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# Working with Interpreters in the Classroom

## Lesson Plan

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**School/University/ Affiliation:** National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester  
Institute of Technology

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**Grade Level:** Higher Education

**Subject (s):**

Deaf Education

Access and Support Services

**Duration:** Three-hour session.

**Description:** This workshop is designed to provide college-level instructors with a brief history of the development of sign language interpreting as a profession in the United States. The role and function of an interpreter in a college-level educational setting will be introduced, and strategies will be discussed that instructors can incorporate to effectively integrate instructional techniques and interpreting.

**Goals:**

1. Learn about the establishment of sign language interpreting as a profession and basic ethical principles that guide professional interpreters in their work.
2. Learn about the role of an interpreter in the classroom and models of effective communication.
3. Learn strategies for adapting instructional methods to complement interpreting services and create an accessible communication environment.
4. Discuss questions regarding challenges and opportunities related to having deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the classroom with interpreters.

**Objectives:** By the end of this training, participants will be able to accomplish the following cognitive understandings (CUs), affective understandings (AUs), and cognitive skills (CSs):

1. Describe 4 major ethical principles that guide the work of sign language interpreters in the facilitation of communication between Deaf/hard-of-hearing and hearing individuals. (CU)
2. Appreciate the interpreter's task of communication facilitation given the varying educational and linguistic backgrounds of Deaf/hard-of-hearing students. (AU)
3. Express increased confidence in the ability to provide college-level instruction in a classroom setting with Deaf/hard-of-hearing and students who are not deaf. (AU)

4. List 2-3 strategies to adapt personal teaching methodologies to better facilitate a visual learning environment. (CS)
5. List 2-3 strategies to adapt personal teaching methodologies to effectively integrate interpreting services in the classroom. (CS)

**Materials:**

1. Pre-Training Questionnaire
2. One computer with Internet access for each training participant with a maximum of two participants per computer
3. One computer for instructor with Internet access and MS PowerPoint software installed
4. Electronic classroom equipped with data/video projector and overhead screen
5. [PowerPoint presentation on Working with Interpreters in the Classroom with copies of slides for each participant \(taken from Content Outline – PowerPoint presentation is created by the instructor\)](#)
6. PowerPoint presentation on transparency with overhead projector (for back-up)
7. Post-Training Questionnaire/Evaluation
8. Reading materials on interpreting ethics and classroom integration of interpreting

**Rationale for Training:**

College-level instructors will be expected to work within a learning environment that includes deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals seeking post-secondary educational opportunities. This workshop will focus on communication accessibility in a classroom setting and teaching methods used to achieve greater communication accessibility for deaf and hard-of-hearing students who utilize interpreting services. A large aim of this workshop is to develop an awareness of the needs of students who communicate through a visual-based language. The workshop is designed to present college-level instructors with a brief history of sign language interpreting, provide models of the interpreter's role in the communication process, and demonstrate instructional strategies that integrate the interpreting process in the classroom.

## **Content Outline – Working with Interpreters in the Classroom:**

- A. Education of the Deaf in the United States, 1800s
  - 1. American Asylum for the Deaf (1815)
  - 2. Schools for the deaf grow across the U.S. (19 schools by 1857)
  - 3. (Discuss in conjunction with Morrill Land Act)
  - 4. Columbia Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, later renamed Gallaudet College, established through congressional bill – signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln (1864)
  - 5. NTID (1968) established after passage of PL 89-36 – signed into law by President Lyndon Baines Johnson (1965)
- B. Civil Rights and Deaf Education – 1950s/1960s
  - 1. 1965 – Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendment
  - 2. 1973 - Rehabilitation Act (Section 504)
  - 3. 1975 - Public Law 94-142
  - 4. 1990 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- C. RID Code of Ethics
  - 1. Major principles – confidentiality, impartiality, neutrality, professionalism
  - 2. Purpose of code – attention to communication, empowerment of participants
- D. Interpreter's Role – Historical Theories – Advantages/Disadvantages
  - 1. Helper/friend
  - 2. Machine/Conduit
  - 3. Communication facilitator
  - 4. Bicultural/Bilingual Model
- E. Instructional Strategies - Working with Interpreters
  - 1. Benefits of adapting instructional methods
  - 2. Tip sheets on how to adapt instructional methods
  - 3. The instructor/interpreter communication partnership
- F. Video Interviews-RIT Instructors Share their Experiences
  - 1. Challenges/Opportunities
  - 2. Benefits of having deaf students and interpreters
  - 3. Advice for instructors who will be working with deaf students and interpreters

