

# Example of language interpretation and victim rights essay

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



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Court proceedings are sensitive especially for the defendants and the victims. There needs to be clarity in the minds of all the participants on what is being said and decided. There have been efforts towards better language interpretation practices for the benefits of bilingual or multilingual participants. The victim's rights should also be respected as it is through them that defendants are arrested and prosecuted.

## **Language Interpretation and Victim Rights**

There have been concerns in the criminal system concerning issues of language interpretation and victim rights. In the nineteenth and twentieth century there has been an influx of people to the United States. It is estimated that 13% of people in America do not speak the national language of English at home. The country's most significant trends at the present and in the future will be immigration and cultural diversity. Where the witnesses and the defendants cannot speak English, law in most states require that the court should hire interpreters.

Cultural misinterpretations can cause the defendants to be lost in the proceedings (Berk-Seligson, 1990). The witness information may be

misinterpreted. The interesting though is that there are minimum qualifications set for the interpreters for the deaf however there are no set requirements for the language interpreters in most of the states in America. Studies conducted on linguistic challenges and court proceedings have shown that there has been widespread in the due process.

The study also investigated issues of ethnic and racial bias in the courts. There has really been adequate equal protection of the non-English speaking population in the courts. To deal with this issue, there should be implementation of state-wide initiatives and plans to

ensure minimum qualifications for interpreters are set. There is also a shortage of interpreters therefore the State should ensure that they are available for the public. California, Jersey and Washington are some of the States which stand out when it comes to policies implemented. There have been training programs that have been carried out for the judicial system. Some of the states lack the financial resources and professional expertise to carry out the policies however the other states can rise and support them at the federal level. An interpreter may be bilingual or multilingual however this is not the only qualification that is required. It is about understanding both cultures and interpreting the source language whether spoken or written on sight documents well.

There has been an increase in the attention paid to the victims during the court proceedings in the recent years. Victims play an important role in the criminal justice system. Their role should be meaningful or full of purpose. This way the criminal justice officers will get the maximum cooperation from

them. This can be ensured through access and participation in court proceedings.

Victims have a right to be notified of any court proceedings in the cases they are involved. Their dignity and privacy should be respected and they need to be treated fairly. They should be protected from the perpetrator. They should be made aware of the conviction

or release of the offender. They should not be left in the dark. The courts have been sensitive to children and women especially when it comes to cases of reported sexual violence. For the victims who are not able to handle giving testimony in-front of the defendants.

There have been closed proceedings where the victims are able to be questioned and their story heard. There should be police escorts to and from the courts. There can be secure waiting areas for the victims in different settings from the accused and his family. There are defendants who have been denied bail or released upon certain conditions where the judges feel that they may be a danger to the victim (Sangroula, 2008).

The country has implemented programs such as witness protection and residence location that guarantees the victim safety should he or she participates in the court proceedings. The victims can be exposed to psychological counselling where it is felt it would help the victim participate better in the criminal proceedings. The system should go out of its way to ensure that these people feel appreciated and safe during the proceedings. The relevant stakeholders charged with communicating and interacting with the victims should receive training regularly. The victims should know in which the situation they can sue for financial damages from the defendants.

## Conclusion

Language interpretation and respecting the rights of victims are sensitive areas. Interpreting is a skill since the interpreter must maintain the legal equivalence of the words when they are interpreted to another language. In times of misinterpretation the English speaking peoples and the Non-English people simply attend different trials.

In criminal proceedings it is about maintaining a healthy balance between the rights of the defendants and the victims. There have been reported cases of victims undergoing hard times as they try and participate in the criminal proceedings. The criminal justice officers should be able to inform their victims of their rights and duties. At the end of the process, the victims should have someone explain to them the sentence that has been issued, the impact it will have and what it really means.

## References

Berk-Seligson, S. (1990). *The Bilingual Courtroom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sangroula, G. (2008). In *Camera Proceedings: Conceptualizing the Rights of Victims of Crimes*. Retrieved from <http://www.asianlii.org/np/journals/KathSLRS/2008/9.pdf>