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| **Speak Up - Kōrerotia**  **16 September 2015**  **Interpretation and the right to access information** | |
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| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s Community Radio Station Plain’s FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand On Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on race relations and human rights with Speak Up - Kōrerotia, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana,  E ngā reo,  E ngā hau e whā  Tēnā koutou katoa  Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”.    Join the New Zealand Human Rights Commission as it engages in conversations around race and diversity in our country. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.  Nau mai haere mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. I’m your host Sally Carlton with the Human Rights Commission here in Christchurch. Our topic for today is interpretation and the right to access information; the right to effective communication, essentially. We’ve got a couple of really key messages that we’re going to be plugging throughout the show: that effective communication and access to information are our human rights and should be available to everybody; and also we’re going to be promoting the use of professionally trained interpreters. I’ve got three guests with me in the studio, Maria Fresia, Gareth Abdinor and Terisa Tagicakibau. Is that right? |
| Terisa | That’ll do. |
| Sally | More or less. If you could please introduce yourselves, that’d be fantastic. |
| Maria | So my name is Maria Fresia, I come from Italy but I have been here a long time and I am the Coordinator for Interpreting Canterbury which is a branch of Interpreting New Zealand. |
| Terisa | I’m Terisa Tagicakibau and I work for Community and Public Health and a huge part of my role is the All Right? campaign. |
| Gareth | Hi everyone, I’m Gareth Abdinor, I’m a lawyer with Taylor Shaw here in Christchurch and I specialise in privacy and information law. |
| Sally | And just to kick this conversation off, I thought we might start with what do we mean when we talk about effective communication? What do we mean when we talk about access to information. What are these themes we’re going to be discussing today? |
| Maria | Maybe I can start just because all this terminology comes from Latin so they are Italian words as well so I know them quite well. So ‘effective’ comes from ‘efectivos’ which really means ‘real’, ‘successful’. ‘Communication’ comes from ‘comunicado’ which means ‘to share’, ‘to successfully share’ and the ‘access’ is also a Latin word which comes from [inaudible] which means ‘to enter’, ‘to allow entering’. So it really means ‘to allow to enter into successful, real, practical sharing’. And in our case I think today we are talking about language, aren’t we? So probably the language could be either speaking or writing. |
| Terisa | When I think of effective communication coming from the Pacific... Now, the Pacific is such a diverse group and so in terms of engaging it’s one size doesn’t fit all. So it’s quite important that whatever language that we use is appropriate for the key group and in terms of for example, English is the first spoken language in Fiji whereas in other Pacific Islands it may not be. So just as an example something to take into account. |
| Gareth | One of the things that I always think about when I look at effective communication is what sort of response the recipient of the communication gives - and so the meaning is not necessarily what you think it is but it’s the response that you get. And so whether we’re talking about communicating in different languages or in writing or even from an English speaker to another English speaker, the meaning is the response. And that’s how I know it’s been effective, if the response is what’s desired. |
| Sally | It’s pretty critical, isn’t it, and not necessarily something people think about. I know you presume - for example, if you send an email - you presume communication has taken place where in fact it hasn’t until that person has received and digested that email. |
| Maria | Yes I mean there are all different levels, isn’t it, when we think of effectiveness. We know when we’ve been overseas in a place where we can’t communicate we can kind of make do with gestures and little pictures and things. So we can make ourselves understood if we really have a simple need but that’s a level, isn’t it? And there are many, many different levels to effective communication and so that’s why we promote the use of interpreters. |
| Gareth | That’s so true and I really like your point about email which is similar where you’ve got a simple need, you can communicate it in a simple way. When you have something like an email where potentially tone is lost and nuance is lost it makes it quite difficult to know if you’re getting that message across. |
| Sally | Definitely. I thought, kind of following on from this, and something that is fairly basic but I think people get confused about, is what are the differences between interpretation and translation? |