## Working with Interpreters in the Classroom

### **Goals of the Workshop:**

1. Learn about the establishment of sign language interpreting as a profession and basic ethical principles that guide professional interpreters in their work.
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3. Discuss strategies for adapting instructional methods to complement interpreting services and create an accessible communication environment.
4. Discuss questions regarding challenges and opportunities related to having deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the classroom with interpreters.

### **I. Pre Workshop Preparation**

Participants will complete a pre-workshop questionnaire (Appendix A) related to expectations of working with interpreters and assessment of teaching methods prior to the introduction of an interpreter in the classroom.

Participants will prepare by reading introductory materials provided.

## **II. Workshop**

### **A. Education of the Deaf in the United States - 1800s**

1. Educational Opportunities for Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (HH) students (Appendix B).
2. Growth of Schools (secondary and post-secondary)

### **B. Civil Rights and Deaf Education**

1. Civil Rights of the 1950s/1960s and related laws (Appendix C).
2. Development in understanding of civil rights inclusion, recognition of the dignity of “differently”-abled people to access to the general goals of society.
3. Evolution of the role of the interpreter from family members/friends to a professional service provider.
4. 1964 – establishment of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

### **C. RID Code of Ethics** (Appendix D)

1. Guiding principles: confidentiality, impartiality, neutrality, professionalism
2. Purpose of the Code of Ethics:
3. Focus of the interpreter is on the message to be communicated.
4. Hearing and deaf individuals have equal access in the communication process.

### **D. Role: Perspectives on the Interpreter’s Role** (Appendix E)

(pros and cons of each perspective, from Witter-Merithew, Anna “The Socio-Political Evolution of the Interpreter’s Role”, 1991)

1. Helper/friend (pre-1964)– lack of impartiality may cause distortion of the message. May contribute to patronization of deaf individuals.
2. Machine/conduit (late 1960s)– assumes linguistic and socio-political equality of deaf and hearing participants; denies the human qualities of an interpreter; creates rigidity

in the role that can hamper communication, creating barriers for hearing and deaf communicants.

3. Communication facilitator (1970s) – more clearly separates the responsibilities of each individual while setting acceptable boundaries for interpreter involvement.
4. Bilingual-Bicultural Model (1980s)– shared respect for ASL and English, socio-political understanding of the role of the interpreter in the communication process.
5. Key points:
6. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the United States come from a variety of language experiences and have varying levels of experience in socio-political involvement. Their expectations also vary as to how the interpreter will function in specific situations/for specific individuals (Appendix F).
7. Interpreters can provide information regarding how interpreters function between 2 cultures: backchannel feedback as part of the interpreting process, language differences among deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, differences in translation versus interpretation, etc.
8. While functioning in the interpreting role, an interpreter utilizes constant judgement, based on experience and training, to assess the communication needs of individuals involved.

**E. Instructional Strategies** (Appendix G – NETAC Tip Sheet)

1. Incorporation of communication strategies from various tip sheets will enable the interpreter to better function within the interpreting role.
2. Sharing materials with interpreters prior to class will aid in interpreter preparation and support the clarity/accuracy of information that deaf students receive.
3. The professor as communication gatekeeper will allow the interpreter to focus on the message and will reinforce a climate of shared respect for all participants
4. The professor as communication gatekeeper, allowing one person to speak or sign at a time, ensures information is not lost in communication confusion (support for processing time required for an interpreted message).
5. Utilizing tips that maintain clear sight lines will effectively incorporate a visual-based language in the classroom and will enhance learning for students (deaf and hearing) whose learning style is primarily visual.
6. Discussion between instructors and interpreters prior to giving exams regarding appropriate interpreting procedures for exams will better maintain integrity in testing processes. (example: dealing with student questions regarding semantics of the written language versus questions regarding class content)
7. Key points:
  - Clear communication is a benefit to ALL students and creates a rich, effective learning environment.
  - NETAC tip sheet is an excellent one-page resource, allow time to discuss main points and answer questions regarding strategies before Case Study analysis.

