



Some Examples of Communication Diversity Seen in NTID Classrooms: Readings in Preparation for S.M. Barefoot's Workshop on Classroom Communication

Instructions: Before the workshop session on "Classroom Communication," read the following examples of communication diversity. In each example, there is one student who is the focus of a communication-related situation. Prepare to discuss the following questions during the workshop:

1. What challenges or problems do you see in this situation?
2. In what ways can this student provide a valuable contribution to this course?
3. What additional information would help you better understand this situation?
4. How would you respond to this situation?

Example 1:

A student usually comes into class and takes his seat without speaking to or looking at the professor. During the lecture part of the classes, he frequently initiates conversation with students sitting nearby, using signing without voice. When the professor indicates that this is not acceptable behavior because it distracts attention from the lecture, the student is quiet for a few minutes and then begins to converse again. A few other students do not seem to mind this and often participate in these "private" conversations. By the end of the third week, none of the students has approached the professor to complain and most students' grades seem to be within the normal range. However, the professor is completely irritated and angered by this student.

Example 2:

One male student in a class of twenty students uses speech and a little signing that he learned recently. He knows that the professor is a hearing person. As the first class begins, he volunteers information more than anyone in class. He uses speech but also adds some signs and fingerspelling. He takes a lot of time planning his signing and his communication is extremely slow. Several students express appreciation for this man trying to sign, but they also say it's difficult to understand him. The student who is learning to sign says he is not getting his thoughts out when signing and he is not doing very well understanding those who use sign language without voice. He asks the instructor to sign interpret when he speaks and voice interpret for the non-speakers.

Example 3:

In a technical course, students are expected to contribute to class problem-solving tasks. A female student who moved from Japan to the US to study at NTID has an excellent attendance record but almost never participates voluntarily. Her replies to direct questions are always very brief. Her language abilities seem to the professor to be similar to the other students. When the class is asked to divide into small work teams for an out-of-class follow-up project, one student points toward the Japanese student and says to the entire class, "I'm not going to be on a team with her. The rest of us will have to do all the work."

Example 4:

A student raises her hand in the second week of classes and says to the professor, "I am concerned that you are ignoring my need for ASL." She says that ASL is her first language and asks why the professor and a few of the students are not more skilled in using the language of Deaf people in a college for Deaf people. It is the professor's belief that the class consists of several students who are long-term ASL users but most of the students have been using English-based signing during class. The professor knows that two students strongly prefer spoken English but they all are able to use English-based signing fairly well. None of the students respond to the woman who asked for ASL to be used in class. They wait to see how the professor will handle her question and her concern.

Example 5:

A female student with very restricted vision is enrolled in a course that uses a lot of visual media. The professor and other students do not know her vision is restricted. In the first class, the professor hands out the course description. It includes NTID's policy on providing special accommodations for students in the classroom. The policy says that it is each student's responsibility to inform the professor if there are any special visual, auditory or other needs that require accommodation. At the end of the fifth week, the student is handed an exam with a failing grade. She approaches the instructor privately and asks, "How can you fail me when I can't read small print, I couldn't tell who was talking in class, you moved around too much and the room was too bright for me to see the board?"