

Lost in translation

Irish Times, 7 June 2010

SECTION: IRELAND; Other Stories; Pg. 6

LENGTH: 438 words

Poor interpreting standards or lack of access to interpreters have often resulted in defendants not being aware of their rights or not understanding what they are pleading to. The following are examples from district courts reported in the press.

Judge Fahy told the 28-year-old interpreter from Lionbridge, the language company employed by the Courts Service to provide interpreters for foreign people coming before the courts with poor English, that she would not certify her for payment as she felt she was not translating everything that was being said for the benefit of the accused man. - **May 2nd, 2008, Galway Advertiser**

Two Polish translators, from a company contracted by the Irish Court Service, were told yesterday they were not competent to translate cases at Cork District Court.

Judge Con O Leary told two translators that they were not acceptable for the task and he requested a translator from an alternative agency. Judge O Leary . . . asked her [the interpreter] to explain the word ambiguity and she could not define it.

This is another example of Lionbridge sending incompetent interpreters. You are not competent. You are not acceptable. You are free to go. You are not honest. If you do not know the meaning of the word you should say so, he said to the interpreter. - **October 12th, 2007, Irish Examiner**

A Polish national was found guilty of driving without insurance but escaped a driving ban . . . Tarnogorski [the defendant] did not have strong English and no Polish interpreter was in court, however he did speak a little Russian and was assisted by another interpreter.

The language barrier led to some problems, particularly when Judge Donnchadh Ó Buachalla attempted to find out how long the defendant had been driving the car. I think I now know what it s like to be called a dentist, Judge O Buachalla said. - **June 7th, 2007 Wicklow Times**

Gardaí had concerns about the identity of the man apprehended at 16 Ramsgate Village in Gorey. Mr. King was able to show Inspector Pat Cody a Pakistani identity card suggesting that his client was called Salas Hussain. This was supported by a letter from a police station in Pakistan.

A translator was present in court but this proved of limited assistance because, while the interpreter understood spoken Urdu, he was unable to read Urdu script. - **March 3rd, 2010 Drogheda Independent**

Judge Mary Fahy said it was absolutely ridiculous to think that anyone living in this country for five years could not speak the language. The judge said she had granted Free Legal Aid but she was not going to certify for an interpreter. - **11th January 2007 Galway Advertiser**