**F. Video Case Studies:** 2 Case studies will be presented. (Appendix H/I)

Each video will have a “before” and “after” scenario and will include inappropriate and appropriate use of strategies previously discussed.

1. Participants will view 10 –15 minute videos of “before” classroom situations. Participants will break into small groups to discuss communication problems in the classroom video.
2. Facilitator will lead large group discussion, incorporating any problems not mentioned during small group discussions.
3. Participants will view “after” classroom situation and will discuss communication improvements.
4. Instructor Interview: RIT faculty interviews in various colleges. Participants will view testimony from instructors who have experienced working with classroom interpreters.

**III. Workshop Summary**

1. Allow time for further questions
2. Participants will fill out post-workshop questionnaire/evaluation. Facilitator will lead a brief discussion of results of evaluations.
3. Re-emphasize the role of interpreter and main principles that guide interpreters.
4. Reiterate strategies to support goals of clear communication that benefits all students.
5. Refer participants to further information about the culture of deaf people –Patrick Graybill workshop, “Considering Deaf Culture in Teaching and Learning ”.

**Materials:**

1. Tips Sheets : NETAC, DIS Tips, RID Code of Ethics, Tips for Teaching Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students
2. Power Point lecture materials
3. Video of instructor interviews
4. Pre-workshop survey and post-workshop questionnaire/evaluation

**Reading Materials:**

Frishberg, N. (1986). *Interpreting: An Introduction*. Silver Spring, MD: RID Publications, 10-13.

Siple, L.A. (1993) Working with a Sign Language Interpreter in Your Classroom. In *College Teaching*. 41(41), 139-142 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ 477 869).

Solow, S. N. (1981) The Ethics of Interpreting. In *Sign Language Interpreting: A Basic Resource Book*. New York: The National Association of the Deaf, 5: 39-49.

Witter-Merithew, A. (1991) The Socio-Political Evolution of the Interpreter's Role. (unpublished)

## Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. Code of Ethics

1. Interpreters shall keep all interpreted and assignment related information strictly **confidential**.
2. Interpreters shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker using language most readily understood by the person(s) for whom they are interpreting. (**impartiality**)
3. Interpreters shall not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions. (**neutrality**)
4. Interpreters shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skills, setting, and the persons requesting service.
5. Interpreters shall request compensation for services in a professional and judicious manner.
6. Interpreters shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.
7. Interpreters shall strive to further knowledge and skills. (preparation)
8. Interpreters, by virtue of membership in or certification by RID Inc., shall strive to maintain high **professional** standards in compliance with the code of ethics.

Appendix F

**Visual Communication Modes of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students**

ASL (American Sign Language)

Signed English

Oral Interpreting

Cued Speech

Deaf/Blind Interpreting  
(tactile or adapted for specific vision requirements)



## Appendix B

### Education of Deaf Students in the U.S.

1800s

American Asylum for the Deaf (1815)

1800s-1860s

Schools for Deaf students increase across the U.S.

1864

Gallaudet College – established through congressional bill – signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln

1968

National Technical School for the Deaf – PL 89-36 – signed into law by President Lyndon Baines Johnson

## Appendix C

### Civil Rights Laws – Opening Educational Doors

1965 – Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendment

1973 - Rehabilitation Act (Section 504)

1975 - Public Law 94-142

1990 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

## Appendix A

### **Working with Interpreters in the Classroom Pre-Workshop Questionnaire**

1. In your opinion, how will your classroom be affected by the presence of deaf and hard-of-hearing students accompanied by a sign language interpreter?

