

TEACHING

There are some specific issues to consider when teaching Deaf interpreters: training deaf and hearing together, professional identity, assessment, language politics, and qualifications for teachers. We will cover some of these issues in the following.

When deaf and hearing students are trained together training must be equal. Deaf students should not become the study objects of hearing students, and The majority of the subjects studied and skills honed are similar. Only one or two DIs in class wouldn't be optimum but it is possible. With regard to different backgrounds it would be good to separate the groups at certain times. For example in an integrated group with hearing interpreters there are certain topics that should be discussed by the Deaf interpreters as a group, such as ethical considerations and internship.

One major issue in the discussions during our project has been professional identity. Building professional identity needs integrated (deaf and hearing) teaching but also safe within group (deaf only) consolidation. Deaf students need the space to share thoughts with each other, and with DI mentors. Their role as insiders of a minority has its effects on building a professional identity and discussing ethics, which differs greatly from the experiences of most hearing interpreters. It might also be worthwhile to enable discussions with coda interpreters.

Language background is in a critical role in many ways. Education of hearing interpreters often pays great attention to learning an L2 of new modality, while most Deaf interpreter students will have a languages in several modalities (signed, written, etc.). Assessment and teaching of language skills should be based on L1 and L2, not written, spoken or signed languages. The depth, width, and content of teaching should depend on whether the language taught is the L1/L2 of the student.

As the Deaf students have a sign language as L1, it should be possible to access signed (translated) texts, articles and books about e.g. study of interpreting, Deaf Studies and linguistic in their L1. And when hearing students show their skills by writing an analysis in their L1, Deaf students should have the equal possibility to use their L1. If there is a rule that some exams have to be written, could that be changed? This policy aims to give equal status to written and signed texts and does not mean written language skills should be ignored. Developing academic (but also professional) skills requires reading skills. A Deaf interpreter must be a "good L2 reader", well educated in the national working language, but also (ever increasingly) in English. The school should support Deaf students fulfil their academic potential.

For many of the subjects the teacher can be deaf or hearing, but there should be both present in the programs. Co-teaching should be considered, because role models are needed in teaching teams. We recommend a qualified Deaf teacher (and mentor) especially for studies in ethics and professional identity. Students also need a qualified, fluent Deaf teacher in sign language – taking into account that it is their L1. The trainer should be familiar with various research done on Deaf interpreters, their training and learning, Deaf Studies, Disability studies, interpreting and linguistics. In summary: Deaf interpreters also also a Deaf trainer.

Teaching is an interactive, multidimensional phenomenon. Students and teachers learn from each other. Learning needs mutual trust, respect and equality.