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Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf Student
Teaching

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Context

Demographics

The setting in which this work sample takes place is the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology. I will refer to the colleges as NTID and RIT for the remainder of this paper. The courses that I were responsible for teaching are English-ASL I and ASL-English I. Both courses were held Tuesday and Thursdays. English-ASL I consisted of 8 students and ASL-English I consisted of 10 students. Both courses are skills courses and use consecutive interpreting as an approach. The course is the students first interpreting skills course, and is a subsequent course to Processing skills which I taught last Spring quarter. Students in these courses have taken ASL I-VI and Introduction to the Field of Interpreting. This group of students was entering their 3rd year of the interpreting program. The class was mainly taught in English, but we would transition to ASL if necessary.

Out of the 8 students enrolled in the English-ASL I class 1 was male and the rest were female. 2 out of the 8 students were CODA's and there was only 1 African American female student in the class, the rest of the students are Caucasian. In the ASL-English I class, 1 student identifies as male, and the remaining 9 are female. The particular student who identifies as male is a transgendered student who recently had his name and sex changed. 8 out of the 10 students are Caucasian, and the other 2 are African American and middle eastern. This data was collected using the NTID Student Rating System (SRS).

Culture/Community of the Institution

RIT is known for being a technical school, known nationally for its Engineering and Computer Science programs. In addition to being a technical school, RIT has the interesting mix of art programs such as their photography program that is also known internationally. RIT is located in the suburban town of Henrietta, New York which is just outside the city of Rochester. With over 14,000 students RIT is constantly expanding. RIT has 9 colleges, with NTID being one of them. NTID is known for being the “largest mainstream experience” with having over 1,300 Deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled. Classes consist of both Deaf and hearing students working together with the assistance of over 100 full time staff interpreters, Rochester freelance interpreters, 50 staff C-Print captionists, and student note takers.

Due to the fact that NTID has a large Deaf student population, NTID’s American Sign Language/English Interpreting bachelors degree program is very appealing to prospective students. The American Sign Language and Interpreter Education department consists of over 150 enrolled students and over 25 full time and adjunct faculty members. The faculty consists of both Deaf and hearing instructors. NTID and RIT are both known for being a friendly environment that is welcome to all types of Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing students, and hearing students.

My affiliation with the institute is that I am a full time staff interpreter for the Department of Access Services at RIT on the College of Liberal Arts Core Team. In addition I am also a graduate of NTID's interpreter training program and continue to serve a mentor for students entering their practicum. Lastly I also teach as an adjunct faculty member in the department of wellness at RIT. Due to RIT's policies and resistance from both Payroll and Human Resources it is a struggle for interpreters who are labeled "non-exempt employees" to work outside their required 40 hours. I was given special permission to work part-time as an interpreter and part-time teaching as adjunct faculty at ASLIE, however this is an arrangement that cannot happen again.

Institution Policies and Conflict Resolution

The policy that is emphasized in every class throughout RIT is the Academic Honesty Policy, which basically states that students should not be plagiarizing their work. In addition any students needing accommodations can seek that through the Office of Disability Services. As far as attendance is concerned faculty are not required to take attendance, but to work around that some faculty will count attendance as part of the student's participation grade.

Regarding conflict resolution RIT has a resource any member of the RIT community can utilize called the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is a confidential way of approaching conflict resolution. This person is a neutral party who advises individuals in informal mediation and helps explore resolution. This is a resource I have used as both a staff person and as a former student.

Types of Support Available

There are a number of support services available for faculty and staff at RIT. First is the Center for Professional Development, which provides faculty and staff the opportunity to continue their education. Next is technical support for a variety of things, such as support with RIT's online course manager (MyCourses), hardware/software support, and enhancing learning by incorporating technology in the classroom.

In addition to the institutes support, I also had support from the faculty of ASLIE. We are fortunate to have a full time student worker to help run our labs, in addition to a full time staff person who helps recruit Deaf guests in class, and finally another full time Deaf academic advisor who helps both students and faculty.

Description of Setting

The English-ASL I class was held every Tuesday and Thursday 2-4pm, and the ASL-English class was held right after from 4-6pm. Both classes were taught in the same lab which contained 10 carrels or stations for students to record their interpreting work. In addition this room is also equipped with 2 ceiling cameras to record classes that have live guests, and a projector connected to the instructors computer. Both courses also have 3 other sections each. Tables were set in a U-shape with rolling chairs. The tables were in the middle of the classroom with the carrels being against the walls. Each carrel contained a PC with a camera and headset. The room also had a large white board and screen for the projector.

