Teaching and Interpreter Education


*The first document above provides a model annual sign language program report that has been informed by experiences gained in collaboration with colleagues at the South Carolina School for the Deaf & the Blind (SCSDB), and the second document provides a report on the Florida School for the Deaf & the Blind (FSDB) Staff Sign Language Program. These two documents may serve as model reports for sign language assessment and development programs, helping to monitor program results in order to assist in determining the appropriateness and fairness of sign language communication skill level standards/goals, entry skill levels, and, if established, timeliness for achieving these skill levels.

**National distribution for all of these books via Assistive Communication Center, Butte Publications, Harris Communications, & RIT Bookstore - see section of this booklet entitled “Available for Purchase”). In 1975, just seven years after NTID accepted its first students, a project for developing sign language materials for technical terminology was initiated at NTID. The goal of this project, the NTID Technical Signs Project (TSP), was to support effective, efficient, and consistent use of sign language terminology in academic and career environments by documenting and sharing how skilled, knowledgeable signers communicate content in technical fields. The TSP is based on three basic and related principles: (1) sign languages, similar to spoken languages, follow a natural process for developing and standardizing vocabulary; (2) within this natural development and standardization process skilled signers develop and refine sign language vocabulary that is consistent with effective use of the human gestural-visual systems for communication; and, therefore, (3) in order to support effective, efficient, and consistent use of sign language vocabulary, sign language materials need to document sign language as it is used by skilled, knowledgeable signers. The above four books, together with the other sign language materials for technical communication listed in the section of this booklet entitled “Available for Purchase,” are the culmination of 30 years of research on the use of signs for technical terminology by skilled signers across the United States.

Initiated in 1998 to provide responses to frequently asked questions by Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) Coordinators and Team Members, this document includes 17 papers. Among the questions/topics addressed are: (1) What Does the SCPI Assess? (2) Fluctuations in SCPI Results; (3) Can ASL Teachers Serve as SCPI Interviewers & Raters for People They Have Taught?; (4) Options for Conducting & Sharing Results of SCPI Ratings, (5) The Importance of SCPI Reliability Studies and Monitoring Ratings by SCPI Team Members; (6) Support for Local SCPI Teams & Team Training; (7) Sign Language Assessment of Students & ASL Assessment Options; (8) Monitoring Sign Language Communication Skills Development; and (9) Principles for Development & Refinement of Sign Language Communication Philosophy, Policy, & Procedures Documents.


The Classroom Sign Language Assessment (CSLA) is a classroom-based assessment of instructors’ classroom sign language communication skills that may be used to assist in planning sign language communication skills development. This document provides readers with a brief history of the CSLA, copies of CSLA forms, and detailed information about administering the CSLA.


This paper includes a selected listing of ASL and Deaf Culture materials, major ASL curriculums, sign language materials for technical communication, and websites that include ASL and Deaf culture information.


When interpreting between American Sign Language (ASL) and English, linguistic and cultural mediation is necessary in order to provide source and target message equivalence. One aspect of this linguistic and cultural mediation has been identified by Lawrence (1994) as expansions. Expansions are the amplification of certain concepts of English in order to create meaning and be linguistically appropriate in ASL. Conversely, since expansions occur in native ASL discourse, they have significant implications for the ASL-to-English interpreting process such that certain concepts in ASL need to be reduced in order to create meaning and maintain linguistic appropriateness in English. In this paper, this reduction is referred to as compression. The use of compression strategies allows ASL-to-English interpreters to deliver both meaning and intention in linguistically
appropriate English. In fact, a number of common ASL-to-English interpreting errors can be eliminated by the use of compression strategies. This paper will introduce the concept of compression strategies, provide methods for teaching compression, and identify appropriate instructional materials to support this teaching.


ASL at Work - Level One is a comprehensive curriculum for teaching conversational American Sign Language (ASL). It is designed for students who have no (or minimal) knowledge of ASL in the community of Deaf and hearing people who use this language daily.


We are in the early days of exploration into the teaching and learning of ASL and interpreting. Much of the last 40 years has been spent in establishing ASL and Deaf Culture as legitimate fields of study. Having gained this recognition, we can now afford the relative luxury of inquiry into competing points of view on what should be taught, how it ought to be taught, how we learn, and how we can best assess learning. Scant attention has been paid to individual differences in learners in this field. Even less attention has been given to the ways in which curriculum is wrought. This article offers a perspective on curriculum deliberation drawn from the works of Reid (1992) and Schwab (1978), and suggests questions and considerations in developing new avenues in the pursuit of our curriculum.

