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"THE USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY BY DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING PEOPLE"

PRESENTED BY: VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU

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        >> Good morning. I have the pleasure of introducing our first speaker. I want to introduce our interpreters who will be assisting in the presentation. To my left is Cheryl Brevard, and working with her is Donna O'Brien. Our speaker this morning is Dr. Venetta Lampropouluo from the University of Patras where she is in the primary education department head of the Deaf studies unit. She is no stranger to the U.S. She did her master's work at Columbia University, and her Ph.D. is from New York University, and she taught at the Lexington School for the Deaf for 12 years. So we're delighted to have you back.
        >> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Thank you. Thank you, John. Thank you very much. I would like to welcome you here, and I also before I start, I have to say a big thank you to people because I am spending my sabbatical here, and some have been very helpful to me.
        Jim DeCaro who invited me here, and also Mark with his nice group that they are here, and I thank you so much. You've done a lot for me. Provided me a room not only the department, but, Mark is smiling. Thank you so much. I hope that we will continue working and also John thank you very much.
        I had a wonderful year here at NTID. So I am going to present to you a study that we did two years ago in Greece on the use of communication technology by Deaf people in Greece.
        Before starting, I want to show you. You all know that Greece is part of Europe, and it's the south part of Europe. And it's known for the Acropolis which is in Athens, and we are in Patras, and as you can see, Patras is here, and Athens is the capital of Greece, and Patras if you drive fast you can be there in two hours, if you are normal, some people are driving normal, you know, and it's like 2.5 hours, 3 hours, okay?
        I usually go in two hours, or in 1.5 we've been there.
        (Laughter)
        Okay. So the University of Patras is a big university, and it was established in 1960. And this is the view from my University. This is just across the University, but you can go there by boat, Mark, or by car. And we are in this part. The University is over here (indicating).

Now I give you my -- sorry. Oops. The location. I want to say a few things about the development of Deaf Education in Greece. The first School for the Deaf was established in 1932, and it was a oral school under the Ministry of Health. And this is the National Institute of the Deaf. And in '84 they undertook the responsibility of special education, and established public day schools throughout Greece in different cities, and these schools were oral schools at the beginning because teachers didn't know Sign Language. And at this time the school changed their curriculum to total communication. In '86 we established early intervention centers, and in '88 the teacher's training program on Deaf Education was established in Patras, at the University of Patras, and as John said, this is the primary education department.

So we trained teachers to be teachers in general schools, but within this department we offer a master's program in Deaf Education, and also a Ph.D. program. And I am responsible for this programs, and also offer other courses to the other graduate students that will be teachers in regular school.

In 2000, the Greek Sign Language was recognized by the government as the language of Deaf people in Greece. And teachers of the deaf have to know Sign Language before going to school for the deaf, to work in the school for the deaf. And today we have different school programs. We have mainstreaming special schools for the deaf, and they use mostly total communication, or bilingual education some schools. And we also have a big number of students now with cochlear implants.

And also we have a deaf person who is in the parliament. And this person -- let me see if I can get that now. I hope. Yeah. This is the Deaf member from Greece speaking in the parliament.

(Speaking Greek)

She is talking to help the deaf with aids. So that was a good development, and we are proud of her being there. She was a student of mine. And I'm very proud, yeah.

All right. Regarding the technology, we become working with the European partners in different projects, and Ben is here from the Netherlands, and we've been working together in developing different materials for the deaf and for the schools and also for Sign Language. And our CDs, DVDs, and videos. I was the first one who did technology with the deaf.

And then we did a needs assessment study in 2004, and we found out that very limited research has been done in the area of using the technology, identifying the needs, and asking the Deaf people what is happening with the technology that they have, how they benefit and how they use it.

So we did a needs assessment study, and here are some of the conclusions. But what we really found out is that teachers and Deaf students really wanted more technology courses, and more education in computer and technology. This is what the main demand was. And you see that in the study that we did later on, and this is the use of technology by the Deaf, and the aim of the study was to see how the Deaf people use the technology, and if they benefitted from that.