| Maria | Right. So when we talk about language of course usually they’re talking of course about speaking and writing. So we are an interpreting organisation which means we only deal with oral communication and translators or translations, they deal with written language. And surprisingly... So the two skills are very different. So a translator is not often an interpreter and vice versa.  I know the society of New Zealand Translators in Christchurch. The people that are members of the society - and just to generalise - a lot of translators are people that are quite happy to be by themselves, very quiet, they’re really studying books and they spend a lot of time to find the right equivalent word in the other language. While interpretation is quite a different thing to do; it’s very immediate so you have to have the words at your fingertips and a lot of interpreters really like being with people and they are extroverts. So we just have to think of the two professions and the two things quite differently and with their complexities. |
| Gareth | I understood - and this may or may not be correct - I’m really interested in your comment that translation is often considered to be a word-for-word process whereas interpretation is not necessarily word-for-word, it’s a transposing of spoken messages and so it’s the meaning rather than the word-for-word content that’s important. |
| Maria | Yes I think there’s a huge debate in the translation world about what you are talking about. Of course the message is to be paramount in both professions. So as we know, we’ve got a lot of idiomatic phrases where you are saying things that cannot be translated even in writing of course. And then we’re talking about All Right? campaign - we might see a bit of that - how hard it is to translate the message if we don’t understand it; it’s impossible first of all.  And I was just thinking, I read a book a few years ago that you might know of: that wonderful Indian author Arundhati Roy, do you remember in 1997, it was a few years ago, and she wrote this book in English called *The God of Small Things*. And I bought it here in English and I read it in English and my mother sent me the Italian version and it was so fascinating for me to read a whole book about an Indian topic with so many peculiarities because it was all about her childhood in India, lovely novel, so how would you render the English so beautifully. She wrote it in English in the first place but how wonderful was the Italian version of it. And of course, if you look them up they weren’t word-for-word, the message was all… So it’s a very, very complex skill and sometimes you prefer the word-for-word and sometimes you have to do the message depending. Interpreting is always the message. |
| Sally | Very interesting and I suppose in New Zealand we live in a country where there are three official languages, we have English and we have Te Reo Māori and we have Sign Language. How does Sign Language fit into the interpretation/translation world? |
| Maria | Well I can only talk about interpreting. We’ve got about, more than 70 languages in our books and of course Sign Language is one of them and if I recall correct I think it became an official language in 2006. And in New Zealand there are more 20,000 using the Sign Language. So Sign Language is in fact a language that we have interpreters for and of course we will have been to conferences and places where we’ve seen Sign Language interpreters working. So it fits in perfectly. |
| Sally | Fantastic. Have any of you got any stories that highlight our key messages? So what is it around... Why is it important to have effective communication? Why is it important to have professional interpreters? |
| Gareth | Many years ago I was working for the Ministry of Social Development working with some refugees who were very new to New Zealand and at that stage these people weren’t using professional interpreters, they were bringing along a gentleman who seemed to be taking on the role of a trusted uncle who was translating for them or interpreting for them. And I wasn’t the only person that was quite concerned that the messages were getting lost in translation, to use that phrase, and you really wondered if you were getting through, if the message was getting through because it appeared that there were agendas there. And I think that was a really good example for me of the benefit of professional interpreters because hopefully you have less of that agenda interfering with the message transmission. |
| Maria | I would say that most people, me included before I became an interpreter, I wasn’t aware of how hard it is actually to transfer a message in an accurate and full way, that’s what an interpreter does. And when she or he is doing that he’s allowing the other two people that don’t share the same language to actually communicate freely. So the interpreter is only there to be the voice between two people and also the interpreter is upholding the Code of Ethics that he has to be abide by. And so, like you said in this case that you were saying, one of the things that we cannot do is to offer opinion or change the message, to add something, to omit because I think oh that’s not that important, I will skip that little bit. What we do when we go in and train people and the use of interpreters, we just show them how to interpret even in your own language. You try to repeat a message in English full and accurately you will soon see that you have forgot something, that you can’t quite remember. So you are just adding something there. And of course an interpreter will take notes, will ask for repetition, will ask for quick clarification so is not afraid of asking where she doesn’t get the message. She has to ask otherwise she can’t pass it on. |