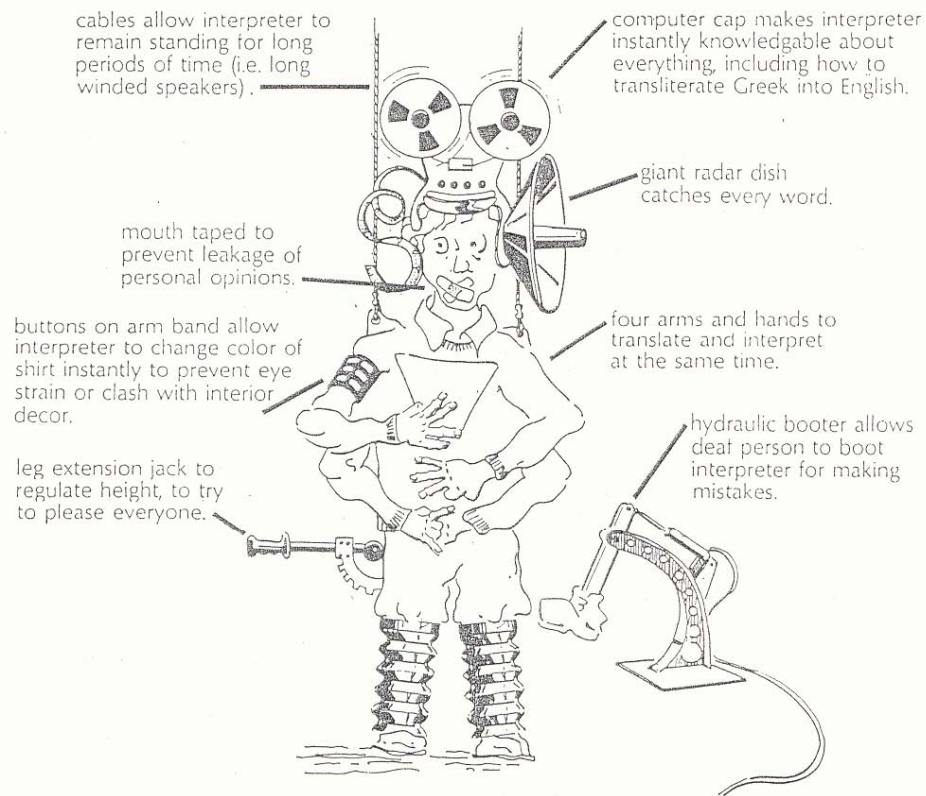
2. In what ways will your teaching methodology be affected by the addition of sign language interpreting in your classroom?

3. What concerns do you have about having a sign language interpreter and deaf and hard-of-hearing students in your classroom?

**For each statement below, please respond by selecting the number on the scale that most closely matches your opinion. (1=always, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never)**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. I incorporate student discussion groups into classroom periods.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I encourage questions and comments from students during my lectures.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I utilize audiovisual materials (films, videos) to supplement my classroom instruction.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I utilize visual materials (slides, overheads, PowerPoint) to supplement my instruction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I provide instruction from a variety of locations within the classroom.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Appendix E



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# what is an interpreter ?

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# Interpreting

An interpreter's role is to facilitate communication and convey all auditory and signed information so that both hearing and deaf individuals may fully interact.

**The common types of services provided by interpreters are:**

1. American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation – a visual-gestural language with its own linguistic features
2. Sign Language Transliteration – sign language and mouth movements using elements of ASL and English
3. Oral Transliteration – silent repetition of spoken English
4. Cued Speech Transliteration – speech movements of English supported by handshapes and hand placements.

All of these services may also require the interpreter to "voice" for the student who is deaf and does not use his or her own voice. The interpreter will vocally express in English what is signed, mouthed, or cued by the student.

Regardless of what type of interpreting is used in the classroom at your educational institution, all interpreters associated with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) are bound by a Code of Ethics. The principles guiding the professional behaviors of interpreters are:

- Interpreters/transliterators shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker, using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve.

- Interpreters/transliterators shall not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall request compensation for services in a professional and judicious manner.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall strive to further knowledge and skills through participation in workshops, professional meetings, interactions with professional colleagues, and reading of current literature in the field.
- Interpreters/transliterators by virtue of membership or certification by RID shall strive to maintain high professional standards in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

The interpreter's job is to faithfully transmit the spirit and content of the speaker, allowing the student and instructor to control the communication interaction. The interpreter's primary responsibility is to facilitate communication. Instructors should refrain from asking the interpreter to perform other tasks as it may interfere with the quality of communication provided and compromise the role of the interpreter.

**Things to remember when working with an interpreter:**

The interpreter's role is to facilitate communication. Please refrain from asking the interpreter to function as a teacher's aide or a participant in class activities.