And we asked 50 Deaf and hard-of-hearing people to participate in the study from three different cities of Greece. Athens, Thessaloniki, and Patras, where they have the most population of Deaf people. And we used a survey questioner that was used by the government, by an institute of Greece that they did their research in the general population on the use of technology. And that was questionnaire of 71 questions in two parts. The first part is the demographics, and also some general questions as to if they have computers, if they own -- if they have Internet connection at home and

so on. And then the second part was questions related to each technology and how they use it.

And we used this because we thought that we'll have a good comparison of the Deaf with the general population. And we collect data in April and March of 2006, and we use interpreters and Deaf researchers that they are part of our unit, and they know how to conduct a survey in that use.

Here are the characteristics of the participants. We see that we have 28 male and 22 female, and their age ranges from 18 years old to 45. We didn't have older people at this time, but we collected data later on older people because the general population also had older people, but we couldn't this time to find people to participate. And we thought that all the people that we use would not use so much the new technology.

And the hearing status, Deaf people, 37 were deaf and 13 were hard-of-hearing. Their education level. Most of the people, 28 people, were high school graduates, and 18 people were either graduate of the University or students of a University at the time of the study.

And we have also four people who were in junior high school. The ones who were under 20 years old.

And 26 were unemployed, and 24 were working at the time. But you have to consider that we have students, so students don't work in Greece.

Here are the kinds of technology used by Deaf people, and a comparison with a general population. So if you see this table you find out that Deaf people are better consumers of technology. They use more of the technology than the general population. You see all of them use mobile phones. 100% of them. While only 80% of the population, of the general population, use the mobile phones.

64% of the Deaf will use computers, while the general population is 35.8%.

44% of Deaf will use the Internet, while the general population only 20%. And e-mail 50% of the Deaf people will use e-mail, while the general population only 15.6%. But I want to remind you that in the general population you have older people also, but still it's a big difference.

So now regarding different technologies, the cell or mobile phone as we call it in Greece -- in Europe, we call it mobile phone. The cell phone, how they use it. Well, most of them -- I mean, 100% of them over here (indicating) they use it for to send a text message. And only 38% use it for e-mail purposes. And they use the ready phrase to compose their text on the cell phones. And they also use the -- well, a few of them use the -- 6% -- will use the pictures or graphics to send that. MMS we call it. They use it mostly to communicate with hearing and Deaf people, 76% of them will use their cell phone to communicate with both hearing and deaf. While only 6% will use it with hearing people only. And 18% with deaf only. The cell phone.

Now about the computers, how they use the computer. We see here that they learn -- excuse me. First, they have computers, 64% of the Deaf people have computers at home. While the general population has only 35.8% computers at home.

And they learn mostly the deaf people learn it at school, while the general population learn from home alone. And this is very important for us to see that school plays a very important role for the Deaf. They should learn computers because this is the main area where they will learn. Of course, they also learn from home alone, or special courses. But most of them will learn it from school, they went to school to learn the computer.

Now, about e-mail and Internet, as I said before, 44% of the Deaf will have Internet and e-mail accounts. And 50% they will use e-mail in school, but they use it.

And the reason for using the e-mail is mostly to communicate. 40% to communicate with other people. Only 6% for work purposes. 4% to get some information, to ask some information. And they will use the Internet mostly to get information. Most of them, 30% will use it to get some information. And only 14% to communicate with some groups on the Internet, and 6% only for work purposes. So communication is the most important and information.

Now, here you can see the hours per week spent in computer or in the Internet. And you see, again here, a comparison with the general population, and we see the Deaf people spending more time on computers per week. They spend 17.5 hours on average a week on the computer, and 10.7 hours a week on the Internet.

And while for the general population is 15.1 hours per week in computers, and 7.5 hours of time per week on the Internet.