| Terisa | And it can be quite complicated if you look at specific Pacific Islands in terms of language because you might have a formal language, you might have an informal language, just depending on what island. Also because we have 60% of Pacific Islanders are born in New Zealand so the language again, there’s a slight change to it and so it depends on the interpreter, whether they have that traditional language or whether it’s sort of changed a bit because they’ve lived here. |
| Sally | So the cultural elements? |
| Terisa | Yes. |
| Sally | Interesting, we’re just going to take a break now.  Welcome back to Speak Up – Kōrerotia, here on Plains FM 96.9. We’re with Maria, Gareth and Terisa discussing interpretation and the right to access information and we’re going to move away a little bit from talking about interpretation and translation and think about what are the legal elements to doing this. Gareth, you might be the person to kick this off, talking about the legal elements, the legal requirements to accessing information. |
| Gareth | Well I think we’re quite lucky in New Zealand because we have a number of statutes and regulations that provide for access to information. Looking at the one I deal with on a day-to-day basis and the Privacy Act, there is a legal requirement that people have access to information about themselves unless some very limited exceptions apply and I think that’s really important because without access to information about yourself it makes it very difficult to have an informed opinion or to give informed consent for things that impact on your life. We also have protection in relation to our health information, we’ve got the Health and Disability Commission’s Code which gives your rights in relation to effective communication. And that is tied very closely to give informed consent: you can’t give informed consent if you don’t have the information that you need in the first place. So I think we are reasonably lucky in this country that we do have a legal basis for requesting information. |
| Sally | Have any of your got examples of when you or your clients have used some of these legal measures? |
| Maria | I was thinking about, of course, people that can’t speak English. I always think of the language barrier because of my work and of course a lot of New Zealanders would say yes, there’s probably a moral obligation to make these people that can’t speak English understand the message. And I mean, we had a lot of problems after the earthquake with messages that didn’t get to some communities because they weren’t English-speaking communities. And so I think most people would say yes, we have a moral obligation so they can be part of our society but of course not everybody knows that we have a legal obligation as well. So the Bill of Rights and the Disability Code states that everybody in New Zealand has got equal rights. Equal rights is a big word because of course we can have the rights of roughly communicate but in the case, for example, going to the hospital for an operation, I have to sign a consent to be operated and if I don’t understand the risks involved and if I’m not using a trained interpreter but just a child or a friend of the family or the husband, they are missing vital parts of what the doctor says. Let’s think of small words: like, to say if the doctor is saying this person is ‘high risk’ or ‘serious risk’ or ‘some risk’ or ‘little risk’, these words are little in front of the adjective before, it’s an important one. And so how do I know, how am I truly informed in an accurate way or not and if we think of ourselves in a foreign country. We soon see how important is accuracy. |
| Terisa | And I think it doesn’t help... Like, you talk about the health setting in terms of the jargon or the medical terminology that’s being used and even as an English speaker, you hear what the doctor said, what? Can you speak English? And so there’s that…. |
| Maria | Definitely. |
| Terisa | Barrier as well… And for Pacific people there’s something that when I do workshops on cultural engagement, it’s like I tell professionals: Just be aware of the “yes” syndrome. So they’ll say yes when they absolutely have no understanding of what you’re saying and is just to allow things to move on. |
| Sally | And that’s not unique to Pasifika either, that’s very common amongst Asian cultures, for example. Not wanting to lose face but also not wanting someone who is seen to be in a position of authority to lose face, either. So you agree because that’s what is expected. |
| Maria | And I would say also I think in all of our cultures, if we were in a place where we were not sure we would ask once, twice, the third time you don’t ask anymore because you think they think I’m silly. You know, how many times can you ask? You know, please explain that in plain English? If you still don’t get it at the end you’re going to pretend just because you think, “What are other people going to think about me?” For years, well not for years but the first year I came to New Zealand, I was living in Sumner and I used to go to Polytech to learn English and I used to catch the bus and I would say, “One to Sumner” coming back from Polytech but I used to say, “One to Sum-NER” and the bus driver wouldn’t understand. I would have to write it on a piece of paper. Finally, weeks later, I heard ‘Sum-NA’ so I learned to say ‘Sum-NA’ and it was such a minor for me but it was huge for the bus driver and so I was finally understood. |
