



Lesson 3.2

Operating with Language Assistants

Content



- Overview of Language Assistants (LA)
- Considerations and management of LA
- Preparations of LA
- Working with LA
- Debriefing LA

Learning Outcomes



- Identify the roles of LA
- Explain the considerations and management of LA
- Describe the preparation steps when working with LA
- Explain the techniques for working with LA



Language Assistants

Who are LA



- Not professionally trained, local civilians, hired by mission
- Familiar with host nation
- Host country ambassadors



Language Assistants

Role of LA



To interpret accurately and dispassionately the exact meaning and nuance of words and phrases spoken during a discussion between two parties who do not speak a common language



Language Assistants

Relationship with LA



- Make them feel like part of the team
- Ask to assist you in improving your knowledge of the local language and local culture
- Maintain a professional relationship

Considerations of Language Assistants



- Language skills
- Physical and mental fitness
- Gender consideration
- Ethnic, cultural, political considerations

Management of Language Assistants



- Review mission's SOP, policies on LA employment and deployment
- Assess potential risk on LA
- Address ability and effectiveness
- Ensure administrative support and supervision for LA
- Maintain confidentiality, integrity, and awareness
- Verify all information provided by LA through additional sources

Preparations of Language Assistants



- Information given to LA
- Security considerations for LA



- Sensitive issues of LA
- Rehearsal with LA

Preparations of Language Assistants



Information given to LA

- Task, goal, agenda
- List, titles and background of speakers
- Copies of speeches, talking points, documents to be distributed
- List of technical words
- Expectations from LA



Preparations of Language Assistants



Security considerations for LA



Be aware of locations where LA may be at risk



Ensure adequate security for LA

- Risk assessment, MOP, security clearance

Preparations of Language Assistants



Sensitive issues of LA



- Gender, Cultural, Political, Religious issues
- Special attention to female LA
 - Can she travel away from home?
 - Is it appropriate for her to travel alone?
 - Are there hygiene facilities available at the venue?
 - Is the venue accessible and welcoming to women?
 - What are security requirements?

Preparations of Language Assistants



Rehearsal with LA

- **Signs between you and the LA:**
 - Example: when I touch your arm, it means I am talking to you
- **Actions to take in case of an incident or if something appears suspicious:**
 - Ensure your LA knows how to communicate any suspicious activity and understands how you will react
- **First Aid:**
 - Ensure your LA has basic first aid skills and knows what to do in case of injury



Working with Language Assistants



Position



As much as possible, the LA should be positioned to the side of the UNMO, not between the speaking parties

Working with Language Assistants



Interpretation



- Set expectation
- Control pace
- Prioritise word-for-word Interpretation
- Explain complex terms

Working with Language Assistants



DO'S	DON'TS
Maintain eye contact with the other party	Don't always focus on the LA
Speak directly to the person	Don't use the third person
LA repeats what is being said, explain cultural nuances	Don't let LA analyse or judge
Speak in short sentences, use basic vocabulary	Don't use technical terms, abbreviations, idioms or jokes

Working with Language Assistants



Challenges



- Misinterpretations / Incomplete or subjective interpretations
- Time management
- Body language and gesture
- Timely availability of LA
- Background of LA

Debriefing Language Assistants



- **Review the interpretation process:**
 - Difficulties, voice, pace of speaking, vocabulary, LA's performance
- **Review the effectiveness of meeting:**
 - Overall assessment, how the meeting went, your counterpart's expectation, outcomes, identify areas of improvement



Summary of Key Messages

- LA play an important role in bridging the gap between UNMO and locals
- Refer to mission's SOP for the management of LA
- Adequate preparation is crucial when working with LA
- Language skills, physical and mental fitness, gender, ethnic, cultural and political consideration should be taken into account
- Apply do's and don'ts when working with LA
- Debrief LA to identify areas of improvement

Learning Activity 1



Plenary Quiz (True or False)

1. Language Assistants are international professional staff hired by the UN mission, for the purpose of interpretation
☐ True
☐ False

Learning Activity 1



2. UNMO should focus on the Language Assistant during discussion to ensure understanding.

☐ True

☐ False

Learning Activity 1



3. Due to lack of professional training in interpretation, UNMO should plan for extra time for meetings with interpretation and provide clear instructions to the Language Assistant.

() True

() False



Learning Activity 2

Group discussion

Total Time: 10 min

Preparation: 5 min

Discussion: 5 min

- What UNMO should consider for LA prior to working with them?
- What are the do's and don'ts when working with LA?



Learning Activity 3

Role play

Total Time: 15 min

Preparation: 8 min

Discussion: 7 min

Scenario:

You are patrolling a village, and you, along with the LA, will speak with the village chief about the current security situation in the surrounding areas.

Task:

Act as the UNMO, LA and village chief during the conversation.