Now, the frequency and reasons of using the different ICT technology by the Deaf, we see on this table that the most frequent tool or technology that is used by the Deaf is the cell phone. 92% of people said that the most frequent technology they use is the cell phone.

And while only 6% of our people said that the most frequent technology that they use is the e-mail, and only 2%, one person, said that they would fax. So we can see that most of the people use the mobile phone of all of the different technologies.

Why? Because it's very easy to carry. It's easy to carry around, and the ones who answer the e-mail was the most preferred technology for them. The reason that they gave is because it's easy and fast communication, and the fax because they had it. It was accessible to them.

Now, the other benefit from the use of mobile phones and e-mail we see here. The Deaf people said that the benefit was accessibility to communication, of course. And also that the benefit that they see by writing the text that they improve the written language. This is what they told us. They have seen the language, the written language, improving by using the cell phone. And also by using the e-mail, all right, they have access to communication and also improvement of their life skills.

And here I have some variables. The relationship of some variables that we examined. And we found out that men spend more time on the Internet, twice as much as women. See, it's a cultural thing. And Deaf of older age seem to make more use of the fax than younger-aged Deaf people.

The Deaf students seemed to use more their cell phone to send e-mail messages than other categories. Younger people use more functions of technology.

And the graduates of high school for the Deaf seem to benefit more than all other categories in their written language by writing messages through the cell phone.

The University graduates seem to have more Internet connection than all of the other categories. And University graduates and students seem to spend more time on the Internet than all of the other groups.

Now, the ones who know well how to use the computer seemed to send more messages through their cell phones, make more use of the fax, have more Internet home connection, make more use of the Internet, and use more of the e-mail of all of the other people.

So we see here that the relationship between knowledge of the computer with the use.

So technology has changed the lives of Deaf people, of course. Everybody knows that, and, of course, it has broadened their opportunities for communication for that.

Cell phones have provided an easy access to communication not only between Deaf, but Deaf and hearing world. And it seems to be the most important and popular promising ICT for the Deaf. And the level of education

and especially computer knowledge seems to be necessary in order for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people to take full advantage of the new technologies.

And I want to comment on this last point that this is what we found in the previous study that I didn't have time to go into it, the needs assessment. That what the deaf students in the schools for the deaf, or the mainstream programs has taught us in the previous study is that they need more courses in computer and technology. This is what they think their need is. And here we find the ones who really have the knowledge, they use the technology better, and they make more use of the technology -- all of the available technology. So these are the ones who have more access to communication, of course.

So this is very important, I think, for the teachers to know that, and so we can change the curriculum a little bit and put more emphasis in computer learning and technology.

And this is my last slide, and this is the bridge I was talking to you about that we go from my University across there to eat for lunch, okay? And have a good time.

(Laughter)

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

And this is my e-mail, and the site of the Deaf studies unit if you would like to communicate with us. Thank you.

>> Thank you. We have 10 minutes for questions and discussion. I may also announce that there are two ways that you can provide feedback, and comments on the presentation, and you are encouraged to do that. One is by paper. I have forms here, so please take one before you leave. Or you may do it in the learning center by computer. So either way please do one today.

So the floor is opened to questions or comments.

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Yes? John, are you going to chair, or me chair?

>> Yes. If you would go to the microphone.

>> Audience member: Thank you for your -- thank you for your interesting report. I am Japan, and I am working for a Deaf College like NTID. And my question is -- well, one comment.

We have the same tendency, and my students who graduated from my college, and after they came into the -- they go to the places like companies or city halls or whatever, and some students showed improvement in language, Japanese language, to help them some e-mail, and sometimes make written papers, written letters. And we found that they relatively improved their writing skills. Maybe this is because they cannot help improve their language so that they can communicate with hearing colleagues. This is my comment.

My one question is do you teach some special language skill in your University so that they include not only for good sentences, for the use of mobile phone, but also some sort of literacy in your University?

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: I want to -- Dr. Albertini is here, and he is an expert in written language, but I want to say something related to the comment made before. Because a student of mine did research for her thesis on the question that you raise, whether the use of technology will improve written language or not.