| Gareth | That really makes me smile because when I first moved to New Zealand, I was a native English speaker moving to another English speaking country but I really struggled to understand New Zealanders because we speak so quickly and whenever I answered the telephone I couldn’t understand what they were saying. And like you said, the first time you say “I beg your pardon”, the second time perhaps you say “I’m sorry I can’t understand” and by the third time you are so embarrassed that you end up hanging up the phone. So it’s not only people who don’t speak English as a first language. |
| Sally | Where did you move from Gareth? |
| Gareth | From Africa. |
| Sally | OK. |
| Terisa | Can I just say, four years ago I went to Oman and I went for three weeks and I was so happy when I arrived back in New Zealand, I just really appreciated the English language because it was so hard trying to get by in the Middle East where English wasn’t spoken. |
| Sally | The importance of being able to understand. |
| Terisa | Yes. |
| Gareth | And I guess that’s why we’re lucky that we have good legislation and good regulations. But the real magic is putting that into practice as Maria said before, it doesn’t help if people don’t know about these protections that we have and that’s really where I think we all come i: communicating that to people who may need use of it. |
| Maria | Yes and one thing that we always try to tell people is no it is not only to expect from the person that doesn’t speak English to say “I need an interpreter” but also us as professionals, we can say, “We don’t understand you” because sometimes the accents are really strong and we truly do not understand. And if the matter is an important one, we want to make sure we understand as well. And so the interpreter is actually for both, not just for one person. |
| Gareth | Good point. |
| Sally | Are there challenges to enacting these legal mechanisms? I mean, we’ve touched on the fact that we’re lucky to have them and I mean, you mentioned that the trick is translating them into practice, what are the challenges around it? |
| Maria | Well it would be the awareness. So a lot of people... we’re working a lot with the medical centres, we’ve got an agreement with the CCC... so it’s just to let people know that there are interpreting and translation services in New Zealand. There’s Language Line which is a phone interpreting; there’s Interpreting New Zealand which is face-to-face as well as phone interpreting; and many other translation services. So first of all that they exist because you know, I’ve been in Christchurch for 25 years but things have changed in Christchurch immensely. You know, 25 years ago I was one of a handful of Italians and now there are so many more after the earthquakes, so many engineers have been coming here and I expect that will bring in all different ethnic communities. So the numbers have grown immensely. So we just have to educate people. It’s normal not to know because we weren’t used to that and now we have to. So the awareness is first of all, and the second one is sometimes we think, “Oh but that person speaks a little bit of English so I can make do” and depending of course if it is just to buy a litre of milk, it’s fine, it doesn’t matter but depending on the situation and to know that there is...  I think one of the main things for us is the costs involved. A lot of people say to us that interpreting is expensive and we also have to say think of the risks that you run with the costs that you have to incur and budget for it. |
| Sally | While we’re on costs: Maria, if you could just give us an estimate that might be quite great, Language Line for example. |
| Maria | Well Language Line is a service provided by the Office of Ethnic Communities and I think it’s free to most government and local government agencies. I can’t tell you about their costs, I do have an idea but I can’t really talk for them.  While Interpreting New Zealand started in 1993 so is over 22 years now, as a very first comprehensive interpretation organisation so we do video as well as telephone as well as face-to-face which is our biggest service and about the costs, I don’t want to say exactly how much it costs only because we just have different costs for different agencies, so the governmental central agencies, they don’t get a discount while of course community groups they do get discounts and of course the City Council and medical centres in Christchurch they also get discounts. So I don’t want to say how much it costs but what I want to say is it certainly doesn’t cost more than getting any other technician to your home or any other service that you ask for. And of course the telephone interpreting is much cheaper but then of course it can’t be used in every situation. I know that later on we will talk about the mental health and of course think about a person with mental health issues that can’t speak the language, probably phone interpreting won’t be the best thing. You’re better to have a person there that can actually see this person as well as to be able to interpret properly. |
| Sally | I think the message that you’re saying there is that interpreting is necessary but it’s also actually not that expensive which is good to know. Now we’re just going to take a little break and listen to Gareth, your choice of song which is ‘Little Lies’ by Fleetwood Mac. If you could give us a little bit of information as to why you chose that one? |
| Gareth | Well firstly as someone who was young in the 80s there was a sentimental aspect to the choice but I also thought it was somewhat related to our topic where it’s about passing information, whether that information is quite accurate or not. |
|  | **MUSIC – LITTLE LIES BY FLEETWOOD MAC** |
