



VANCOUVER ISLAND
UNIVERSITY

Information Package
for
Faculty & Staff
Who Work with Students Who are
Deaf or Hard of Hearing

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INTRODUCTION

This package will provide helpful information for working with students who are Deaf and hard of hearing and use a sign language interpreter. This package, however, serves only as a guide. What is helpful to one student may not work for another. As individual direction from the student is often the best approach, feel free to ask the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing what works best for him/her.

The first part of this document provides information on American Sign Language (ASL), Deaf culture, and communication strategies for working with students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. It also explains the role of the sign language interpreter and suggests ways that you can enhance the interpreting process. The second part provides a glossary that explains current language used in the field. Since language is dynamic and always evolving, we have attempted to provide the most current terminology. A final section explains the national code of ethics that sign language interpreters follow.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, feel free to call Disability Services at 740-6446.

PART I: SECTION A

Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Students who are Deaf and those who are hard of hearing, like hearing students, are first and foremost individuals. Hearing loss varies from mild to profound. Some students who are Deaf or hard of hearing may have clear speech; others may not. Some students may speak for themselves when they are in a small group but prefer to use an interpreter in a large group. Some individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing may have good speech reading skills; others may rely solely on the interpretation.

It is important to recognize that students who are Deaf and hard of hearing have differing needs. Students who are Deaf access information through the use of American Sign Language (ASL). They will be using the services of a sign language interpreter in the classroom. However, a student who is hard of hearing may access information through the use of hearing aids, an FM system and/or make extensive use of their speech reading skills. In the classroom, the student who is hard of hearing may (or may not) prefer to use an oral interpreter.

Don't be afraid to ask the student about deafness, language, or culture. When in doubt as to how to act or what to say, just ask.

Role of the Interpreter

The role of the interpreter is to facilitate communication between students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, their non-deaf peers, and faculty and staff at Vancouver Island University. Interpreters are hired solely to interpret. The interpretation process should not cross over into the area of tutoring, instruction or supervision of exams or classroom management. Interpreters should not be asked to interrupt the interpreting process to perform other tasks.

Interpreters belong to a professional group, bound by a code of ethics. This code establishes guidelines to confidentiality, neutrality and impartiality. In order to respect a student's right to privacy, interpreters keep all assignment-related and personal information confidential. If an issue arises in which the interpreter needs support from their supervisor, that information is kept confidential within the working team. Neutrality needs to be maintained as the interpreter is representing all parties involved; therefore, it is unethical for the interpreter to show bias. The interpreter will remain impartial so the intent and spirit of the message is conveyed in the manner in which it is intended. For a more detailed explanation of the code of ethics, see the final section of this package.

American Sign Language (ASL)

ASL is composed of a series of handshapes and movements with its own distinct grammar and syntax. ASL is not universal. Each country has its own sign language which is culturally specific, and like other languages, regional variations exist.

In the 1960's, linguists established American Sign Language (ASL) in its rightful place alongside other spoken languages of the world. Until that time, ASL was thought to be inferior to spoken languages. Research into this visual spatial language documents that ASL is capable of conveying all the subtleties and complexities common to all languages.

Deaf Culture

The outdated medical model, where deafness was perceived as an audiological deficit, has shifted its focus in recent years to that of a sociological model where Deaf people are viewed as a cultural and linguistic minority. The Deaf community actively advocates for recognition as a cultural minority and rejects the label of a handicapped group. When the word "Deaf" is capitalized, it refers to individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing who strongly identify with and participate in the language, society and culture of people who are Deaf.

English Skills

As English is often the second (or third) language of many students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, they may experience difficulties with written English. The grammatical structure of ASL differs from English and this may be reflected in student's written assignments, however some students who are Deaf or hard of hearing have competencies in English that may rival that of their hearing peers.

PART I: SECTION B

Working with Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and an Interpreter

By the time the student enrolls in your class, the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing will have contacted Disability Services for educational planning, tutoring, notetaking and interpreting services.

The Interpreting Process

The interpreter is there solely to facilitate communication. Interpreters are not participants in the proceedings. Do not include them by asking for their opinion.

Use the first person tense when communicating with students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. For example: "I agree with you, Mary" is preferable to "Tell Mary I agree with her." Respond and look directly at the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing even though he/she will be watching the interpreter. Initially you may find this difficult but it will keep communication directed between yourself and the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing.

When you hear the interpreter speaking in the first person tense, he/she is voicing for the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing. For example: "I don't understand the question, could you please repeat that for me." This is a question from the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing, not the interpreter.

If it is the interpreter who needs clarification, the interpreter will say, "for the interpreter, could you please repeat or clarify that." This should eliminate confusion and establish that it is the interpreter, not the student who requires clarification.

Be aware that everything spoken or signed in class will be interpreted. The interpreter does not censor information.