This is what we found out is what the people felt and told us. What we looked at in another study was that the faxes, because at that time we had faxes, and we spoke about that, I think, John, and we did a study on the faxes that Deaf people will use and write, and we did faxes over five or six years, and we followed the five years, and see the difference if there is any difference in the written language of people who will write faxes to the Federation of the Deaf, the National Federation of the Deaf in Greece. So we

took all of these faxes and we examined them of the same person. If they changed over time, the language. And we -- improved. But what we found out was that it was an improvement in vocabulary, not in the grammar of the language.

Okay? So you have an improvement, but only in the vocabulary. But Deaf people report that they see improvement which they see it in the vocabulary, they see an improvement. But I think that we have to clear this out. It's very difficult to see improvement in the grammar.

Now, regarding my University, no, we don't offer literacy courses to our students because they come there supposedly with literacy skills, and some people who can make it they cannot finish, but, you know, they have some tutoring, but on their own. The University doesn't provide tutoring in improving language skills. It would be nice if we had, but we don't have. I don't know if here they have some tutoring. I think that they have here tutoring in literacy.

Thank you.

>> Maybe I could ask a question. Did you have any surprises in the survey? About the use of cell phones or computers? Is it what you expected?

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Yes, because you can see that the cell phone is the most, you know, used -- everybody is using it in Greece, and the young people use it more and more. What we expected really was what we found, but what we are surprised to see is that, you know, everybody is talking about the knowledge of technology and putting into the curriculum more time on computers, and everybody is struggling to put different subjects in the curriculum and to fit everything there, and there's no space. But if you want to take advantage of the technology, this is what you find out. I mean, they need more help in this.

>> And do many students have their own computers?

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Yes. By now, yes. This study is two years old, so now I think more and more students, don't you think so?

>> It was providing computers to students, so --

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Because my colleague here, we did the research together. I mean, so you can answer if you want to.

Yes I think that everybody now has a computer at home. Because a national project given computers for free to all students. But the school has to look at the situation because I don't think that they devote more time -- I mean, a lot of time in that, in computer teaching. And also teachers don't know how to use the Internet or the e-mail for educational purposes. That was a different study that we did, and we found out that, all right, we feel that this is very important, but they don't know how to use this for literacy, teaching literacy, or immigrated into the teaching goals. They use it as all the populations use it, I mean, to communicate and that's it. But as a tool to teach and learn, they don't know how to do it, and I think that this is the area that we have to look into.
This is what the research is saying. But I was very surprised to find out that no research is available. You know, only two or three papers have been written on the use by the Deaf. It's an area that everybody is developing things, and not asking the Deaf people what they need, or how they use it. And so we have to and little bit careful on that.

Yes?

>> Audience member: Good afternoon. We are from University of Moscow, and my question really is in connection with such big developments in technology, maybe it's happening that now a student is using more and more technology, but they are really forgetting now the Sign Language, and in connection with this I have really another question.

And the question is, do you think that with the developing of communications like using cell phone, Internet, computers they are really

forgetting about communication, personal communication, personal communication that's causing a lack of personal communication because of a lot of use of technology? So this is the question. What do you think about that?

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Okay.

>> Audience member: I will go back and translate because we have a group of three.

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Thank you. I think that if we watch the young people mean, my nieces and my nephews and all of the young people, they're using the technology and they are depending so much on the cell writing text messages. Not even -- I went to a cafe in Greece to meet my niece, and she is a student in the law school with all her friends there in a cafe, Starbuck's cafe, of course, of course. And the cell phones, and instead of talking to each other, they were writing messages to each other. Even to each other. I was so shocked to see that.

So this is something I think that it's not for the Deaf, I mean, you can see all of the youth doing that, and using the technology, and they are so involved with the technology. They know how to do things and we don't. I mean, nobody is teaching them. They learn by doing it, by, you know, playing with the technology even from a young age. So these are different generations, and they have -- how do you say? -- adapted the technology like it's part of their body.