Familiarity with the subject matter will enhance the quality of the interpreted message. If possible, meet with the interpreter before the first class to share outlines, texts, agenda, technical vocabulary, class syllabus, and any other background information that would be pertinent.

## Appendix G

Keep lines of sight free for visual access to information. In class, the interpreter will attempt to stand or sit in direct line with you, the student, and any visual aids.

Interpreters normally interpret one or two sentences behind the speaker. Speak naturally at a reasonable, modest pace, keeping in mind that the interpreter must listen and understand a complete thought before signing it.

Allow time during class discussions or question and answer periods for the student to raise his/her hand, be recognized, and ask the question through the interpreter. This will allow the interpreter to finish interpreting for the current speaker and enables the student who is deaf or hard of hearing to ask a question or make a comment.

The interpreter will relay your exact words. Use "I" and "you" when you communicate with deaf individuals using an interpreter. Look directly at the person you are communicating with, not the interpreter. Use of third party phrases such as "ask her" or "tell him" can be confusing.

For interactive situations, semi-circles or circles work best for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Try to avoid talking while students are focused on written classwork. The student can't read and watch the interpreter at the same time.

Plan some strategic breaks so that both student and interpreter can enjoy a mental and physical break from the rigors of the situation. Receiving information visually without breaks can be tiring and cause eye fatigue for the deaf individuals. Additionally, simultaneous interpreting requires the processing of new information while the information that was just communicated by the speaker is being delivered. For classes longer than

one hour in which only one interpreter is available, a five-minute, mid-class break is essential.

Encourage the students to wait until the teacher recognizes them before speaking or signing. The interpreter can only convey one message at a time after indicating the speaker. It is important that only one person speak/sign at a time.

Captioned films and videotapes are strongly recommended to allow the student direct visual access to the information. If you are planning to show a movie or use other audiovisual materials, inform the interpreter beforehand so that arrangements can be made for lighting and positioning.

If the deaf individual(s) are not present when class begins, the interpreter may wait a few minutes for late arrival. The interpreter may be needed at another assignment and may leave if no deaf individuals are present after 10-15 minutes.

If the interpreter will be asked to read and interpret test questions, allow time for the interpreter to prepare for this assignment.

Alternative test procedures may be needed by some students. If the test has a written format (essay, multiple choice, or fill in the blank), the student may prefer to have the interpreter read and translate questions into sign language. Arrangements for this kind of testing should be made by the student and instructor with the interpreter BEFORE the test.

More information about the role and function of interpreters can be obtained from the national organization of professionals who provide sign language interpreting/transliterating services, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, in Silver Spring, Maryland.

For more information, contact:  
**Northeast Technical Assistance Center**

**Rochester Institute of Technology**  
National Technical Institute for the Deaf  
52 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, NY 14623-5604

716-475-6433 (V/TTY)  
716-475-7660 (Fax)  
Email: [netac@rit.edu](mailto:netac@rit.edu)  
WWW: <http://www.rit.edu/~netac>



This NETAC Teacher Tipsheet was prepared by Kathy Darroch and Liza Marshall, Interpreting Services, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, a college of Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York.

## Appendix J

### **Working with Interpreters in the Classroom Post-Workshop Survey**

1. If you had concerns regarding working with interpreters prior to this workshop have they been addressed?

Is so, what have you learned that has answered your concern?

If not, what further question(s) do you have that would help address your concern(s)?

2. What are some teaching strategies presented during the workshop you would like to incorporate into the classroom to make information more visually accessible?
3. What are some teaching strategies presented during the workshop you would like to try in adapting instructional methods to integrate interpreting services? (Check those you would like to try with an X.)

I will facilitate student discussion groups \_\_\_\_\_  
to control the communication flow.

I will be more aware of including all student questions and \_\_\_\_\_  
comments during my lectures.

I will inform the interpreter prior to using audiovisual materials \_\_\_\_\_  
(films, videos) to aid in their preparation.

I will coordinate spoken communication with the use of \_\_\_\_\_  
visual materials (slides, overheads, PowerPoint) during  
classroom instruction.

I will remember the importance of “line of sight” when \_\_\_\_\_  
providing instruction from a variety classroom locations .