



Seeing is Learning: *Deaf Students Access to Tertiary Education in Ireland*

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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme





First - a True or False quiz!

- Sign Language is international.
- Sign language was created to help educate deaf children.
- Sign language is English on the hands.
- Deaf people are a cultural & linguistic minority.
- Teachers of the deaf must be able to sign.
- Sign language is easy to learn.
- Anyone who can sign can be a sign language interpreter.
- Having deaf/hh students in my class is hard work.
- I don't need to make any adjustments if I have a deaf student in my class: the interpreter/notetaker is enough.





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File Edit Annotation Tier Type Search view Options window help

Grid Text Subtitles Audio Recognizer Video Recognizer Metadata Controls

Lexical Gloss

*DOG · RUN-OFF · BEE · SWARM-OF-BEES-FOLLOWING · D · *DOG · THEN · BOY* · RUN-AROUND · HOLD-ON · RUN-AROUND · HOLD-ON · RUN-AROUND+++ · BOY · STARRING-AT · SEE · ROCK · SHAPE-OF-ROCK-IN-THREE-TIERS · CLIMB-UP-ON-THE-ROCK · SEE · ANTLERS-STICKING-OUT · LEAN-OVER · STUCK · BAR-ACROSS-STOMACH · WAS · DEER · SOMETHING-STUCK-ON-DEER'S-ANTLER · BOY* · **BOY-STUCK-ON-DEER'S-ANTLER** · RUN · BOY-STUCK-ON-DEER'S-ANTLER · JUMP · TO · *CLIFF · BOY · FALL-FORWARD · TO · FROG · BOY · *DOG · FOLLOW · DOWN-THE-HOLE · BOY* · BOY-SIT-UP · WET · WATER · WATER-ALL-AROUND · RIVER · SEE · *LOG · SHAPE-OF-LOG · BEHIND · TELL · *DOG · SILENCE · MAYBE · INDEX+sr · LET-HAVE-A-LOOK · CREEP-OVER · SILENCE · FINALLY · MOTHER*FATHER · FROG · WITH · THEIR · BABY · INDEX+f+hi · END · *FROG · INDEX+f · BOY* · WAVED BYE · COLLECT · KEEP · ONE · FOR · *BACK · HOME ·

00:01:56.820 Selection: 00:01:56.820 - 00:01:57.890 1070

Body Movement [64] LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward LEAN+forward

Head Movement [127] TURN TURN+sr TILT+ba TURN+sr PUSH+forw TILT+forw PUSH+forward Headshake TURN+sl

Iconic Info [28] see previous comment from boy's perspe detail of previou deer's perspectiv

Mouthing [258] 'climb, climb, clim' 'up' 'what's-that' 'open_str' 'open_jaw' 'stuck' 'op' 'open' 'was' 'deer' 'deer' 'open_str' 'boy' 'there' 'open_str'

Eyebrows [48] sed Furrowed Raised Raise Raised

Eye Aperture [133] WD SQ+ SQ+ SQ

Eyegaze [215] +dn +interlocuto +sr, + +sr, +up +interlocu +sr, +up +inte +sr, +dn +interlo +sr, +interl +interlocutor 1 +ca +up +came +sl, +up +can

Dominant Hand [36] Cl: ISL 'v'+c+fl 'bo'

Lexical Gloss [241] LIMB-UP-ON-THE-ROCK SE ANTLERS-STICK LEAN-OVER STUC BAR-ACROSS-S WAS DEER SOMETHING-ST BOY* BOY-STUCK-ON- RI

Notes [39] Used f

Point of View [15] r/s r/s

Non-Dominant [30] INDEX+f+hi





Deaf Communities: General Facts

- 750,000 SL users in the EU (EUD 2012)
- 1 in 7 have a hearing loss (RNID)
- 1 in 1000 are SL users
- 1:10 (Hearing: Deaf Signers) (Bergman 2001)
- c. 6,500 Deaf ISL users in ROI and NI (Leeson and Saeed 2012)
- ‘Deaf’ v ‘deaf’; Deafness v Deafhood (Ladd 2003)
- Education, literacy and suppression of SLs
- Mental Wellbeing and Deafness: Link to Communication, and link to educational success.
- Recognition of SLs





Accessible Language is Key

- Fellingner and Holzinger (2011) found that deaf children who have difficulties communicating with their families are four times more likely to have mental health difficulties in childhood.
- Gregory et al. (1995) carried out a longitudinal study of young deaf people aged 18-24 years (n= 71) whose families were first studied when they were preschool deaf children (122 families in the original study).
- Quality of communication within families as children were growing up is essential: in many cases deaf young people experienced childhood-long difficulties in communicating with their families, especially when in group situations.