Goals & Learning Objectives

English-ASL I

Goals:

The goals for this course are to provide experiences enabling students to:

1. Develop reading, writing, analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills related to interpreting spoken English to ASL.
2. Analyze the context of spoken English texts.
3. Consecutively produce equivalent ASL messages from spoken English texts.
4. Consecutively interpret incorporating appropriate expansion features.

Learning Outcomes:

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze texts based on Isham message analysis features.
2. Produce equivalent consecutive interpretations with respect to: Message equivalence/pragmatics, prosody, grammar, semantics, cohesion/coherence, use of space, affect, sign production.
3. Demonstrate appropriate interpreting management strategies for consecutive interpretation.
4. Define in writing and use technical vocabulary related to the spoken English to ASL interpreting process.
5. Demonstrate ability to incorporate effective expansion features in rehearsed and unrehearsed interpretations.

6. Demonstrate self care techniques for sign language interpretation.

ASL-English I

Course Goals:

The goals for this course are to provide experiences enabling students to:

1. Develop reading, writing, analytical thinking, and problem solving skill related to interpreting ASL to spoken English.
2. Analyze the context (intent/content) of ASL texts.
3. Consecutively produce equivalent spoken English interpretations from ASL texts.
4. Consecutively interpret ASL texts of varying lengths.

Learning Objectives:

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze texts from Isham message analysis features.
2. Produce equivalent consecutive interpretations with respect to: message content, articulation, grammar, cohesion, register/vocabulary selection, affect, pacing/pausing.
3. Demonstrate appropriate interpreting management strategies for consecutive interpretation.
4. Distinguish the six major components of message analysis as described by Isham.

5. Define in writing and use technical vocabulary related to the ASL to spoken English interpreting process.
6. Demonstrate ability to incorporate effective compression features in rehearsed and unrehearsed interpretations.

Assessment Plan

My assessment plan was to have the students in my ASL-English I class experience a live interpretation twice. The first time students would not be instructed on how to handle various demands that could occur in a live interpretation such as pausing the speaker to consecutively interpret, how to ask for clarification, and what to do if a misinterpretation is made. After the students experience their first live interpretation and were exposed to the many demands of the work, they were asked to reflect on their experience and post their reflection on MyCourses. Students were then required to respond to at least one other classmate's reflection.

We then came back together as a class after the responses were made, and discussed what we saw as common themes in the reflections. Common themes that occurred were, struggles the students had (namely the demands I mentioned above), nervousness, uncertainty, etc. Students noted that they were not alone with those feelings after responding to their classmates. This was a sub goal to have each student realize they are not alone.

The lesson that I had planned was then to discuss how we could approach meeting the demands mentioned above. Students and I had an interactive dialogue on how to approach the demands using the DCCRD, in addition to PowerPoint slides with optional

controls. Students then had an opportunity to do a second live interpretation and reflect upon their experiences. The same requirements of responding to another student's reflections were in this assignment. The data that I am using are the reflections students made from the first and second time they experienced a live interpretation.

Lesson/Unit Plans

As you can see some of my lesson plan is included in my assessment plan. I was aided by a PowerPoint presentation that includes clarification strategies. This is used a guideline for me as the instructor to bring up possible control options, and raise discussion about diagnostic analysis in regards to decision making. This PowerPoint was meant to span over the course of two classes in case the discussion was lengthy. The time required to complete the entire PowerPoint was taken into account prior to developing the course schedule.

Data Analysis & Interpretive Essay

The data that I collected from the students was used to help me develop the PowerPoint for the lesson following the first live interpretation. The student's reflections served as a jumping off point in developing topics to cover in class with the students. The goal was to see where the students lacked in control choices, and use the PowerPoint as a guide to leading a discussion on controls and the DCCRD.

Coding the student's reflections in order to draw conclusion on the common themes collected the data for this project. Once the coding was complete for both pre and post lesson, Wordle was used as a graphic representation to determine which were the most common emerging themes. Wordle is a program that allows you to enter a group of words, and whichever word is used most often is shown bigger in the graphic of the words. The most common themes that emerged from the first live interpreting reflection were fear, uncertainty, and regret. The common themes that emerged from the second live interpretation were confident, prepared, and excited. It seems that although the second live interpretation contained more positive comments compared to the first, the second live interpretation still had themes such as fear and struggles.