Incidental learning often takes place in the classroom. When the interpreter is not in the classroom, the student's access to communication will be hindered.

During the first week of classes, the interpreter will check in with you. If you have any concerns about the interpreting process or the role of the interpreter, feel free to address those issues with the interpreter. If you need to speak with the interpreter, arrange to do this during non-interpreting hours.

Interpreters belong to a national organization, bound by a code of ethics. This code establishes guidelines relating to confidentiality, impartiality and neutrality. (see Page 9)

Communication

Inform the interpreter by email of any class cancellations, changes of venue or time changes. The interpreter can then be better prepared to provide quality interpretation to Deaf or hard of hearing students.

Course Materials

Students who are Deaf or hard of hearing access information visually. Therefore, the use of overheads, chalkboards, charts, and slides are beneficial. Also, writing new terminology on the board helps the student to become more familiar with new information.

Provide a detailed course outline that includes test dates, quizzes, chapter readings and assignments. Both the interpreter and the student can take advantage of the outline to prepare for upcoming information and new terminology.

When handing out written material, pass it *first* to the interpreter and the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing so they can quickly preview it before the lecture starts.

If you have a spare copy of the textbook, it would be beneficial if the interpreter could borrow it for the term.

Videos and Films

Let the interpreter know *in advance* when you will be presenting films or videos, or when you are having a guest speaker. The interpreter will then be able to preview the material in advance.

During films, videos and PowerPoint presentations, the Deaf student may require that one classroom light be left on so the interpreter can be seen.

As speakers on videos read from a prepared text, they often speak quickly. In the classroom the speed of the video cannot be controlled, therefore, the interpreter or the student may request that the video be interpreted before the actual class time. The interpreter can then take advantage of the VCR/DVD pause feature to control the rate at which information is presented.

Use closed captioned videos whenever possible. Closed captioning allows persons with hearing disabilities to have access to the audio portion of a video or film by displaying audio as text on the TV screen.

A TV with closed caption capability is required for these videos. Captions are accessed through the remote control or the TV on-screen menu. The instructor should contact IT Services to arrange closed-captioning videos and be familiar with the set-ups.

Students may review videos or films in the library using closed captioning. Closed captioning provides a critical link to news, entertainment, and information for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. For individuals whose native language is not English, English language captions improve comprehension and fluency. Captions also help improve literacy skills.

Speaking Rate

A smooth interpretation will occur if you speak at your normal rate. Interpreters do not sign a “word for word” translation when they are working in American Sign Language, but rather hang back in their interpretation in order to sign the concept. Therefore, you may notice a few seconds lag between when you finish speaking and when the interpreter finishes signing. The interpreter will let you know if they need you to slow down for any reason. For example, when speakers are reading from a prepared text, they tend to speak more quickly.

Group Discussions

During group discussions, the interpreter will be interpreting for all parties; therefore, it is beneficial if participants follow proper turn-taking signals. The interpretation will suffer if two or more people are talking at the same time.

Circular seating allows the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing to watch the interpreter and still be able to identify who is speaking.

Note-takers

It is difficult for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing to watch the interpreter and take notes at the same time. Disability Services may employ another student to take notes.

Exam Accommodation

The interpreter will stay for the exam to ensure that the student has understood the instructions and has asked any pertinent questions.

Breaks

Be aware that the interpreting process requires intense concentration and stamina. Interpreters require a 10-minute break each hour. Breaks for the interpreter often occur naturally when students are working independently, but during lectures the interpreter will need a rest break after one hour if working alone.

PART II:

Glossary of Terms

ASL – American Sign Language is a visual-gestural language used by Deaf people. The grammar and syntax of ASL is different than English. ASL is acquired as a first language by Deaf children who have deaf parents. Others learn ASL in schools and with Deaf peers. It is important to recognize that not all forms of signing are ASL. There is a signing continuum; from ASL to signed English. ASL has recently been recognized by the governments of Alberta and Manitoba as the official language of the Deaf. La langue des signes du Quebec (LSQ) rather than ASL is used in many parts of Quebec.

deaf (lower case "d") – The medical or audiological term applied to the loss of hearing to the extent that speech cannot be heard through the ear alone. The term can also be used to describe those who became deaf later in life and who do not identify themselves as culturally Deaf.

Deaf (upper case "D") – The sociological term that “refers to those individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the language, society and culture of Deaf people, which is based on sign language. “(Canadian Association of the Deaf).

Deaf Community – A cultural group comprised of persons who share a similar positive attitude toward deafness. The “culturally Deaf community” is comprised of those persons who have a hearing loss, share a common language, values and experiences. They have a common way of interacting with each other, with non-members of the Deaf community and with the hearing community. The wider Deaf community is comprised of individuals (both Deaf and hearing) who have positive, accepting attitudes towards deafness, which can be seen in their linguistic, social and political behaviours.

