Access to Education: Deaf Students in Inclusive Settings

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Abstract

Increasingly Deaf children are educated in settings with a sign language interpreter, which is perceived as making the educational environment inclusive.

This makes education one of the largest employers of sign language interpreters.

However, there have been several authors who have questioned the accessibility of this setting (LaBue, 1998; Marschark, 2005; Wauters, Marschark, Sapere & Covertino, in press; Winston, 2004; McKee & Beiderman, 2003; Ramsey, 1997; Schick, Williams & Kupermintz, 2006).

This research project focuses on the inclusive supports offered to Deaf students in several Kindergarten to Grade Twelve educational settings.

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Research Questions

Q: To what extent and in what ways does the use of interpreting services impact the academic performance and social development of Deaf students?

Q: What perceptions are held by Deaf students, their parents, teachers, and administrators on the quality and impact of interpreting services on the academic and social success of Deaf students?

Methodology:

Qualitative and Quantitative methods, including case studies, classroom videos of interpreting, and on-line surveys and interviews with:

Interpreters, Teachers, Administrators, Parents of d/Deaf and hard of hearing children, and students

Data Collection

**Focus of Analysis of Classroom Interpretation:**

Data being analyzed for linguistic functions in teaching/learning discourse.

Six common teaching processes chosen:

- Metacognitive Questions
- Scaffolding
- Reconceptualiizing
- Reciprocal Teachings
- Feedback
- Sequencing

Overall Patterns Emerging

✓ Experienced Interpreters possess more strategies to represent metacognitive purposeful language of teacher

✓ Scaffolding – when interpreters are familiar with the class content, they can often represent scaffolding language

✓ Content – managed inconsistently if interpreters have not prepared for the class or do not understand the content

X Reconceptualization– both experienced and inexperienced interpreters struggle to manage this element

X Feedback & Affect – pace of class barrier to representing teacher/student affect and feedback

X Reciprocal Teaching – prosodic elements lost in rapid turn-taking and fast moving classes; frequent omissions; sequencing frequently incorrect
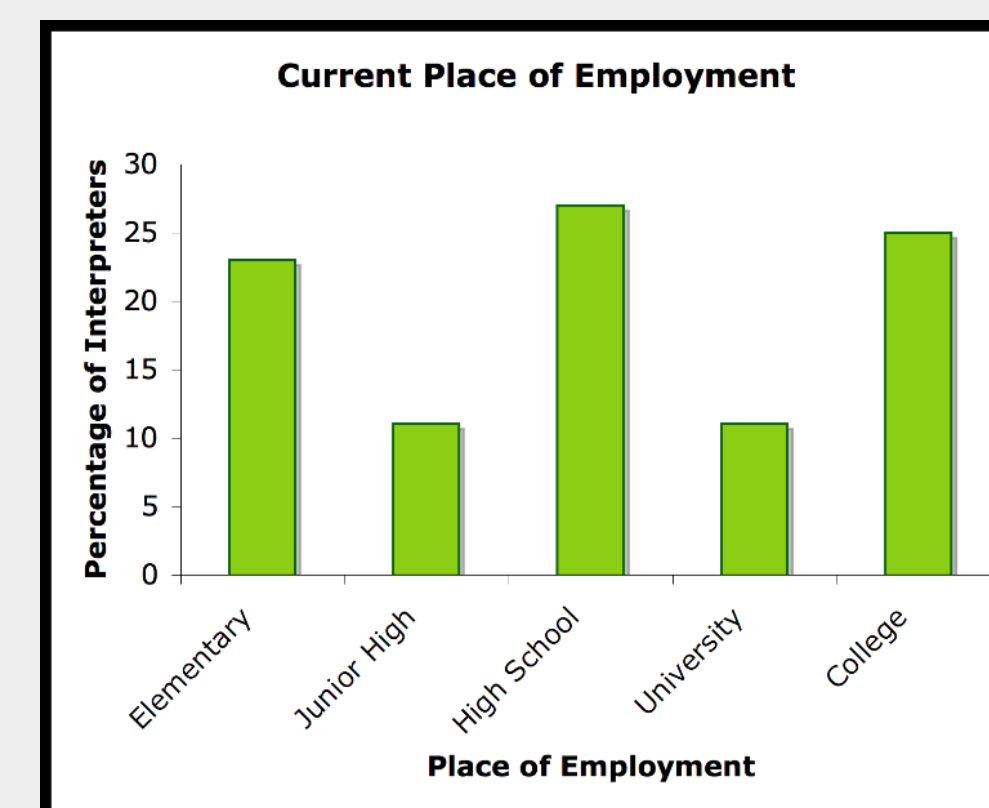
61% of the Interpreters surveyed work in the K - 12 Education system.

Inclusion or the Illusion of Inclusion?

The reality is that many school programs do not hire qualified interpreters, which negatively impacts Deaf students' education, including academic performance and social integration (Schein & Mallory, 1992; Russell, 2000, Winston, 2004).

Appearance of access creates the illusion that the setting is inclusive for the Deaf student.

Preliminary Findings

- Students held back by lack of qualified interpreters both in academic and social development

- Children lack meaningful relationships with other children who can use sign language, especially from Grade 3-12.

- Mediated communication - it may be effective for academic work when interpreter is qualified, but not for social interactions.

- Some older Deaf students know they are not getting full interpretation.

- Interpreters - various strategies and levels of success demonstrating the teaching methods.

- Impact on students: higher level thinking processes are not activated when interpretation lacks skopos behind the teaching processes.

Implications

Evidence and Policy?

- Evidence-based practices or policies of convenience?

- Canadian practices - what can change?
  - Need for solid training and hiring of interpreters who can work with children.
  - Need for solid training and hiring of teachers that can work with Deaf children.

What Does the Research Tell Us?

What does it mean:

- To meaningfully include a Deaf child in an inclusive setting, both academically and socially?

- Inclusion - works well for whom? Under what context?