| Sally | Kia ora and welcome back to Speak Up – Kōrerotia, the show of the Human Rights Commission here on Plains FM. We’ve just been talking about some of the difficulties with interpretation and translation and we might just pick up on that point again and sort of talk about what are the barriers, the legal barriers even for people accessing information and effective communication. |
| Gareth | Well, one of the scenarios and situations that I had a few years back: I was involved in some litigation with both parties were not native English speakers and the matter was going to trial and we were trying to arrange interpreters so that the evidence could be given in the trial. It very quickly became a bit of a circus because not only did we need an interpreter to interpret my client’s evidence, we needed an interpreter to interpret the other lawyer’s client’s evidence and then we needed to make sure that we were comfortable with the interpretations that were being made. And it’s complicated enough when you’ve got several lawyers and several people giving evidence without adding in several interpreters and the time delays and the complication, and as a lawyer I think I’m naturally predisposed to have control issues and to give up that control was quite threatening. And I know in some parts of the United States they have an interpreter who is interpreting the evidence in a trial and then they have a check interpreter who is checking the interpretation but really, where do you draw the line? |
| Maria | In 2010 I think there were the Courts wrote about some recommendation because interpreting was getting… everywhere it was a problem. So the recommendation came out after a trial that had to be repeated because of interpretation problems and three main things came out of the recommendation. They were not legal requirements but they said: one [recommendation] is to do consecutive interpreting so it’s not simultaneous - so you’re waiting until the phrase is finished, the sentence and then you interpret - because with simultaneous you are also kind of guessing a little bit where the person is going. The second one was to speak with a loud voice, so the interpreter is not whispering, everyone is to hear the voice of the interpreter. And the third one was everything was to be recorded and that’s in a criminal trial so the recording is because someone else can check the interpretation afterwards. |
| Sally | That’s pretty critical actually, that makes a lot of sense and I guess Maria, if for example someone interpreted something and then that was found down the line to be potentially misinterpreted, what are the legal issues around that? |
| Maria | I know only the interpreting part that we’ve got an insurance because of course it’s a big responsibility, our main request to the Courts which unfortunately is not always met is to know a little bit about the case before we get into it. So we really want to know what it is all about so we can prepare ourselves. So you were saying before, Terisa, about the difficulties if the doctor’s speaking is in his medical terminology but you can imagine the Courts, the legal terminology is harder and if you don’t know the background you can’t prepare yourself. So for an interpreter it’s vital to prepare for a Court trial so the more information we can get... And of course we are bound by the confidentiality so we’re not going to tell anyone. So we really need that and so it’s happened before that trials get dismissed… |
| Gareth | Mistrial or retrial. |
| Maria | Yes and they have to retrial so it has happened in New Zealand before and of course what we really push and we push for the Courts to use trained interpreter because still not trained people are used at times all over the place in New Zealand. |
| Gareth | And I think a real impact on this is the cost. We discussed the cost before and am certainly not suggesting that the cost of interpreters is high but where there are limited resources that are being spread quite thinly, my concern is that perhaps interpretation is one of those things that is not seen as essential. That leads to problems. |
| Maria | Yes but think of the cost of retrial. |
| Gareth | Exactly. |
| Maria | Or a doctor that… we’ve had so many anecdotal little stories of people that have taken the wrong medications and back to emergencies. To redo things costs a lot of money too. So we just really advocate for do it right in the first place. And of course if you have problems with a trained interpreter you complain because of course nobody is perfect and we need to know, if people are not happy with one of our interpreters they need to complain so we know immediately what to do. We offer professional development courses all the time so we just are really in touch with all our interpreters. |
| Terisa | So do you have a huge number of interpreters/translators because I know because our Pacific community is quite small and so the numbers that you have may be small as well? |
| Maria | So we don’t have translators at all; we only have interpreters and so oral translation. In Christchurch, we’ve got about 60 interpreters but we’re talking about many different languages, probably 35 languages and so depending… Some Pacific languages we only have a couple of interpreters but the good thing is we’ve got many more everywhere especially in Wellington so they can be reached by phone or video. So the good thing of having the phone interpreting is that you can have a much bigger pool of interpreters and if it’s an emergency and a quick consultation, it can be done by phone. |
| Terisa | So in any instance are non-certified people used? |