Deaf Culture – The beliefs, values and patterns of behaviour, language, expectations and achievements of members of the Deaf Community that are passed on from generation to generation.

Deaf Interpreter – In some situations, it is advantageous to include a Deaf individual in the process. A Deaf interpreter is a Deaf individual who is fluently bilingual in ASL and English and may better meet the communication needs of certain Deaf consumers.

Fingerspelling – Each letter of the alphabet is represented by a different hand formation. It is a way of representing English words. Fingerspelling is not a language and is only a small component of ASL.

Gesture – A movement of the body which occurs for some purpose of communication. Some gestures are widely understood, while others are culturally specific.

Hard of Hearing – Hearing loss to the extent that makes difficult, but does not preclude, the understanding of speech through the ear alone with or without a hearing aid. The hearing loss may be from mild to moderate. Often hard of hearing persons can take advantage of assistive listening devices.

Hearing-Impaired – This catchall phrase is no longer an acceptable term. “Deaf” or “hard of hearing” are the appropriate terms to use.

Interpreter – A professional with specialized training, “who facilitates communication between two or more people who do not share the same language, culture or communication method.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990).

Interpreting – The process of re-expressing a message originally delivered from one language into another language. “The essence of interpreting is the preservation of meaning across two languages, communities and cultures.” (SMI & Madonna University)

M.R.C. (Message Relay Centre) – Telus’ Message Relay Centre offers a telephone communication link between individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing and hearing individuals. To access this service, call 1-800-855-0511 and give the operator the TTY phone number of the person who is Deaf or hard of hearing that you wish to contact. The operator will also ask for your name and phone number. If you are new to this service, the operator will guide you through the process.

Oral Deaf – A hard of hearing or deaf person who may have been specially trained in speech and speechreading. Any residual hearing may be enhanced through the use of hearing aids or an FM system. An oral deaf student may prefer to use an oral interpreter in the classroom. An oral deaf person may or may not know, or use ASL.

TTY (Teletypewriter) – A TTY is an electronic device, similar in size to a laptop computer, which allows Deaf and hearing people to communicate with other TTY users. It has a LCD display unit that allows the deaf person to read the typed message as it scrolls across their screen. If you do not have a TTY, phone the Message Relay Center (see M.R.C.) and the operator will relay your spoken message to the Deaf person and communicate the Deaf person’s typed message to you.

Visual Language – A language method based on seeing (visual). It includes American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des Signes Quebecois (LSQ) and other sign systems such as speechreading, mime or gestures.

PART III:

Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC)

Code of Ethics

- 1. The Visual Language Interpreter will keep all assignment related information strictly confidential.**

It takes a minimum amount of information to identify the parties involved in an interpreted situation. An interpreter will not reveal identifying information about any interpreting assignment. In certain situations the interpreter functions as part of a professional team. In such cases the interpreter will use discretion when discussing term assignments. In cases where the information from an interpreted situation is public knowledge, the interpreter will again use discretion in discussing the same.

When an interpreter is functioning in any other capacity (i.e. lecturer, trainer, advocate) and wishes to share actual experiences of an interpreted situation, she/he will not reveal any identifying information.

- 2. The Visual Language Interpreter will render the message by faithfully conveying its contents and spirit.**

The interpreter will transmit everything in the manner in which it is intended.

This is especially difficult when the interpreter disagrees or feels uncomfortable with what is being expressed.

If the interpreter's own feelings interfere with rendering the message accurately, sh/he will advise the persons involved and, when possible, withdraw from the situation.

- 3. The Visual Interpreter will not counsel, advise or interject personal opinions related to the interpreted assignment.**

Just as an interpreter will not omit anything, she/he will not add to the situation, even when requested to do so by the person(s) involved. The interpreter is present in a given situation solely to facilitate communication.

- 4. The Visual Language Interpreter will use the preferred language of the person(s) for whom she/he is interpreting.**

It is important for the interpreter and the person(s) receiving the service to spend some time adjusting to one another's way of communicating prior to the interpreted assignment.

While working from audible to visual language, the interpreter will communicate in the manner preferred by the person(s) receiving the service.

While working from a visual language to an audible language the interpreter will use a compatible spoken interpretation of the visual language.

- 5. The Visual Language Interpreter will accept assignments using discretion with regards to the interpreting skills required, the setting and the person(s) involved.**

The interpreter will only accept assignments for which she/he is qualified.

The interpreter will generally refrain from interpreting in settings where the involvement of family members, personal friends or close professional associates may affect the quality of service.

- 6. The Visual Language Interpreter will approach the matter of compensation in a fair and equitable manner.**
- 7. The Visual Language Interpreter will conduct herself/himself in all phases of the interpreting situation in a manner befitting the profession.**
- 8. The Visual Language Interpreter will strive to further individual knowledge and skill in order to maintain high professional standards.**