

WHAT REALLY WORKS!

Working With Educational Interpreters in Your Classroom

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Rise of Mediated Education for Deaf Students and Educational Interpreting

- Since early 1970's, the number of Deaf students in mainstream settings increased to approximately 80%. As a result, the demand for educational interpreters has increased as well.
- Approximately two-thirds of interpreting education program graduates enter the field of educational interpreting

Educational Interpreting: Teacher Preparedness

- A vast majority of teachers working with educational interpreters have not received training regarding how to work effectively with educational interpreters.
- In one study, less than 33% of 100 elementary and secondary general education teachers have received training and instruction for working with educational interpreters in the classroom (Beaver, Hayes, and Luetke-Stahlman, 1999)

Issues: Deaf Students

- Due to societal issues that cause challenges in families and in Deaf education, deaf students often do not have:
 - The same language skills and experiential knowledge and the same benefit of direct instruction in their language as their hearing peers
- Deaf students are often not prepared for mediated education (via interpreters) due to not having fully developed language skills, literacy skills, self-esteem, understanding of interpreting practices and of their own rights
- Deaf students feel frustrated with the lack of access due to interpreters' limited skills and with the failure of the teacher to appropriately mediate the classroom environment
 - Often, students are asked to repeat themselves, not sure how much they understand the message and how much they missed
- Deaf students often feel left out socially in all classes as well as outside classes

Issues: Educational Interpreters

- Lack of qualified interpreters with extensive training with educational settings
- Lack of receptive and expressive skills in both ASL and English
 - Often ask students to repeat, omit and skew information
 - Can't express academic content in both or one language
- Lack of knowledge of and experience with teaching practices and principles
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of the academic content
- Often interpreters are put in situations where they have to handle multi-task activities simultaneously, such as:
 - Group processes, debating skills, timing-based activities/games
- Lack of supporting resources, supervision, and mentors
 - E.g. lack of access to signed vocabulary for chemistry or other content-laden lesson, improving skills, discussions of how to recognize and handle problem situations

Issues: Teachers

- Lack of knowledge and experience with mediated classroom environment
- Teachers lack strategies to address growing gaps in Deaf student's academic performance
- Teachers often leave many teaching decisions to the interpreter, assuming that they have more experience with Deaf children
- Teachers have limited understanding of how little access the child has to the language of instruction and believes interpreters are doing great
- Interpreting is not enough, so teacher practices must be significantly modified for an effective learning environment

Myths: All are incorrect assumptions about the mainstream context

- An interpreter provides equal access (equivalent to what the hearing children have)
- Signed language is a visual form of English
- Anyone can sign and signed language is not complex, intricate and linguistically-rich
- Students in the early years don't need qualified interpreters because lessons are "simple"
- Deaf children learn language by watching someone sign 6 hours a day (rather than from normal daily interaction through use of language)
- Schools are completely accessible to Deaf children - e.g. they can easily ask for assistance, report problems, call their parents.
- Teachers can teach "as usual" when interpreters are present in the classroom and do not need to modify their teaching approach, classroom environment, or their lessons

Impact of the myths of mainstreaming

- Creating situations where simultaneous demands are present making the context very difficult for interpreting and for the Deaf students
 - Scenarios of difficulties created by forcing split attention:
 - Lecturing while students must take notes
 - Allowing students to talk out of turn simultaneously
 - Lecturing and writing on the board at the same
 - Choosing non-captioned videos which forces the student to split their attention between the interpreter and the video
- Because the interpreter is assumed to provide equal access, Deaf students are assumed to be able to easily participate in discussions and other activities. This results in relegating the Deaf students to a "bystander" status
- So, Deaf students in those types of environment may be learning, but in spite of, and not because of 'access'.

Interpreter Requirements & Needs for Effective Inclusion

- Bilingual fluency (language skills in **both** English and ASL, and even Spanish when needed)
- Advanced Interpretation abilities with savvy decision-making skills
- Knowledge of educational discourse and practices
- Knowledge of teaching processes
- Professional development, with focus on:
 - Educational content
 - Teaching processes
 - Vocabulary and equivalency of concepts in both languages
 - Tutoring by experienced and skilled tutors in ASL and English to prepare for interpretation of educational /academic content
- Supervision of Interpreters by other interpreters
 - Interpreter supervision via consulting contracts
- Interpreter Mentoring
- In-service opportunities for interpreters and teachers

What we can do as teachers: Interpreter, Student & Material Preparation

- Prep with interpreter by providing:
 - Schema for course, week, day (what you are trying to accomplish, what type of activities, preview of what's coming next, etc.)
 - More background content for interpreter to review
 - Opportunity for interpreters to ask you questions to help activate their meta-cognitive abilities
 - This provides you with a diagnostic of what they understand and what you need to pay attention to (ensuring common frame of reference)
 - Textbooks, handouts, visual aids, indoor activities schedule, etc.
- Make sure all videos have closed captioning to reduce simultaneous demands on the student (ie. watching interpreter and the video)
- Pre-teaching as cognitive support (e.g. provide a list of concepts and key words as a handout)
 - Pre-teaching can be done by teacher, peer, tutor and family members

What We Can Do as Teachers: Classroom and Interpreter management

- Share the purpose behind questions, explanations, links to previous knowledge, and goal behind your lessons with the interpreter as well as the class
 - This will provide shared context access to the interpreter so that the interpreter can aim for a more purpose and meaning-based interpretation and not focus on only producing signs for words you use
- Make sure the interpreter does the prep work (active vs. passive preparation)
 - Passive: just reading material
 - Active: Reading material, developing discourse map, preparing interpretation into ASL and filling in missing concepts/signs

What We Can Do as Teachers: Audit of interpretability of materials & activities

- Conduct assessments of “interpretability” of classroom activities (audits)
- Work with classroom interpreters or interpreter consultants (when available) to conduct the audit
- Assess materials and activities for their potential for accessibility modification, problematic contexts, and situations that require too many modifications (and therefore not recommended/ suitable for interpreting).

