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## EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETING AS A SPECIALIZED TYPE OF PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING

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The article examines characteristic features of educational interpreting as a specific field of professional activity within the framework of Public Service Interpreting. The article also considers criteria of effectiveness of interpreting in educational settings.

**Key words:** Public Service Interpreting, educational interpreting, deaf or hard of hearing students, sign language, BSL /ASL, minority community.

Educational interpreting is a specialized type of interpreting activity which aims at facilitation of communication in educational setting for deaf or hard of hearing persons.

The growth of educational interpreting as a professional field corresponds with the increased number of deaf or hard of hearing students who have to receive an education in public schools. However, for a long time the status of the interpreter in educational setting has been uncertain, they were not treated as part of educational team, the interpretation was mostly undertaken by non-professionals who knew a little of signing and virtually nothing about methods and strategies of effective interpretation, and, of course, the payment left much to be desired.

Educational interpreting for deaf or hard of hearing students is characterized by a number of specific features distinguishing this type of Public Service Interpreting from others, like medical or legal. Educational interpreter is normally expected to be a part of education team, to be an active participant of deaf students' education process, to provide social support for deaf students, to assist the administration and teachers with behavior management, to rearrange the classroom to accommodate deaf students, and even to teach age-appropriate concepts.

The specificity of educational interpreting is determined by the target audience. According to some scholars, community of deaf people can be regarded as a specific collective community distinguished by a high context culture. To some extent, deaf community may be viewed as an immigrant community, whose members are of non-English speaking origin; it is on this ground we regard Educational Interpreting as a specific type of Public Service interpreting. As researches point out, "much of interpreting and translation in deaf community has been done by non-professionals language mediators from the community who were either deaf themselves, but very fluent in sign language and English, or the hearing children who were born to deaf parents, but grew up fluent in sign language as their home language and English through environmental exposure and schooling" [7].

Deaf communities are also characterized by specific perception of the world, namely through visual experience. According to B. Bahan, the frames of reference of the deaf people, who get their primary experience of the world through visual channel,

are often described in terms of outward appearance and how one would experience a specific phenomenon. The scholar gives the example of perception difference of a vacuum cleaner by hearing people and deaf people. "Hearing people think of a noise a vacuum cleaner makes, that it should be switched off when you speak to anyone, and that it cleans. Deaf people would normally think of small things that disappear up the hose, the vibration one feels handling a vacuum cleaner and that it cleans. A deaf person's perception and experience of the world is very much affected by these differences on daily basis. They also influence the way deaf persons describe the world and, consequently, they influence the interpreting process itself as to its effectiveness" [1].

Effectiveness of interpreting in educational setting can be assessed from different perspectives and can be highly variable [6]. From student's perspective effective interpreting implies communication use that enables deaf or hard of hearing students to take part in class discussions, achieve and maintain comfortable level of personal involvement with other hearing students in classroom activities.

This assignment of communication facilitation in classroom requires a highly specific set of skills. Analysis of the research literature on educational interpreting suggests that there are three main components that relate to comprehensible message production and thus to effectiveness of interpretation. These components are:

- appropriate sign communication use;
- performance criteria;
- personal characteristics of the interpreter.

In the present article we shall briefly discuss each of these components. Appropriate sign communication use refers to the use of a specific type of sign language: American Sign Language (ASL) and British Sign Language (BSL).

Sign language (SL) similarly to any natural language has its own specific grammar and syntax which is different from English, however; besides SL is not a manual version of spoken English as it is commonly believed. Signs are made by combinations of hand shapes with locations and movements. Adverbials and adjectives are expressed by means of specific mouth gestures and mouth shapes. As it happens with any minority language existing within a majority language context, BSL/ASL borrows from English. According to Chr. Stone, "this happens in a variety of ways including the partial mouth-ing of nouns that co-occur with the manual element of the sign, or the coding of an English word using hand configurations commonly known as fingerspelling" [7].

