

DISCUSSION AND FURTHER POSSIBILITIES

Deaf interpreters are typically used as interpreters between two sign languages or between one sign language and International Sign, or as interpreters who modify language for consumers with distinct linguistic needs. These consumers could be deaf people with mental, or cognitive disabilities, deaf immigrants, deaf seniors, or deafblind people. Those groups are among the most marginalized within the Deaf communities, and their limited access to interpreting services greatly impedes their integration into society. The long-term objective of this project has also been for those groups to receive better access to interpreting services and thereby to enhance their quality of life.

The desired impact of the project is an increased awareness and understanding of Deaf interpreting both at local level (at local public agencies such as municipalities), regional level (at regional public agencies such as counties, provincial or state agencies) and national level – such as the respective ministries responsible for the funding of interpreting services for deaf people within various fields (especially interpreting for deafblind people, deaf immigrants, and deaf people with mental illness or intellectual disability). It is our ambition that the outcomes of this project will influence the provision of DI training in countries across Europe – at any level and at any institution where it might take place. We aim at enhancing the provision of basic interpreter training for Deaf people (up to BA level). If training options for Deaf interpreters were better, more Deaf people would be able to qualify for this kind of advanced training at MA level.

As mentioned earlier in this guide the implementation of this curriculum depends on the national educational system. Possible implementations could be: a two-year training including core-elements; or a comprehensive three-year programme (associate professional); or a four-year full education (full professional). We recommend thorough discussion about the minimum duration of the education: what is the minimum qualification that would ensure a competent Deaf interpreter?

There are possibilities for further education, e.g. MA-degree in interpreting, and post qualifying specialisms for interpreting in legal settings (as outlined by the JUSTISIGNS Project, www.justisigns.com). We should also keep in mind to set the bar on a reasonable level. Although it seems that DIs are needed in so many areas, there is a limit on how much one student can learn during a single BA education. There should be ongoing possibilities to undertake supplementary studies and develop know-how, to qualify or specialise in new domains. In order to ensure a steady income, it is worthwhile to have professional expertise in several areas.

The education of Deaf interpreters is organized both in connection with the education of hearing interpreters and as separate entities. In many countries the numbers are too small and education is too expensive for a Deaf student group. We hope for future projects and more permanent co-work on a European level to ensure global discussions with DI students. This of course requires funding and lobbying for the importance and crucial role of DIs. Virtual environments and distance learning offer a lot of additional possibilities, which should keep the costs down. If education is organized for a Deaf student cohort, co-operation with hearing interpreter(-student)s must also be enabled. This is required when aiming to work as equals in multilingual interpreting teams.

It should also be considered whether codas are categorised as hearing or Deaf interpreters, or as something in between. Is it really the deafness that determines the role of the interpreter, or should we talk more about what the interpreter's first language (L1) is? Should this be tested? When starting a DI education, will codas be allowed to participate? What is essential for a DI? Is it being deaf, having sign language as L1, or both?

Education systems often favour written language skills. Academic thinking doesn't have to be expressed in writing – it can be signed or spoken. But as long as written language is preferred there should be an adequate amount of training on the national written language for the Deaf students ensuring their access to academic discourse. The level and quality of education for Deaf people might vary in different regions and nations. Thus it should be ensured through preparation studies that Deaf applicants have an equal possibility to reach the criteria for admittance. Would now also be the time to discuss changing the rules (educational policy) and thus making linguistic access possible?

Along with varying linguistic backgrounds students will also have other differences. Study groups might often be mixed, with both deaf and hearing students. The trainers need to be aware of, and also inform the students about, the different paths to reach same goals and competencies. This

requires an open mind, patience and sensitivity – from everyone. This is something we hope to see in all of the interpreting education field.

This curriculum, as with all curricula, should be continuously evaluated: are the outcomes of the education desired? Are the intended objectives achieved? Should the programme (objectives and outcomes) be redesigned, and how? Research related to curricula should be carried out to develop the interpreter training, to develop the interpreter profession, and to develop the profession of Deaf interpreters.

The profession of Deaf interpreters is still young and developing. The role of a Deaf interpreter might be very different 20 years from now. Technology and software development might create new possibilities for remote interpreting, use of mobile devices, speech-to-text software, and interpreter work in multimodal media. But technology will probably not change the need to have a DI with translingual skills and language plasticity to communicate with, e.g. refugees who don't know IS. DI's also need to know older variations of their own sign language to work with elderly people with dementia. Both Deaf interpreters and their trainers need to keep up to date with new inventions, but at the same time hold on to good practices.