

CASE FILE // CF-02 // INTERVIEW COMPLETE



What no one tells you about asylum interpreting.

This is what interview 2 taught me.

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The asylum interview is not designed to hear your story.

It is designed to find inconsistencies in it. Every answer becomes a data point — disclosed or not disclosed, consistent or contradicted.

The interpreter is the filter between your words and the official record. What enters the record is what gets judged.

A bad interpreter does not just mistranslate.
They construct a different person.

Language fluency is not enough.

Many asylum claims involve religious persecution. The distinctions matter — specific sects, practices, beliefs. UK policy reflects those distinctions.

An interpreter without that domain knowledge will approximate. Under cross-examination, an approximation becomes an inconsistency. An inconsistency becomes a refusal.

Language

Required

Domain Knowledge

Often absent

Cultural Context

Rarely checked

Answer length is a signal.

Experienced practitioners notice when something is off — not always the words, but the shape of the exchange.

Answer too long

The interpreter may be elaborating or filling gaps they did not understand.

Answer too short

A complex question returned a one-word answer. Something was lost.

Question misread

The claimant responds to something the officer did not ask. The interpreter reframed it.

When the problem is raised matters more than the problem.

In the moment

A practitioner can flag the issue, pause proceedings and request a different interpreter. The damage can be limited.

After the fact

The transcript exists. The decision is made. Challenging it requires identifying the error, evidencing it, and persuading a tribunal it was determinative.

Most interpreter problems are not caught in the room. Most are never caught at all.

I'm 15. This is interview 2 of at least six.

I am interviewing solicitors, barristers, interpreters, and academics. Building a report. Trying to understand how a structural failure becomes a personal catastrophe.

Follow for findings as they emerge.

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All sources anonymised.