It follows from the above that in educational setting deaf or hard of hearing students, who should read and write in English, have to take part in communication using BSL/ASL through an interpreter, and thus they find themselves in a situation of bilingual communication. As researchers indicate the pragmatics of BSL/ASL and English is different, which causes some difficulties for learners of BSL/ASL as second language. One more specificity of BSL/ASL lies in the fact that despite being a minority language, it has no exclusive geography, however it has developed a highly specific jargon for some professional areas [8].

The performance criteria of comprehensible message production include physical position of the interpreter, lag time between the utterance production and interpretation. In educational setting, especially in a discussion-oriented classroom, the issue of lag time may become very problematic. Research findings indicate that the time be-

tween the teacher's question and the student's answer is to be measured in fractions of seconds. A lag time of more than four seconds would mean that an interpreter could be starting interpreting teacher's question by the time when other students had given a response and the teacher was giving feedback on a specific response. As a result, a deaf student may miss the step in the discussion and feel confused.

However, the research findings suggest that there is an inverse relationship between the lag time and the amount of mistakes made in the process of interpretation/transliteration, which means that if the lag time increases, the number of errors decreases. It has been calculated that an interpreter with two-second lag time makes twice as more errors than interpreter with 4-second lag time and so on. But, it should be noted that this inverse relationship would not continue with extremely long lag times. The article "Issues in educational interpreting" by J. Stedt illustrates this by the example where an interpreter with 20-minute lag time made many mistakes due to short-term memory capacity [5].

Personal characteristics. Some scholars insist that the factor of interpreter's personal traits such as educational level, intelligence, manual dexterity and sociability, have an impact on production of a comprehensible message. However, these issues require further investigation.

Qualification. The objective of educational interpreting is to make education accessible for deaf or hard of hearing students, and in fact, it is a part of a complex system. Simply knowing BSL /ASL is not enough for an individual to qualify as interpreter. Interpreting in educational setting requires additional knowledge and skills that are relevant to children. It is essential for well qualified educational interpreter to understand psychological characteristics of child development as his/her job involves supporting the education team not only in class activities.

Educational interpreter must also be familiar with the educational content which varies greatly according to the class level. If at the primary level the interpreter needs only broad basic knowledge and understanding of subject areas, at the secondary level the interpreter will need sufficient knowledge of subject areas to be able to interpret highly technical concepts accurately; this may involve a great deal of preparation, previewing study materials, teacher's lesson plan, electronic presentations, etc.

In summary, competent educational interpreter should be able to demonstrate:

- ability to communicate and adapt, as a member of an education team, on matters regarding interpreting and communication;
- fluency in written and spoken English;
- fluency in various forms of communication including BSL/ASL or the sign mode determined by the education team;
- ability to both produce accessible language and understand child and adolescent signers;
- an understanding of the stages of child development particularly as this relates to language development;
- knowledge specific to language development of deaf and hard of hearing children;
- knowledge of class specific academic content.

(compiled from Standard Practice Paper of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf).

One of the most important aspects of educational interpreter's qualification is to advance their knowledge, skills and professionalism through continuing education and training as well as participation in professional organizations.

In conclusion it should be noted that Educational interpreting is a specific type of Public Service Interpreting with its own characteristic features and qualification requirements. But unlike other types of PS interpreting (medical and court interpreting) provision of educational interpreter's services is far less legally regulated and in many countries that are only developing PSI it is left to the discretion of educational institutions.

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## УЧЕБНЫЙ ПЕРЕВОД КАК ОСОБЫЙ ТИП ПЕРЕВОДА В СФЕРЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ УСЛУГ

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В статье исследуются характерные особенности учебного перевода как особой области образовательного процесса в рамках дисциплины «Устный перевод для государственных организаций». В статье также рассматриваются критерии эффективности учебного перевода.

**Ключевые слова:** устный перевод для государственных организаций, учебный перевод, студенты с нарушениями слуха, язык жестов, американский / британский язык жестов, национальное меньшинство.