What We Can Do as Teachers:

Promoting socialization and taking responsibility

- Children often lack meaningful relationships with other children who can use sign language, especially Grades 3-12, so be sure to promote and provide ample opportunities for socialization in class
- Incorporate opportunities for every student to lead socialization activities to ensure Deaf students have opportunities to develop leadership skills
- Consistently assume and maintain the role and responsibilities as a teacher with each Deaf student rather than to leave it to the interpreters (eg. disciplining, making sure students follow directions, and do not cheat on exams)

What We Can Do as Teachers: Communication strategies

- Speak directly to the student, and not to the interpreter
- Know that everything said and signed in class will be interpreted (as it should be)
 - However, sometimes student or interpreter may ask for clarification on the sign used or may repeat what was said, and the interpreter does not interpret that as a part of the interpreter management process
- If you think you won't need an interpreter in a certain situation, ask both the student and interpreter, don't make decision without consultation

What We Can Do as Teachers: Communication management strategies

- Allow pauses in lectures to allow interpreters to catch up
- Allow for clarifications
- Repeat questions before answering
- Lessen simultaneous demands
- Allow time for students to actively participate in discussion and ask questions (processing time)
- Manage classroom talk & turn-taking
- Pace yourself
 - Repeat important vocabulary
 - Repeat or rephrase important information
 - Adds visual references to important concepts in spoken English
- Remember your classroom is BOTH bilingual and bimodal (two different modalities)

Teaching Practices: Tips

- Work with IEP team to determine if inclusion can work for the student
- Access/obtain consulting services to work with integrating the educational interpreter and the Deaf student in your classroom
- Do not leave teaching decisions to interpreter
 - E.g. process for solving math problems should be explained by teacher who is specially skilled to do so
- Learn some signs – greetings/feedback – to foster direct relationship
- Consider fatigue factor to Deaf student of watching interpreter for 6 hours a day – balance small group and individual activities
- Mirror Deaf life in the classroom
 - E.g. Classroom presentations on Deaf-related topics - ASL poetry lessons, Deaf role models, success stories of Deaf people
 - Field trips to Deaf-related events and activities, ASL poetry lessons, Deaf role models, success stories of Deaf people

Classroom Environment: Tips

- Lighting, consistent and sufficient for communication access
 - Make sure there is good lighting for Deaf students to see the interpreter during videos (especially if not captioned)
 - Be observant of lighting issues from windows & shadows in the room that may impact sight lines
- Positioning – make sure that the sight line from Deaf student's seat to main presenter in the room, the board, and the interpreter is not obstructed.
- Interpreter clothing – make sure it is a solid color contrasting to skin tone so signs can be seen easily. This also helps reduce eye fatigue
- Interpreter fatigue- make sure you provide class with a variety of activities that also allows the interpreter to rest occasionally

Creating Relationship with your Deaf students

- Learn some survival signs (where, what, etc.), social greetings (hi, bye, how are you?) and feedback signs (ok, good, try again, etc).
- Use written notes to communicate with student directly occasionally
 - Text, email (depending on age of student)
- Provide ample opportunities for Deaf students to participate in class (e.g. wait a bit before picking students to answer your questions)
- Visual classroom environment – make sure it welcomes your Deaf student & signed language (provide a comfortable, safe space)

Tips for Improving School & Community Relationship with students

- Make sure your school has Direct access options via technology (e.g. VideoPhone, E-mail, etc).
- Ensure that your school provides classroom teachers working with Deaf students regular coaching from master mentor teacher
- Create opportunities for field trips / tournaments with other Deaf children
- Provides access to language support – e.g. Deaf language models
- Provide homework support –e.g. Deaf tutors (on site or via, e.g. Skype)
- Promote and attend Deaf-related events across region
 - Art festivals, ASL Festivals, etc.
- Extra-curricular interpreting funding so that your Deaf student can have interpreter for their after-school activities

Resources

- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)
 - <http://www.rid.org>
- RID Hiring Interpreters
 - <http://www.rid.org/interpreting/hiring/index.cfm>
- Captioning Videos
 - <http://www.csun.edu/it/captioning>
 - https://www.rit.edu/~w-drupal/sites/rit.edu.provost/files/rit_guidelines_for_captioning_audio-visual_media_january_2012_final.pdf
- Classroom Interpreting Resources
 - <http://www.classroominterpreting.org/eipa/index.asp>

References

- Video references:
 - <http://mdrltoolkit.ualberta.ca/tutorials>
 - www.rit.edu/ntid/radscg/system/files/classroom_tips.doc
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-209DSaW9g>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cqV84yWBSE>
- Articles and books:
 - Beaver, D., Hayes, P.L., & Luetke-Stahlman, B. (1995). Inservice trends: General Education teachers working with educational interpreters. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 140, 38-42.
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