

Tape recording the asylum seekers' interview

An international literature survey

Summary

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND), together with the WODC, have started a study of the influence of making tape recordings when interviewing asylum seekers. The experiment's objective is to determine to what extent tape recordings can be used as an instrument to control and improve the quality of the interview. By comparing an experimental group of recorded interview sessions to a control group without such recordings, it turns out that recording influences the contact officers as well as the interpreters. The contact officers experience pressure of time because of the attention that must be paid to the use of the equipment, and pay more attention to the written report of the interview.

The interpreters take less initiative during the interview and perceive a tenser atmosphere. There are no indications of quality improvement like a decrease of complaints, corrections and additions or a different assessment.

Recording can serve as a means of control in the event of difference of opinion about what has been said during the interview. However, legal aid workers are very reticent in claiming the right to listen to the tapes. In those cases the tapes are not really a means of quality control.

Another finding is that interpreters are not very willing to participate. They argue that recording has a negative influence on the atmosphere during the interview sessions and they fear financial consequences if their translations turn out to be disappointing. For some interpreters this translation job is their only source of income. The authors recommend further study of the role of interpreters. Also more can be invested in advancing interpreters' and contact officers' expertise, to improve the quality of the interviews.

To generalise the conclusions the research population must be extended with other types of asylum seekers and contact officers in other regions.