| Maria | We don’t in our interpreting organisation, people have to do in-house training and they have to, it’s compulsory to do the professional training every year through the year. We also provide counselling services; as you can imagine, an interpreter has to do pretty tough things at times and so we provide… You know, there are a lot of interpreters that do freelancing but we really think that belonging to an organisation has a lot of pluses for interpreters and also I probably forgot to say at the beginning, we’re a not-for-profit organisation so all the money… We pay the interpreters, that’s why the agency need to pay for the service but all the money go back to the organisation to implement the training, to have more interpreters. Training is just about free because we need people to be trained to offer them as interpreters. |
| Sally | I mean the other side of the coin is the risks when people don’t use trained interpreters and you’ve spoken about people taking the wrong medicine, I can think of some stories that are even worse than that. I suppose this might be a good time to talk about health, and mental health in particular, and the criticalness of interpreting correctly what the doctors and the health care professionals are saying. Terisa, you might be a good person to talk about this and the mental health side of interpretation. |
| Terisa | So in terms of mental health I just want to be clear to our listeners that I’m not a clinician as such, my involvement is basically with the All Right? campaign. The All Right? campaign was a mental health initiative that came about after the earthquakes and so it was a mental wellbeing campaign to sort of cater for mainstream - and I say mainstream because the campaign didn’t appeal, or Pacific people didn’t relate to it - so it wasn’t until a year… |
| Maria | Why? Can I ask? |
| Terisa | Because we look at mental health in a totally different light. Mental wellbeing in terms of Pacific... it’s not… there are different views on mental wellbeing and so when we had focus groups and everyone just absolutely didn’t relate to it which is why we had to do some research and do focus groups and then design something that was more appealing to Pacific people. And so a huge part of it was... there was all these posters, banners on buses and everything, just “Are you OK?” or “Are you alright?” but for Pacific people it really didn’t mean anything. Hence why All Right? had to go back to the drawing board and do some research. |
| Maria | So they didn’t resonate because of the culture but people understood the English, we’re talking about Pacifica that can understand English very well. So they did understand for example… I’ll give an example. there was: “When did you last show a little love?” Or “Where did you last get caught up in the moment?” Did they understand actually the meaning of the thing but they didn’t relate to it? |
| Terisa | So our younger generation would have understood but maybe our older generation, they didn’t relate at all but then again for those that did see it, it really didn’t resonate with them so they didn’t think it was for them. |
| Sally | And it’s not something that can just be translated word-for-word; we were talking about this at the beginning. “When did you last get your sweat on?” for example. If you were to translate that word-for-word it probably doesn’t have any meaning. |
| Terisa | Well I was born in the islands so I am island-born and all my kids are New Zealand-born and so some of the messages even I didn’t understand because there’s some slang in it. So you can imagine... work for the DHB and I really don’t understand some of the language so… |
| Maria | Yes because a lot of them were just playing on words, idiomatic things and I just thought… because I’ve been here 25 years I understand them and I like them and I think they’re really funny and uplifting and the colourful posters, I really like them but of course I thought like you, I thought, “My goodness me, if there was a new Italian or one of my relatives coming and saying that one about ‘When did you last get your sweat on?’ they would say, ‘Why do you need to sweat?’” And I imagine in the Pacific Islands you try not to sweat. So that were the funny ones.  What was interesting is because my office is inside the Migrant Centre and so the Migrant Centre, I just talked to the Case Manager there which is a woman from China, and the people from the All Right? campaign approached the migrants to say look, “Let’s see what other communities, what does a Chinese person…” I mean, you are generalising so of course it’s quite hard every time but so I sat down with this Chinese woman and we talked about them. All of them didn’t make sense, the ones that were there, and so with the Chinese woman, we came up with this phrase “It is OK to ask for help” and so she said the Chinese would understand that and maybe say, “OK, maybe they’re telling me I can ask so I will ask for help”. But out of all of this wonderful other creative messages, they really didn’t make sense for the Chinese community. |
| Terisa | And I think when we sat down to look at the research it was about just putting things that were important to Pacific people. So we have new key messages and it’s around our culture, it’s around our Pacific languages and it’s about our spirituality. So with those things... And what we didn’t want was posters everywhere, we wanted practical things. So working in health it’s like, let’s have a drink bottle that has this message so you get your drink of water and also take the key message about language or culture or spirituality and so that way it’s worked for us. |
