Why we need deaf interpreting teachers

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Introduction

The first Bachelor's programme in Sign Language and Interpreting started in the autumn semester of 2013 at Stockholm University, commissioned by the Swedish Government. The three-year programme (180 ECTS) is taught at the Department of Linguistics and The Institute for Interpreting and Translation Studies. After completed training, the students are qualified as professional interpreters. Deaf and hearing teachers educate the students in Swedish Sign Language (SSL) and Interpretation. We are interested in how the first round of students experience having deaf teachers, which is why we administered a survey. Their responses are listed here.

Structure of the three-year programme (2013-2016)

1st semester	2nd semester	3rd semester	4th semester	5th semester	6th semester
Introduction to Swedish Sign Language 7,5 ECTS	Perspectives on Language 5 ECTS	Introduction to Interpretation and Interpretation Theory 7,5 ECTS	Swedish Sign Language VI 7,5 ECTS	Interpreting III 7,5 ECTS	Interpreting VI 10 ECTS
Communication and Culture in Sign Language Community 5 ECTS	Language Structures: Contrastive Analysis 5 ECTS	Swedish Sign Language V 7,5 ECTS	Interpreting II 10 ECTS	Tactile Sign Language 5 ECTS	Theme Course 5 ECTS
Swedish Sign Language 1 7,5 ECTS	Language Use: Contrastive Analysis 5 ECTS	Text Analysis 7,5 ECTS	Translation studies LSP and Terminologi 5 ECTS	Interpreting VI 7,5 ECTS	Degree Project 15 ECTS
Swedish Sign Language II 10 ECTS	Swedish Sign Language III 7,5 ECTS	Interpreting I 7,5 ECTS	Professional Ethics in Theory and Practice 7,5 ECTS	Children, Sign Language and Interpretation 5 ECTS	
	Swedish Sign Language IV 7,5 ECTS			Applied Practice 5 ECTS	
Theory in Spoken Language	Theory in Sign Language	Sign Language	Interpreting		

One teaching example: Role play

Role play as a method helps the individual express his/her feelings and emotions in a creative way. A group of people construct a situation based on a real life situation and they each assume a role. When the individual dedicate him-/herself to role-playing feelings, emotions and actions are integrated and the fictional situation seems real. Role play is a method with which an individual can draw from experiences of past events, but also from new experiences within the role play, to acquire new knowledge and a better understanding of factual knowledge.

Students' experience from deaf-led interpreter teaching

During the first student group's last term, they answered a questonnaire about their experiences from three years of deaf-led interpreter education. Specifically, we wanted to examine the added value of these teachers in interpreter education. A selection from the students' answers are given below.

What is your experience of role play as a teaching method?

- It is the best method as it mimics a real interpreting situation. Apart from the interpretation you also get to consider coordination, ethical dilemmas, and siimilar things.
- The only disadvantage with the method is that it is very time consuming, and the students who don't take part in the role play will have to spend a lot of time waiting or will have to do something else.

What is the value of deaf teachers in role play?

- Deaf teachers can both act as users of interpreters and work with analysis of students' work. As a user, the deaf teacher can assess whether the interpretation into sign language works, and also try to add challenges for the interpreter to handle. It is very valuable to get the user perspective in the role play as the deaf teachers have used interpreters all their lives and their experiences and input are very helpful. In addition, it is also very valuable to get the students' role play analysed. If the role play is recorded the deaf teacher can take part in the play and analyse it afterwards.
- It is more realistic if deaf teachers are actors in the role play, rather than having a hearing teacher act as a deaf user.
- Some students argue that deaf teachers should not act as users in role play. Instead, they should only participate as interpreting teachers while other deaf people could be recruited to participate as actors. It means that the deaf teachers can focus on analysing the students' use of sign language and the interpreting situation. Their experience as users combined with the fact that sign language is their first language give them an important competence.

What sort of feedback is valuable from deaf interpreting teachers?

- Deaf teachers focus on the language use and the situation as a whole. They can also give a cultural background regarding specific choice of words.
- Deaf teachers are good at finding solutions regarding the use of SSL and how one can make efficient use of the language.
- Deaf teachers do not pay too much attention to details, but give us a more holistic view on the interpreting.
- Deaf teachers' feedback on our use of SSL is very helpful. It has been particularly valuable during the last semesters of the programme, when interpretation is the main focus, and not the SSL language learning.

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