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- Being able to express oneself, be understood and learn through close social and familiar relationships is positively connected with good mental health (Rodgers and Young, 2012).
 - Instead, in many of families studies (Gregory et al.), there had been a lack of consistent, elaborated and meaningful communication throughout childhood.
 - At follow-up, when the children were 18 years old, many parents admitted they still could not communicate fluently with them.
 - In 17% of cases the young people, now on the verge of adulthood, had little or no language in either spoken or signed language.
 - Thus, communication in the home is essential. But access to language in the classroom setting is also critical: teachers must be able to fully engage with their students.



Predicting Self-Esteem



- In a meta-analysis study of the self-esteem of d/Deaf people from non-longitudinal studies (Bat-Chava, 1993), the three main predictors of good self-esteem were:
 - parents who have a positive attitude towards deafness,
 - the availability of clear and accessible communication within the home,
 - and whether the deaf child identifies with others within the Deaf community.



Key Issues for Us...



- Communicating in a language understood by the child in group and individual settings is vital.
- There is NO empirical evidence to demonstrate that being a bilingual signed language/spoken language user inhibits speech development (Marschark and Spencer 2009, Takkinen 2012)
- It is ESSENTIAL that a deaf child has access to signing peers and adults in order to facilitate age appropriate language development (Takkinen 2012), which in turn impacts on positive identity formation, and crucially, mental well-being (Gregory et al. 1995).
- Otherwise, the sense that the deaf child is the only person in the world like this remains. As on Flemish mainstreamed deaf child put it, “the loneliness stays” (Vermeerbergen et al, 2012).



Deaf Students at Third Level in Ireland

- In 2001 - only 81 d/hh students at third level (10% of students with disability population).
- In 2011, there were 235 d/hh students (3% of students with disability).
- Figures don't allow for identification of ISL users - but anecdotally, the figures for ISL users are extremely low.
- 7 times less likely to hold a tertiary education qualification than the average Irish person (Leeson, 2012).





At Trinity?

- More than $\frac{1}{4}$ of all graduates from the Centre for Deaf Studies Diploma Courses have been deaf/hard of hearing (graduates from 2003-10)
- Pride in language, anger at misinformation that they/ their teachers/ parents received.
- Increasingly deaf candidates have been mainstreamed and find that they develop a “Deaf identity” while at CDS.
- Importance of Deaf role models cannot be underestimated.



But...we have to avoid the illusion of inclusion

- IRELAND: interpreters/ notetakers on ad-hoc basis for academic content only.
- No figures on total number of interpreting hours paid for at third level in Ireland via ESF or other mechanism.
- USA: Rochester Institute of Technology where 117,000 hours of interpreting and 63,000 hours of note-taking were provided in 2011.
- In addition to classroom interpreters, students can request interpreting services for non-academic activities such as athletic events, religious services, student government meetings, guest presentations and other student life activities.
- This is quality of life. This is what equality looks like.



Barriers to Accessing Teacher Training

- Primary Teacher Training: Irish Language Requirement
- More importantly: Lack of recognised Leaving Certificate qualification in ISL which could facilitate potential derogation for entry.
- Other issues: expectations of deaf children across the educational cycle must be high (Marschark and Spencer 2009, NCSE 2011).
- UNCPD (2006) makes specific reference to the need to train teachers who share the same characteristics as their students (e.g. deaf teachers for deaf students).





Why Deaf Teachers? A Finnish Example

- Jokinen (2003:52) states that in addition to educating teachers, the FinSL class teacher education programme has a societal function.
 - Strengthen the linguistic identity of students studying on the FinSL class teacher programme.
 - Serve as an important channel for improving the human rights of FinSL signing children and above all their right to teaching in and of their own mother tongue,
 - Important for creating learning environments in which students' multilingualism and multiculturalism can develop fully
 - To improve the status of FinSL (Jokinen & Alanne 2008).



Legal Rights?

- FinSL signers have also a legal right to education in FinSL as their mother tongue (Basic Education Act 1998, p. 628).
- In order to implement this right, it is important to train subject teachers of FinSL to the same high standard as teachers of other languages.
- In Ireland - this is an issue that we need to address for ISL teaching (NCSE Report 2011) with ISL recognised as a language of the curriculum and a language of instruction (Leeson 2006)





SUPPORTING ACCESS TO DEAF STUDENT TEACHERS



Even Academics Benefit!

