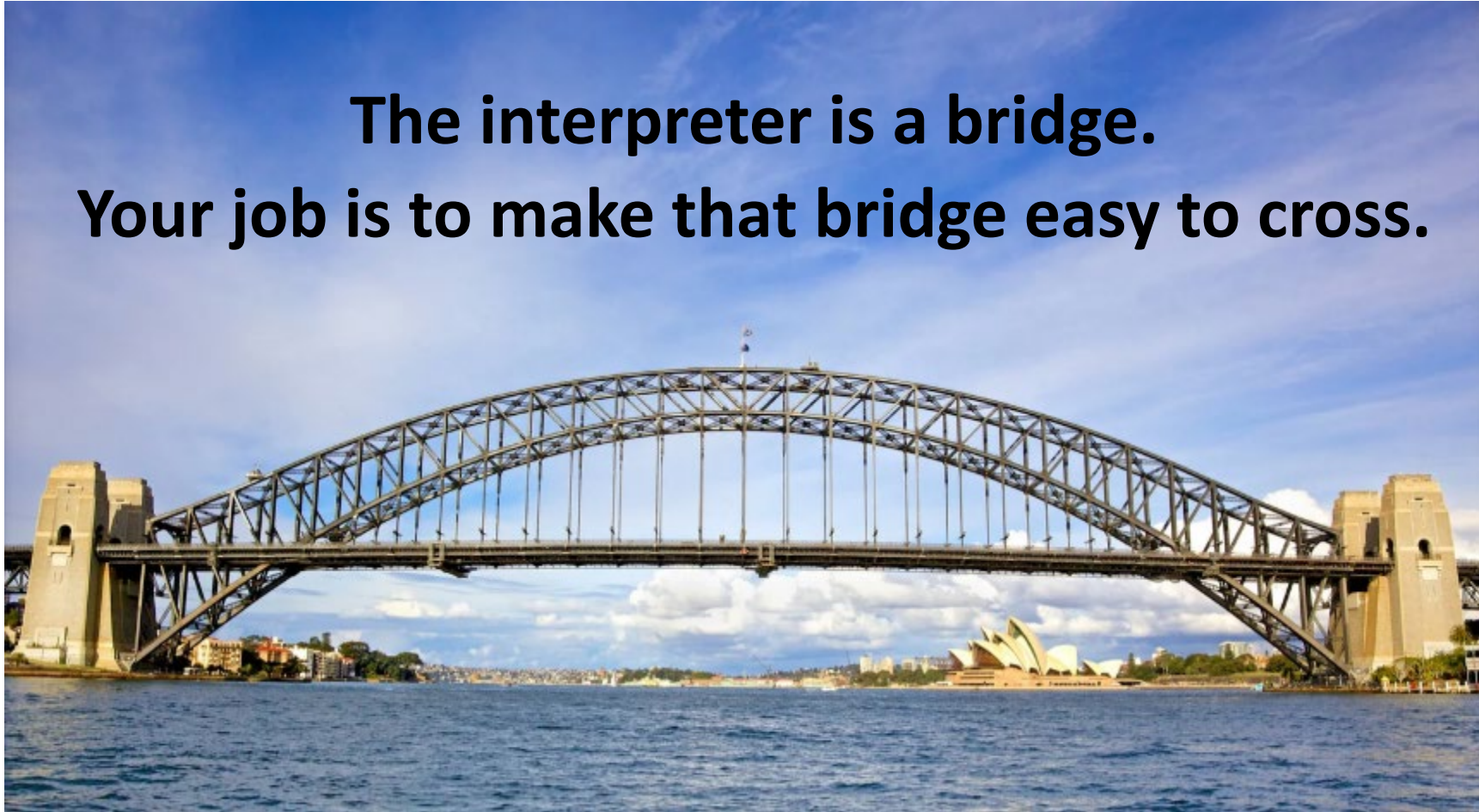
When an interpreter is present:

- Speak clearly and at a steady pace
- Look at the person, not the interpreter — they're who you're serving
- One speaker at a time — crosstalk shuts communication down
- Pause between ideas so nothing gets lost
- Use plain words — drop the jargon and acronyms



Benefits of Working with Interpreters

**The interpreter is a bridge.
Your job is to make that bridge easy to cross.**



Questions & Next Steps

What you can do starting today:

- Ask: "Do you need an interpreter?" — don't wait for someone to struggle
- Plan for language access before meetings, not after
- Include translated materials every time you send a notice
- Speak up when you see a language gap — silence is a choice

