



Effective Communication & Working with Interpreters *Best Practices*

Effective communication tips are beneficial for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, but also a good approach towards Universal Design and accessibility for all individuals. Additionally, there are many Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals that may utilize Sign Language interpreters or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) service providers who are provided as an accommodation for students as a request of accommodations to have effective communication in the classroom and clinical settings. These service providers help to facilitate communication between the professor, the Deaf or Hard of Hearing student, as well as the other students in the classroom or audience.

Below are a few tips to establish effective communication from a Universal Design perspective:

1. When lecturing or discussing, make sure that you are facing the audience at all times. Never turn around and communicate while your back is facing your audience. There may be individuals in the classroom or group that rely on lip-reading or sound of your voice.
2. Repeat questions that are asked from the audience. This allows everyone to get a better understanding of the questions that were asked.
3. Repeat important facts and numbers - and/or write them on the board.
4. Verbalize written material on the board.
5. Provide image descriptions of images that may be displayed.
6. Provide written directions of an activity or assignment that is discussed in class.
7. Provide the ability for preferential seating to allow individuals to select a spot to sit in the classroom that works best for their learning style.
8. Ensure audio of media that is presented in class is accurately captioned.
9. If wearing a mask lecturing, see if social distancing or clear facemasks are available to allow for lipreading.
10. Ensure the lighting of the room is appropriate for lip-reading or ability to observe sign-language interpreter.

Below are a few tips to establish an effective working relationship with the interpreter or CART service provider in addition to having Deaf or HH students in the classroom:

1. Provide Class Information Early:
 - a. Share canvas access, class-specific vocabulary, handouts, and announcements ahead of time with the interpreter and/or CART provider. Providing this information with the interpreter will allow for the interpreter/provider to be fully informed of the mode and activities occurring in the class.
 - b. There may be times where an interpreter/CART provider will need to establish a sign or shorthand for a particular word or phrase. Having handout and class materials prior to the start of class will assist in that process.

2. Promote a Professional Environment:
 - a. An interpreter or service provider is there as a peer and part of the educational team. Foster a positive professional relationship and know the interpreter is there to allow communication access for individuals within the class.
3. Positioning of Interpreter:
 - a. The interpreter will be situated in a place best seen by the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student. This should be relatively close to the presenter and the visual aids to maintain sightlines for the student. The Deaf/Hard of Hearing student should have the ability to choose their seat to maintain these sightlines.
 - b. CART providers can be positioned anywhere in the room, as the livestreaming of the translation will occur on a student's iPad, phone or laptop.
4. Using an Interpreter/CART provider:
 - a. It is important to speak directly to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student, not the interpreter or CART provider. Always face the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student, as turning your back while talking limits the sound and visual cues the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student needs to be included.
5. Allow Time for Interpretation or Translation:
 - a. When asking questions to the class, remember that the interpretation/translation will be a few seconds behind the spoken question. Allow time for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student to see the interpretation and formulate an answer.
 - b. Having students raise their hands and being called upon, will allow the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student a better opportunity to participate.
6. Avoid Overlapping Discussion:
 - a. Students talking over each other is hard for the interpreter, CART provider and the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student to follow. Taking turns during discussions allows the interpreter/provider to interpret all of the conversation that is occurring and providing the opportunity for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student to participate.
7. Don't Speak While Students are Reading:
 - a. If the students are reading a handout, slide, or passage-- don't speak until the class is finished reading. Due to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student reading, the student is not able to watch the interpreters simultaneously.

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