- Finnish study of academics at the University of Jyväskylä who teach Deaf FinSL users training to be teachers (B.Ed./M.Ed. Routes) found that:
 - >50% of academics felt they had the same kind of relationship to their deaf students as their hearing students and could communicate with them if an interpreter wasn't present.
 - 25% of academics reported that they didn't observe any real difference between deaf FinSL using students and hearing students in their classes.
 - Majority of academics reported that their classes were enriched by having FinSL using students participate in terms of diversity, awareness of cultural difference. (Keski-Levijoki et al 2012)



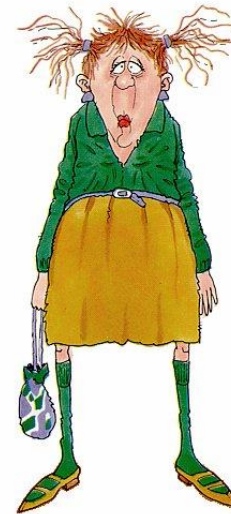
Even Academics Benefit (2)!

- They said that their own knowledge of their specialist subject was enhanced by having deaf FinSL using students in their classes.
- They noted that their experiences of working with interpreters increased their reflection on their own approaches to teaching and learning.
- As a result of their teaching deaf students, many academics planned to engage further in learning about FinSL/ Deaf communities/ participate in community cultural events (Keski-Levijoki et al 2012)



Interpreters in Education

- 83 Trained ISL/English interpreters in Ireland (Leeson 2012) = 1:79 deaf people.
- 100% of Irish providers contacted have been asked to provide interpreters in educational contexts in tertiary settings (ibid.).
- The bulk of the work is at undergraduate level, with one provider saying it represents 60-70% of their work in the area (average reported was between 40-60%).
- None have been asked to provide interpreters in primary/post-primary settings...
- No composite figures exist for requests for interpreting in tertiary educational settings that cannot be met due to the lack of interpreters - this would be something worth looking at.





Deaf Students Say...

- “When I went to college it felt very different [from school] - it was an all hearing setting. ... every time I asked for an interpreter, I had to postpone a year of my studies. I felt completely lost in the first year. I had to ask the hearing students for notes, but they were not adequate...” (Deaf woman, Cork) (Leeson 2007)
- “I am still in college, but recently...had some bad situations. One interpreter is constantly late, constantly sick and no other interpreter is available leading to constant frustration. I think about dropping out of college because of it, but I cannot as I really want to persevere. I am very frustrated about the situation though.” (Deaf man, Cork). (Leeson 2007)



What we want?

- To put our house in order...
- SO - some Best Practice Tips...





Best Practice Tips for working with deaf students

1. Make notes/ PPT available to student before class. (UA)
2. Don't use words like 'this' and 'that' as referents - with interpreter lag time, this information can get lost. For note-takers, they need the proper nouns.
3. Remember that the student cannot look at the board/PPT, a handout and the interpreter at the same time! Give the students time to read before moving on. Try using the "PacerSpacer"!
4. Allow deaf students to use the front row so they have clear visual access to you/ board.
5. Indicate who is speaking in group settings.
6. Interpreters have "lag time" - make sure that this doesn't mean that the deaf student never gets to answer a question. Make the effort to direct questions to them/ ask for their opinion to ensure they are engaged.
7. Don't automatically expect deaf students to work together in the same groups!
8. Treat all students equally! Deaf students sometimes feel that they have to do better than their hearing peers to be considered equal by hearing lecturers.
9. Remember - your deaf student is taking your course through ISL, not English (with access to reading materials in English, which for many deaf students is a L2). Bear this in mind when assessing the student's work.
10. Talk directly to the deaf student.



Best Practice tips for working with educational interpreters

1. Prepare course material well in advance and brief interpreter/s on content.
2. Ensure the interpreter has access to the textbook/s.
3. Ensure that you convey your learning goals to the interpreters so they can make your communicative goal their communicative goal.
4. Talk about teaching method with interpreter in advance of class: it helps them make decisions about how they can make your intention work in another language.
5. Give the interpreter your contact details so they can check their understanding of a concept in advance if necessary.
6. Pace of delivery needs attention: processing capacity for simultaneous interpreting is limited!
7. SL speaker speed, SL text density and interpreter familiarity with topic domain are key indicators for quality output in TL.
8. Interpreters work with lag time: ensure to build in space for the deaf students to participate fully in class.
9. Talk directly to the deaf student: use the first person.
10. Build rapport with the interpreter: They are “your” interpreter too!

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What are we doing to change things for the better?

Welcome to Deaf Studies in Ireland





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“What matters deafness of the ear when the mind hears. The one true deafness, the incurable deafness is that of the mind.”

Victor Hugo to Ferdinand Berther

November 25, 1845





Go raibh maith agaibh!



Contact me?



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