

Additional ideas for Interpreter Educators

If discussions are being facilitated, we suggest:

- using open-ended questions. Questions of right and wrong are less interesting and limit discussion. “Why” and “How” questions call for introspection and critical thinking.
- emphasizing strategies in terms of dialoguing with colleagues. Try to move the discussion from the passive [“I would tell her that it wasn’t ok,”] and into active examples of what words would be used to make a point. Encourage students to try potential statements on for size and revise if necessary.
- asking for supporting statements of opinion with relevant examples.
- changing the scenarios to elicit new responses. For example, change the setting in, “I Come, Bearing Gifts” from a hospice to a court ordered supervised visit, with either hearing parents and D/deaf children, or vice versa. Notice how the opinions around gift-giving differ. Or ask if there is a difference in opinion depending on how the interpreter is hired (direct contract, agency, employee) or the frequency of the interpreter’s work with a specific client (on-going, one time, sub). Ask for reasons about the differences.

Ask students to observe all the different personalities represented in this program. Imagine yourself needing to approach these different individuals about the same question. Identify the situation and the question, and then pick two (or more) individuals from the program and tell how your strategies would differ and why. (Could also be done as a role-play.)

Ask students to pick an interpreter who appears in this program with whom they’d like to team or mentor, or to have as a supervisor. Tell what specific traits noticed that make that interpreter their choice.

Notice the lexical choices that the discussants make, especially when talking about how they would approach a colleague. What, if any, patterns do you see?

Do you notice times in the program where different participants have different or even opposing points of view? How do they handle those circumstances? Notice their approaches and the way they talk to each other about those differences.

Notes on specific scenarios

Interpreters: Let's Talk About Them

What does 'humble' look like? What are illustrative behaviors that would indicate humility? How do we show that we are confident, yet humble? Can humility be taught?

Are there specific consumers that you prefer not to work with for reasons other than skill? Talk more about this. How does this play out in VRS/VRI situations?

Shouty

Have the students practice this idea of getting in someone else's process in teams, using either sign to voice, or voice to sign stimulus materials. Debrief about the experience. Was this teaming experience different than other teaming experiences they've had? How so? Did students feel they were able to achieve a sense of being in their team's process? How did they know it was or was not working? What do they think might help them develop the skill of getting into someone else's process while teaming?

You Don't Mind, Do You? (or You Need ME, You REALLY need ME)

Talk about the point Anne's makes about knowing a consumer well so that the interpreting product is high quality, and at the same time, the temptation to react as a buddy is more prevalent.

This Town Ain't Big Enough for the Both of Us (or What Am I, Chopped Liver?)

Do you have a story about experiencing "the drop of water, working on the stone" that Anne mentions? What about Paavo's idea of "planting seeds?" Have you ever planted a seed? How did you do it? How did it work out? What made it more or less effective? Have you been aware of anyone planting a seed with you?

Messages are Hard!

Jesse mentions interpreters have a lot of power. Talk about this power. Do you imagine or believe the power dynamics are different in VRS settings than in community work? How does the power manifest?

Can interpreters ever be truly transparent?

Talk about about Paavo's point about training interpreters to work 'cold'. What are the implications (pros and cons) of training this way?

It's all About Me...Isn't It?

The participants mention the importance of understanding the context of an event (in this specific example, an academic paper presentation). They also talk about observing the room and predicting possible challenges of working in that space. It may be useful to consider specific examples (types of events, different venues) and employ Demand-Control Theory to flesh out these points.

Notice Steve Phan's change from his original position of wanting to inform the DP, to taking his cue from the presenter. Why do you think this occurs?

From where did the idea of making D/deaf people sound like hearing people come? Do you think it is related to any specific interpreting process model? Do you think any of the process models would specifically include or exclude the idea of people who are D/deaf sounding like people who can hear?

Jeremy mentions arrogance. Do you think interpreters are arrogant? How does this manifest? Could arrogance ever be a positive quality in interpreting?

Steven talks about using self-talk to remind himself that it is fine when people for whom he is interpreting have a different way of doing things than he would. What different strategies can you use to make space for the wide variety of ways that people handle their lives?

I Come, Bearing Gifts

Are there times when the role of the interpreter conflicts with the cultural norms of the interpreter? [This question can be applied not only to Deaf interpreters, but broadened to include interpreters of color, of a similar religion or sexual orientation, etc.] When does identity come into conflict with professionalism? How do you manage that conflict?

In our presenting experience, hearing interpreters often express a sense that the gift giving might have a cultural basis. The two Deaf interpreters in the discussion have a strong sense that the gift giving is inappropriate, and do not seem to attribute it to culture. Discuss this.

Catherine mentions, "staying open to the process." How do we do that? What would it look like if you are open to the process? Can you think of examples of interpreters you know that are open to the process? What do they do to demonstrate their openness?

Processing Takes Practice

Many hearing interpreters begin working before they are certified, and often are getting what amounts to on the job training, sometimes supervised and sometimes not. Compare on the job training for hearing interpreters with on the job training for Deaf interpreters.

What makes up the "it" factor? Does "it" differ for interpreters who are Deaf and interpreters who are hearing? What are the similarities and what are the differences? Can you train people to have "it"? Are there types of screening that would show if someone had "it"?

Hearing interpreters have been trained not to critique the way a Deaf person expresses themselves in sign language. Given this, how can hearing interpreters best approach Deaf interpreter team members with concerns about an interpreted message?