So I think that what -- I mean, this is a fact. I don't know how you can change this. What we can do, though, the teachers in schools is to use the technology in smart ways, and encourage, you know, our students to communicate more, and to take advantage of the technology to improve communication, or, you know, improve their written skills, and so on. Talk about how, you know, some ethics of the computers, I mean, those are the things that they should be teaching in computer curricula, I think.

I want to say something else about the Sign Language. Of course you know that many cell phones, you know, you can sign and you have Sign Language also. It's not limited to text only messages. I know a lot of people, Deaf people, use these cell phones, and they sign, with one hand they sign and the other is the cell. So there are possibilities of Sign Language, too. I don't see why not using it. And also we have the VRS that they use it. At least here a lot in this country. In Europe it's not being used so much. Like the camera with the video.

>> Video relay.

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: The relay. So it's very good. It's very good for people who sign it's very good. And there is one person here who is doing his research on that of using this. And also he was very first rated because he couldn't find data, you know, nobody else has Researched this area.

I don't know if I answered your question. Thank you.

>> May I have one question?

>> Sure, last question.

>> Audience member: Okay. Last question. My question is basic data about what percentage of the Deaf or Hard-of-hearing students go up to the college or university in Greece? I have no idea about the Greek education.

>> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Yeah. In the Greek education system, the students who are going to go to college, to the University, because all of the universities are free. They don't pay. Okay?

So the ones who go to the University have to take an entrance examination. So Deaf people and students with disabilities, they don't have to take the examination. They are accepted. So we accept the percentage of students with disabilities in universities. This is good and maybe bad

because some people who don't have really the knowledge goes to the University thinking that they can make it, you know?

But we cannot have examinations for them. According to the law. We have some interviews and try to figure out and also if they are very good in the high school they can get into the university.

So we have a lot of students in the University. Many Deaf students at the Universities. Sometimes they don't have interpreters. In my school they have because I provide. In some schools we provide. Some others don't have. It depends on the school. Sign Language interpreters. But they go to the University.

I know at least 100 people who are now at the University, and there are more. We have so many, yeah. And it's free. They don't have to pay for anything, books, or whatever. So they go.

    >> Audience member: We have another question.

    >> Could you come up to the microphone?

    >> Audience member: He said he can speak very loud.

Because we work with the Deaf students, our habit is to speak loud.

If you allow me, I would like to talk a little bit about education on the level of high school.

The question is about in Greece, do you have mainstream schools or how many schools do you have where only Deaf students are? And what is really the policy or what is really the future as you can see as the mainstream or just school for the deaf? This is the question.

    >> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: If you ask my opinion, I think you are asking my opinion, what I think, right?

I think that the Deaf people should have different choices, many different choices, the Deaf students, because they are not the same. So you can't give an answer for this School for the Deaf or the mainstreaming or inclusion.

They should have mainstreaming programs, they should have inclusion programs, they should have special units and special schools so that they can pick the ones that they really like and go.

In Greece we have special schools and units, and we also have many students who are in the mainstream. Some get some help and some don't get because the cochlear implanted children, their parents, think that their children don't need any help. So they will just go to get the implant and go to the regular school and place their child there, and they don't want any service, or they don't know that they need the service.

So lately we lose a lot of children, you know, because they go for their cochlear implants, and they go to the mainstreaming. This is a problem now that we have. But we have schools for the Deaf throughout Greece, big schools and smaller schools. And so also we have small units within the regular schools, one class with all deaf and they will attend some of the courses with the other students and some in the resource room, wherever.

And also we have students who are in the mainstream as I said before. Without help. Okay?

    >> Thank you for your questions. I'm afraid I have to bring this part of the program to a close so that other people can setup. Thank you for your comments.

    >> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Thank you very much.

    >> Thank you for bringing this data to us.

    >> VENETTA LAMPROPOULOU: Thank you for being so nice.

    (Applause)

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