

# Language and rights

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ENPSIT – European Network for Public Service Interpreting and  
Translation

[www.enpsit.eu](http://www.enpsit.eu)

## Communication gap in public service provision

A care coordinator at a primary school wants to talk to the parents of an eleven-year-old pupil. Joseph and his parents are Twi-speakers. Joseph was able to learn Dutch (= “the local language”) swiftly. His parents go to Dutch-as-a-second-language classes too. And they can relatively fluently, with a slight accent, order groceries at the local store in Dutch.

However, they are unable to grasp the exact difficulties Joseph is facing regarding math. The school’s care coordinator speaks of ‘serious issues with math’, ‘dyscalculia’, ‘probable math disorder’, ‘remedial therapy’ ...When it becomes apparent that Joseph’s parents don’t understand, Joseph is asked to translate. His parents came to understand that math was involved and that Joseph had some difficulties with math. In conclusion, Joseph’s father asks the coordinator: ‘When do you expect Joseph to come to the extra math tuition?’

## Communication gap in public service provision

Two Russian sisters go to the gynecologist. One of them is 'interpreting'. She says that her sister wants an abortion. The patient is referred to the proper hospital ward and gets an abortion. Afterwards it becomes clear that she had wanted to keep the child. The acting 'interpreter' – her sister – was suffering from a depression: she was undergoing treatment for infertility problems.