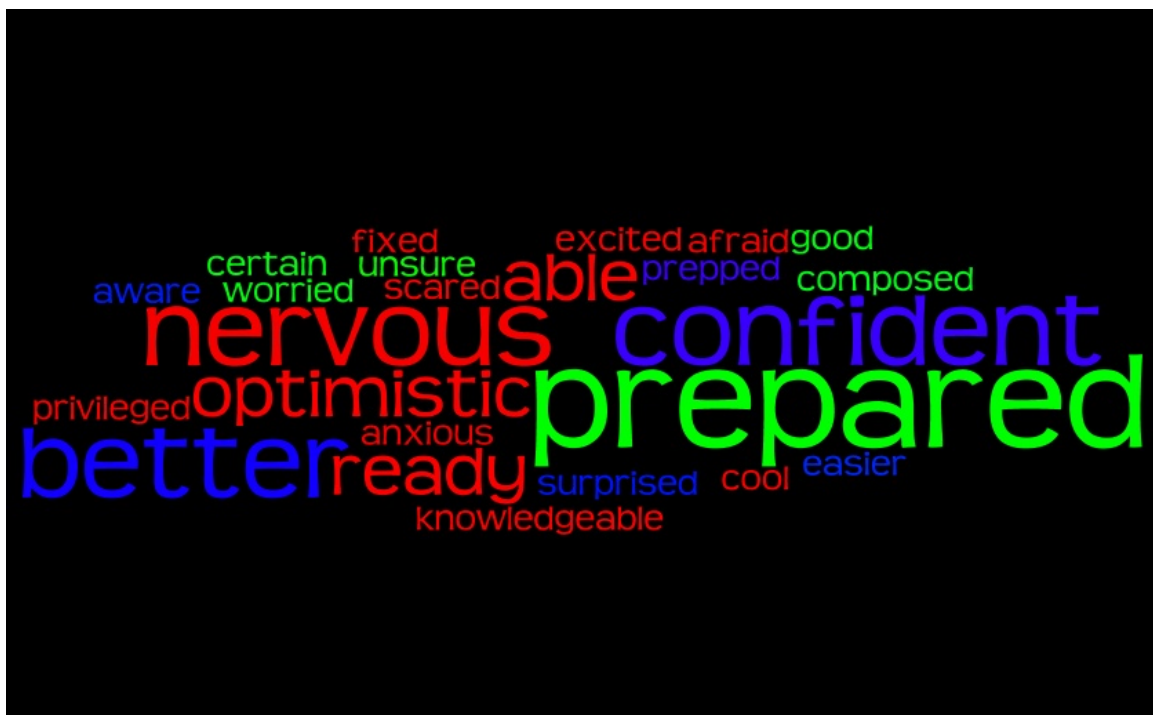
It can be concluded that the lesson in combination with practice had a positive impact on student's feelings toward live interpreting. The lessons, which gave students the opportunity to discuss possible control options in handling demands that interpreter, can face in interpreting situations. Although this lesson did not completely alleviate the nervous feeling students have, it did lessen it.

Graphic Representation:

Live Interpretation I:



Live Interpretation II:



Reflective Essay

I believe that my lesson had multiple benefits to the students. First it gave students the opportunity to experience a live interpretation in a safe place. Secondly I gave students a forum in which to safely discuss their feelings and learn that they are not alone with those feelings. In addition I used that opportunity to analyze potential decisions they could have made, and collectively come up with those controls. I know this by the common themes that changed or lessened from the first reflection compared to the second reflection.

What worked well was that the students responded positively to the experience and to the lesson. They appreciated the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their experiences. What did not work was I couldn't conclude 100% that my lesson was the reason why student's reflections changed. If I were to actually be doing a study, I may consider taking two groups of students where one is the control group and the other is the variable group. This would give me a better conclusion as to if my lesson did have as much of an affect on the students as I believe.

I learned that as a teacher I really enjoy giving students the option to reflect. I enjoyed reflection assignments as a student, and enjoy it even more as an instructor. This gave my students the opportunities to dig deep into decisions they made and why they made those decisions. In addition I learned that as a teacher, I can provide a safe environment which is something I feel is important in our field. It seems interpreters can easily be damaged in our field due to the negativity from ourselves and others, and to be able to provide a positive first time interpreting experience was important to me.

The skills that I need to acquire may not directly relate to this study, but it does definitely relate to teaching in general. I need to improve my abilities to manage the classroom. I struggle with controlling the conversations that occur with students, and this is important when maintaining the floor. I will do this by first practice. I can get practice by continuing to lead supervision sessions. In addition I will be sure to observe other experienced instructors who have a good command of a classroom. Taking notes of my observations and incorporating that in my own teaching will be beneficial.

Overall I believe that my goals for this lesson were achieved. Students were able to get first hand experience with interpreting in a safe environment. In addition to that they had the opportunity to reflect on those experiences and revise their “mistakes in the next live interpretation. The vibe that I got from the students in their second reflection was much more positive than the first, which is what I was shooting towards. Lastly I was happy to see that students were able to relate to one other since they could see they like their classmates experienced similar feelings about their work. This validated students, in that it is normal for them to have those feelings.

References:

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