Peterson, R. (2001). Scared to deaf: Language anxiety among ASL students. Published online at http://www.flagler.edu/about_f/deafstudies.html [AN 1813]

The study of Language Anxiety among language students has received much attention. This paper seeks to extend that study to students of American Sign Language (ASL). Early work in this area is reviewed, and the preliminary results of the first phase of a study of ASL students are reported. Students’ comments and opinions about the learning process are crucial to the development of curriculum. Heretofore these are a largely untapped resource. This paper addresses the need to include student perceptions in curriculum design.


This chapter describes the use of recall protocols both as an instructional technique and as a metric for student comprehension of ASL discourse. The first section provides an overview of the problems of literacy in language learning. Given the high incidence of language learners in interpreting courses, comprehension skills are often lacking. The second section discusses several process models for making meaning. The issue of assessing comprehension is the focus of the third section. In the next section immediate recall protocols are described as an instrument for teaching metacognitive skills and
assessing comprehension. A sample recall is detailed, together with sample scoring glosses. Several student recalls are shown, followed by a discussion of scoring features and classroom implications.


Professionalizing a task has the concomitant effect of transferring control over admission to the ranks from community to institution. As Interpreter Education Programs (IEPs) become more prevalent, the locus of control shifts from the Deaf community to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs). IHEs are very effective at administering academic learning but are less adroit at the sort of social integration that lies at the heart of successful interpreting. Moreover, the Deaf community has virtually no presence, no “clout” within the power structure of IHEs. The result is that IEPs often find themselves engaged in an unsteady entente between the very different domains of scholastic knowledge and cultural knowledge. Teachers and curriculum designers, many of whom came into the field under the old “cultural” model, face formidable challenges working under the new “academic” model.


Our system has no way to judge whether deaf students in the educational mainstream are afforded an equal education. Our system has no way to determine whether the education of deaf children in the interpreted mainstream is equal to his hearing counterpart in the same setting, although many have asked that question since the onset of PL94-142 in 1975. This chapter focuses on the individuality of every deaf child and how that individuality impacts his/her L1 acquisition.


In the space of 30 years the education and training of sign language interpreters has evolved from community endeavor to academic enterprise. This transition has served to increase the number of people who receive training, and has thereby helped to satisfy the growing demand for interpreters. While exact figures on employment are not known, 1986 the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) had a membership of over 3,000 members from the U.S. where today the number stands at 10,412. However, it is not clear that as we increase the quantity of interpreters we have also maintained the quality of their training. Moving the focus of our learning from the community to the classroom has had another, less desirable affect – that of removing deaf people and their communities from the center of our education. Our migration from community to academy has come at some cost.

This chapter is about the profession of American Sign Language/English interpreting in the United States and the education required to succeed in that profession. It begins with a chronological summary of the most compelling research in the field, as well as issues that show the field’s beginnings and reflect a vision for the future. The chapter continues with a look at relevant research and the evolution of the task of American Sign Language/English interpreting, the role of interpreters, quality control, the current status of interpreter education, and the goals for the future.

In collaboration with teachers and students at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), the Sign Language Skills Classroom Observation (SLSCO) was designed to provide feedback to teachers on their sign language communication skills in the classroom. In this article, the impetus and rationale for developing the SLSCO is described. Previous studies related to classroom signing and observation methodology are reviewed.

This chapter describes an approach to teaching translation using discourse mapping. Winston and Monikowski (2000) presented a comprehensive description of discourse mapping and described a series of spiraling activities in their explanation of discourse mapping. It is a process that helps students and working interpreters render a successful message and includes accurate content, appropriate context, and appropriate linguistic form.

This chapter presents some preliminary findings from a comparison of interpreted and transliterated texts. It focuses primarily on the prosodic features used for indicating major topic segments in a spoken-English source text. For this chapter, they discuss the similarities and differences among the segment boundaries as they are produced by three interpreters. These interpreters produced signed target interpretations and transliterations of the same source text, providing an opportunity to compare prosodic and linguistic features used in each type of target.

This book chapter examines three aspects of a message for successful interpretation: accurate content (themes, topics, and events); appropriate context (register, settings, speaker’s goals, etc); and appropriate linguistic form (discourse structures, transitions, vocabulary, etc.)