

INCLUSIVE MEETINGS' NUTS AND BOLTS

ADAPTED FROM COCO RIOT'S WORKSHOP ON
MARCH 9TH, 2012 - C'EST EN FRANGLAIS FORUM

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WHAT NOT TO DO:

What makes it more difficult for people whose mother tongue is not English or French? Things to avoid (or keep to a minimum) in meetings and other communication situations:

- > Interrupting
- > Speaking quickly
- > Long sentences and multisyllabic words
- > Jokes, irony, sarcasm, humour
- > Long meetings
- > Acronyms
- > Too many expressions (as in turns of phrase, not facial expressions!)
- > External references (such as, oh remember that program everyone watched in Quebec when we were kids?)
- > Talking down to people just because they are not as comfortable in English/French as you are
- > Making announcements about translation ONLY in the dominant language
- > Asking if people need translation support and then quickly moving on before people have a chance to really respond
- > Getting frustrated with "side conversations" that are actually whisper translation

WHAT TO DO:

BEFORE THE MEETING:

From the brainstorm led by Coco Riot and C'est en Franglais participants on things to do in order to make meetings welcoming and comfortable for people who do not speak the dominant language(s):

1 As members of the dominant language group(s), actively do some learning about the other languages that are used in your group.

2 When planning the meeting be specific about which languages other than the dominant language that you want the meeting to operate in. For instance maybe this particular meeting is most relevant to people who speak Farsi, or maybe in general it is important for meetings to be more accessible to Spanish-speaking members.

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WHAT TO DO:

BEFORE THE MEETING:

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- 3 Recruit volunteer whisper translators before an important meeting, emphasize that volunteers just need to be comfortable casually translating to a few people, they do not have to be professional translators and they will not be asked to stand up and translate in front of the whole group.
- 4 After you have recruited some volunteers, make sure to advertise that there will be whisper translation from language X to language Y available at the meeting add some multi-lingual text to invitations for the meeting (only in the language(s) that you have confirmed translation for.)
- 5 If the broader public is being invited to the meeting, make sure to publicize the meeting information through communication channels that are widely used by people that do not speak the language.
- 6 It can also be helpful to meet with key businesses, organizations, or community leaders who speak the language(s) that you are outreaching to. Make sure to listen at these meetings and invite feedback.
- 7 If possible, get the main points of the agenda translated before the meeting and print them out.

WHAT TO DO:

DURING THE MEETING:

- 1 Try to have a translation volunteer available to greet and welcome people as they arrive so that they can feel comfortable from the very beginning.
- 2 Encourage people who need translation support to sit in small clusters around each whisper translator.
- 3 Open the meeting with some words of welcome in the non-dominant language(s) that you are outreaching to and apologize that you do not have the ability to conduct the main content of the meeting in the non-dominant language(s).
- 4 Make an announcement at the beginning about how translation will work during the meeting and encourage people to move around to get closer to a whisper translator (make sure this announcement is translated into the non-dominant language(s)).
- 5 If possible write-out an agenda in dominant and non-dominant languages or distribute translated copies of the agenda.

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WHAT TO DO:

- 5 Present some basic ground-rules for the meeting such as:

- 6 Actively give everyone a chance to talk - go-arounds can be helpful here, as they don't involve singling people out.

- 7 Make sure to take breaks to recognize the extra effort it takes to participate in a meeting in a foreign language, especially for the whisper translators!

- 8 Provide time at the end of the meeting for feedback about how to improve language accessibility for the next meeting.

- 9 At the end of the meeting thank everyone for their effort making the meeting accessible in multiple languages.

- 10 Be prepared to challenge your assumptions, and the assumptions of your group - take action!

WHAT TO DO:

- 1 Make sure to personally thank the whisper translators for their hard work and invite any additional feedback they may have about how to improve future meetings.

- 2 If possible get a summary version of the notes of the meeting translated and sent around to meeting participants.

- 3 As members of the dominant language group, try to attend some meetings that are being held in a language that you do not speak and see what ideas this may give you for your next meeting!

DURING THE MEETING:

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GROUND-RULES

“respect regardless of language”

“one speaker at a time (other than whisper translators)”

“if you are a person who usually speaks, step up into a listening role – if you are a person who usually listens, step up into a speaking role”

“anyone can pause or slow down the meeting if they can't follow what is being said”

AFTER THE MEETING: