On 17-18 January 2019, CWI and the Legal Training Centre St Petersburg held a two-day workshop for court interpreters entitled **«Work of interpreters in court and police stations. The experience of Russia and the UK».**

Alexander Larin, one of the trainers, mentioned afterwards, *«We managed to do a very important job: for the first time in Russia, the problems of court interpreting were discussed by lawyers and interpreters together. It is crucial that we were able to reach an understanding.»*

Trainers:

Katrina Mayfield, member of the Association of Police and Court Interpreters; UK.

Elena Cook, member of International Association of Conference Interpreters AIIC, lecturer at Manchester University, UK.

Alexander Larin, Director of Alba Translations Bureau, Nizhniy Novgorod

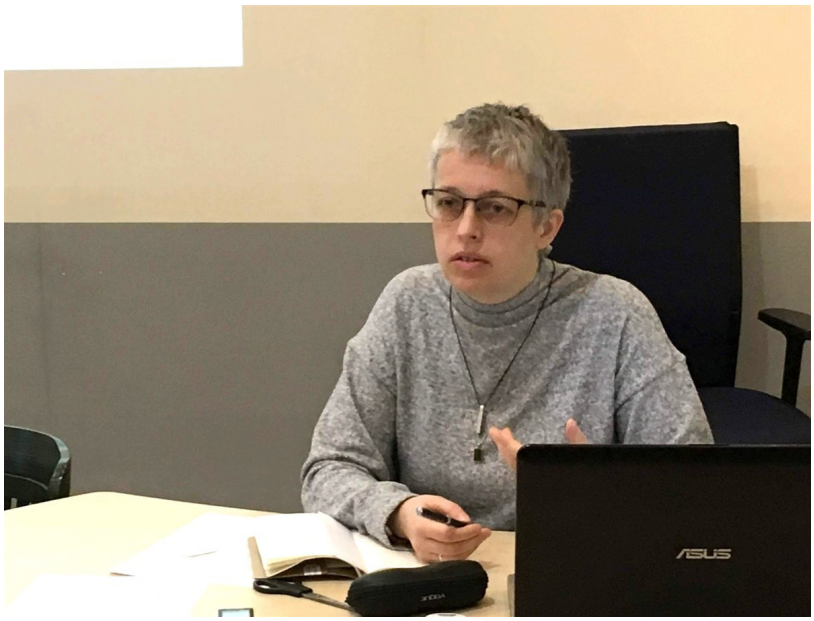
Oxana Yakimenko, Russian court and police interpreter since 1996, member of the Union of Translators of Russia, lecturer at St Petersburg State University, Higher School of Translation and Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg

The workshop gathered interpreters from a diverse range of languages: Russian, English, Italian, French, Spanish, Dutch, Tuvan, Estonian, Portuguese, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Kazakh, Hindi, Urdu, Ukrainian, Polish, Latvian, and Hungarian; as well as lawyers from Cherepovets, Nizhny Novgorod and Kaliningrad.

Specially for this event, excerpts of the handbook “Interpreters and the Legal Process” by Joan Colin and Ruth Morris (Waterside Press, 1996) were translated from English into Russian.

The book opens with the following statement: «In England and Wales, as in many other countries, interpreters have become an indispensable part of the legal process. Unfortunately, many people who work in legal settings have little or no understanding of interpreting and its complexities. Not infrequently they treat interpreters with suspicion, distrust and a lack of respect for the skills which they bring to the job. It must also be acknowledged that the people engaged to interpret are not always skilled, experienced or fully competent. A central aim of this book is to encourage better understanding of the implications which attach to interpreting in this special context. Sensitivity to the items covered is essential to the proper operation of the law when the need for an interpreter arises, and ultimately to the interests of justice itself.”

As it turned out in the course of the seminar in St Petersburg, interpreters and parties to trials often face similar problems in Russia.



Oxana Yakimenko opened the discussion sharing her thoughts about the role of interpreters working at police stations and in court. What are ethical and legal aspects of this work?

The main international documents underlying the EU professional codes of court interpreters:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Articles 1-11
- European Convention of Human Rights (1950), Articles 5 and 6
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), Chapter III – Articles 20-21, Chapter VI – Articles 47-50
- Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings

Oxana then shared examples of professional and ethical dilemmas encountered by interpreters during court proceedings.

Katrina Mayfield provided a detailed presentation about the work of interpreters with law enforcement bodies in England and Wales.

Katrina touched upon the following topics in her presentation:

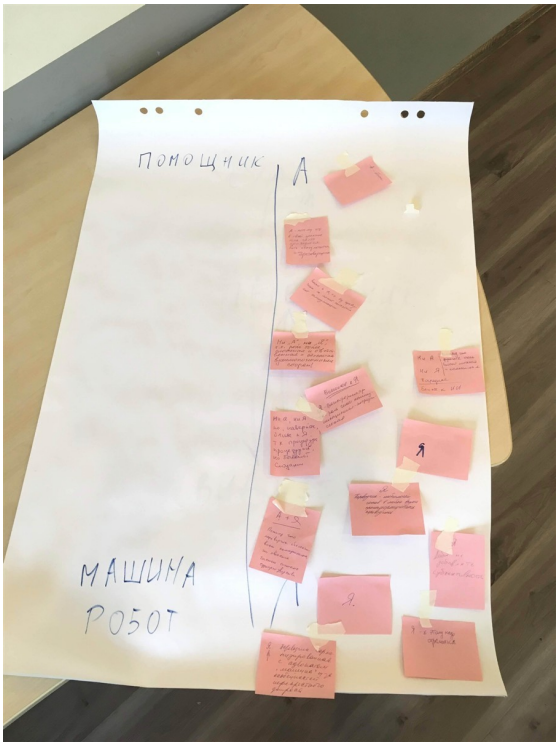
- What interpreters are invited to work at police stations;
- How professional competence of interpreters is assessed;
- The procedure of interviewing a suspect at a police station with the assistance of an interpreter;
- Other aspects of professional work of interpreters and translators engaged by law enforcement bodies in England and Wales.

The participants had a chance to try their skills in an exercise on accurate interpretation in the context of a police investigation. Working in pairs, they were asked to translate a story told by their partner consecutively from Russian into Russian. The task proved to be not so easy!

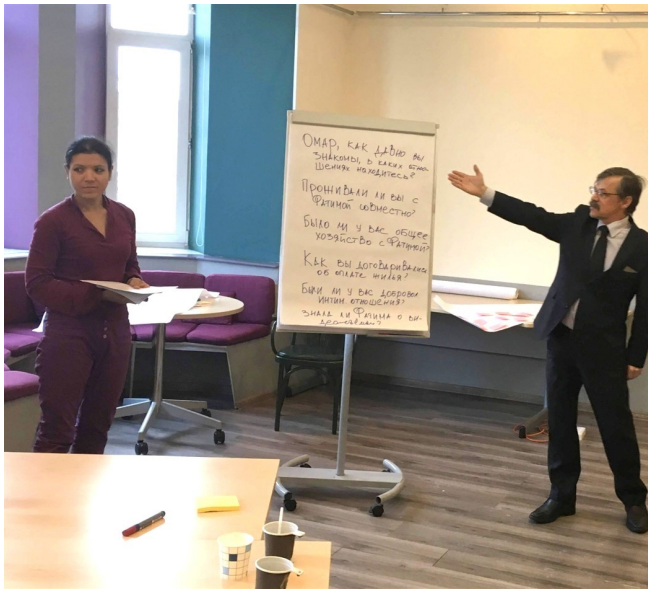
On Day 2, **Elena Cook** led the discussion of the work of interpreters during court hearings. This again included issue of accuracy of translation in court, as well as the following subjects:

- Interpreter and the lawyers. Adversarial trial procedure in English courts. Direct and cross examination of witnesses. Problems for interpreters if they don't get the purpose of questions asked by defence and prosecution lawyers.
- Interpreter and witnesses. Style and manner of interpreting in court. Accent, behaviour, body language etc. The impact of interpretation on the jurors and their assessment of witnesses' credibility.

The participants then discussed the role of an interpreter in court. Is he/she an assistant to justice or a machine – from the point of view of a victim, a defendant and a judge.



Working in two groups, “Defence” and “Prosecution”, with lawyers and interpreters in each group, the participants drafted and presented questions for direct and cross examination of witnesses based on a ‘porno revenge’ case study.



Then they watched a video clip from the famous O J Simpson trial where a defence witness was questioned in court with the help of an interpreter.

At the end of the workshop, **Alexander Larin** invited the participants to discuss the stereotypes lawyers and interpreters have about each other.

Alexander's presentation also covered the procedural rights and duties of court interpreters in the Russian environment:

- Participation of interpreters in various phases of investigation and trial. When interpreters are hired by the government and when by the parties of a hearing?
- Engagement and payment.
- Can an interpreter refuse to take the job? Can he/she get access to case files?
- Level of qualification and professional requirements.
- Liability of an interpreter. Responsibility for a wrong translation (with direct or indirect intention).

To conclude the workshop, Alexander invited the participants to support the initiative of creating a national register and professional standards for court interpreters by voting for this project on the website of Russian public initiatives.

The youngest participant with her mother, an interpterer from a rare Tuvan language