| Sally | I haven’t seen the Pacifica posters around the city, I have seen the odd one in offices and that must be why then, because you’ve gone with the practical. |
| Terisa | Yes. |
| Sally | OK that’s great, we’re going to have to break it up for a minute now and Maria we’re going to use your song, ‘Ebano’ by the Modena City Ramblers. |
| Maria | Yes I chose those guys because it’s a lovely group and it’s a contemporary group that plays concerts all over Italy so I have seen them not that long ago. And ‘Ebano’, I like this song because it is very melodic and also it talks about an African in Italy immigrant and all the difficulties that they can have. |
| Sally | Quite appropriate for today then. |
|  | **MUSIC – EBANO BY MODENA CITY RAMBLERS** |
| Sally | Kia ora and welcome back to Speak Up – Kōrerotia, here on Plains FM 96.9. We’re speaking with Gareth, Maria and Terisa about interpretation and the access to information and Gareth you were just mentioning about, you don’t know what you don’t know. If you could maybe give us a little bit more information about that. |
| Gareth | Certainly. That’s one of the aspects of this topic that I find fascinating because it applies to so many different aspects of it whether we’re talking about access to information, whether we’re talking about access to information in a legal setting, in a health setting: people don’t know what they don’t know. They often don’t know that they can access interpreters or translators, they often don’t know that they’ve misunderstood the message until it’s too late and they often don’t know that they’re not getting all of the information. And I see this frequently for example in the employment sphere where decisions are made about people based on information that may be incorrect, it may be irrelevant but they don’t know that’s happened. |
| Maria | Yes, how do you detect that? |
| Gareth | Exactly and as I was saying earlier in the show where we do have good legislation that provides access to that but often people don’t know about that either and so it’s really a layered problem where you are essentially peeling the onion to get to the information. There are practical issues as well because often the information isn’t written down and so it’s not even a case of being able to translate it or not, if the information that is relevant to you hasn’t been written down how do you get that information? So there’s some really interesting practical issues that need to be overcome. |
| Terisa | Another layer on top of that would be the influx of workers that have come in. |
| Gareth | Definitely. |
| Terisa | And that have no… they haven’t accessed any information and so employers might… like, I know employers have gone to the islands to bring workers in and so there’s no… I guess in terms of a process where they will have that information and if they do have the information, do they understand it firstly or is it just beside, they’re just happy to be in New Zealand until something happens. |
| Maria | Yes I was thinking of that too, you know the recruiting company that went to the Philippines for the workers. So one of the requirements for New Zealand Immigration was that they could have enough English - so I know, because my son worked for Leighs Construction and he went to Manila to recruit some of their… But we know one of the requirement was the English level but of course I have met many Filipino workers now and I have seen the level of English is really minimum or nothing, I’ve been to some of the houses too so I’ve met them in groups and so some of them… I’m sure they haven’t been able even to understand the contract or the contract that they have with the landlords and all the rest of this problem.  So going back to your idea was we have a group that is called CLING - CLING is the Communication Language Information Network Group - that was formed after the earthquake and it really is a group that wants to advocate for how… and educate all agencies and people, just talk about it and collaborate towards including all the different communities into the mainstream messages that we want to give people here in New Zealand. So it doesn’t have to be only after an earthquake but in any case, how do you reach everyone, even the people that don’t share the same language and the same culture? So it’s all about educating, isn’t it? |
| Gareth | Definitely, education really must be the key to me about all of this. |
| Terisa | Because then what happens if you have workers coming in and if they rely on host families that live here and if the host families don’t have information or they might have wrong information this gets passed on. |
| Maria | But think about the safety in the construction companies. I mean, they are building huge buildings. Would a Pacific Islander or a person from the Philippines know the code in New Zealand or the OSH and all the safety procedures? I’m sure they do courses but are they in English, those courses, that is my question, they might use interpreters I don’t know. |
| Terisa | I know in Fiji they have the standards of qualifications is acceptable by NZQA so in terms of getting workers and I think it just depends on the employers where they actually go because I know there is a government initiative that’s happening at the moment and is still in process but that won’t stop other employers just going themselves. |
| Gareth | And the construction companies that I’ve worked with, I think they are definitely aware of the potential issues. As we said before though, whether someone can understand the words and the meaning or just the words is a whole other issue which possibly people don’t turn their mind to. |
| Sally | And I think part of this problem and definitely key to this particular conversation around construction is you can live in New Zealand totally fine until something happens and that’s the real key thing, as soon as you need to go to the hospital, as soon as there’s an accident on the construction site and then all of a sudden it really becomes key and it’s too late then. |
| Gareth | Definitely. |
| Maria | Yes it’s always the risks, isn’t it? Often when I go into presentations I just make a parallel with: If I need something done in my house with the electricity, would I call someone that says, “I can string two wires together” and let them do it? Well, it could work, but how safe is it? OK I might be saving money by doing that but how long would it last? If I get a person with the qualifications, the results are predictable, I’m covered, I’m insured, I’m safe, it’s just all the risks that we want to run or we can run. |
| Sally | Actually that’s a really good analogy to draw; it makes it very comprehensible I think. We’ve been talking about the necessity of having interpretation and being able to access information, what is it that makes a really interpretation or a really good translation? |
| Maria | I won’t be talking about translations again because I was just saying translation requires a lot of skills that I don’t have, all of us can say, “OK I speak my language quite well but can I write a book about it?” If we think about it we all realise how hard it is to write a book, we have to have something to say first of all but also being able to express that in the right way in the writing. So for interpreting I think the main skill is of course be fluent in the two languages but that’s not at all enough to know two languages well, it still doesn’t make you a good interpreter. What makes you a good interpreter is just to know how to really manage the process of interpreting which is always being aware of boundaries, your own boundaries, to be aware of your Code of Ethics. The aim is to transfer the message in an accurate and detailed way so you have to be faithful to what you hear and so always ask for repetition, always ask for clarification. And I would say the perception or the majority of people is if I’m speaking fast, without stopping, people assume I’m saying the right thing. I often think if you heard my daughter was 30 and she speaks perfect English because she’s been to school here and she speaks very good Italian, she has no accents in any of the two languages but you put her in a medical or legal situation and she hasn’t got the vocabulary in Italian for it. So if you could hear me or her speaking English you would say, “OK let’s get the daughter, she speaks perfect English” but do we know what is her Italian is like? Perfect pronunciation but she hasn’t got the vocabulary for it and she doesn’t know how to manage a process of interpreting, that is much more complicated. |
| Terisa | You just touched on something about using children to interpret, it is wrong. |
| Maria | Huge, it’s wrong. |
| Gareth | And yet it happens so often, it’s almost a default choice in a lot of situations isn’t it. |
| Sally | Yes the moral obligation you are imposing on somebody, it’s not fair, is it? |
| Maria | Do they have the maturity first of all?, I think. |
| Sally | I remember reading, maybe about a year and a half ago, about a refugee family in Wellington I think where they’d been using the child to interpret and the man had cancer. And I mean, apart from the fact the story had a sad ending, whether or not it had a sad ending is sort of beside the point, the child should not have been placed in a position that he was having to tell back to his parents. |
| Maria | Yes very big responsibility. |
| Gareth | Which I guess raises another interesting question though and that is we all agree that it is not fair to put the child in that situation but is it better for the person who cannot communicate in English, being the language we’re talking about, is it better for them not to have anyone translating or interpreting for them or to have someone interpreting perhaps poorly which raises some interesting moral dilemmas doesn’t it. |
| Maria | Yes but there is provisions for interpreting so they should be called. |
| Sally | Yes well we’re out of time unfortunately but I guess this is a good point to finish up on, just to be aware that there is provision for interpretation and that people should be making the most of these opportunities, in fact it’s a legal obligation to be making the most of these opportunities. Any final comments before we finish up? |
| Maria | It’s been very good to be in this program Sally and very lovely to meet all of you, thank you. |
| Gareth | Agreed, it’s a fascinating topic and one that I think we could all spend much more time discussing. |
| Sally | We always seem to run out of time! Well thank you very much for your time today and I just have a couple of notices.  Tuvalu Language Week is coming up, 27th September to 3rd October. Fiji Language Week is coming up, 5th to 11th October. The Niue Language Week is coming up on the 12th to 18th of October and Tokolau Language Week is coming up on the 25th to 31st October. So not surprisingly, given all these language weeks, the October show is going to be looking at Pasifika, so tune in then on the 21st of October or Sunday the 24th. See you then! |