Module C Multicultural Interpreting Skills

Module Description

This module introduces the participants to the basic skills and techniques necessary to function more effectively in a variety of multicultural settings. Techniques for participant observation and cultural and linguistic analysis skills are presented. This module is designed to enhance interpersonal and intercultural communication skills and provides strategies to help the interpreter gather specific cultural information prior to accepting assignments, identify culturally specific language varieties, and learn how to make linguistic and cultural adaptations appropriate to the specific situation.

Participants’ Prerequisite

Participants should have completed the modules on Multicultural Knowledge and Sensitivity or have an equivalent cultural understanding or background. Participants should be familiar with general interpreter settings and situations, and have a knowledge of interpreter theory and processes. Participants should be able to interpret at a baseline skill level for a variety of cross-cultural situations.

There are several important assumptions that form the basis for multicultural interpreting. These are that the interpreter or interpreter team must possess the following attributes:

1. An understanding of and sensitivity towards cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences.
2. Ability to interpret at the baseline skill level required for a variety of cross-cultural settings.
3. Linguistic and cultural competency in the languages and cultures of the identified multilingual/multicultural community. Multilingual competency means that the interpreter possesses a fluency in another signed or spoken language, for example, the interpreter is fluent in spoken Spanish, Russian, or Cantonese and/or signs Mexican Sign Language, Japanese Sign Language, or another signed language.
4. Receptivity to dominant culture and minority partnerships and cross-cultural mentoring and team interpreting.

Instructor Qualifications

The instructor should possess:

An extensive professional background working in multilingual and multicultural settings both as individuals and as members of various interpreter teams.

They should be familiar with socio-linguistic theory, various discourse styles, and cultural variables that impact multilingual and multicultural D/deaf communities and consumers.

The ability to identify appropriate linguistically and culturally diverse materials to support these learning objectives.
Learning Objectives

1. Develop strong observational and visual language techniques.
2. Demonstrate cultural and linguistic analysis skills.
3. Identify socio-linguistic variables and apply multilingual analysis skills to meet the different languages and modes used by consumers.
4. Demonstrate a knowledge base of regionally and culturally specific lexicons.
5. Differentiate between “in-group” and “out-group” sign usage.
6. Interpret the deeper meaning of terms related to their context and situation to include the connotative, denotative meanings, and not “false cognates.”
7. Analyze ASL spatial and non-manual features that are culturally specific and be aware of the implied dominance conveyed related to choices in sign placement, and referencing.
8. Recognize non-manual signals and gestures that are culturally specific.
9. Maintain culturally appropriate linguistic features and registers.
10. Convey appropriate cultural attitudes and meanings.
11. Identify and analyze multicultural discourse and culturally specific signing styles.
12. Apply appropriate cultural and linguistic adaptations according to the interpretation and audience.
13. Anticipate and prepare for specific cultural diverse assignments and events.
Topic Outline

I. Linguistic and Cultural Analysis Skills
   A. Differentiating and analysis skills
      1. Prescriptive - ethnocentric - judgmental attitudes
      2. Descriptive - culturally relative - non-judgmental attitudes
   B. Honing participant observation skills
   C. Observing of inter-cultural and intra-cultural communication
      1. Identifying culturally specific themes
      2. Identifying culturally specific behaviors
      3. Identifying culturally specific terminology
   D. Observing and practicing skills at:
      1. Cultural events and festivals
      2. Diversity celebrations and events
   E. Interacting within culturally diverse Deaf/hard of hearing and Deaf-blind communities
      1. Locally
      2. Regionally
      3. Nationally

II. Socio-linguistic Variations within Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Deaf Communities
   A. ASL varieties specific to D/deaf communities
   B. Other sign languages in the United States
      1. American Indian sign language
      2. Mexican Sign Language - LSM
      3. Other signed languages from other countries of origin
   C. Outcomes of language and cultural contact
      1. Contact signing
      2. Cultural and regional dialects
      3. Code-switching, code-mixing and lexical borrowing
      4. Home signs
   D. High visual and gestural strategies
   E. English usage both spoken and written
   F. Other spoken and written language usage

III. Culturally Specific Lexicons and Concepts
   A. In-group and out-group sign usage and vocabulary
   B. Individual and group differences
   C. False cognates
   D. Deep meaning of words and signs
      1. Historical change of words and signs
      2. The “Color of Words”
      3. Connotation versus denotation of words and signs
   E. High visual gestural strategies
      1. Determining appropriate context
      2. Utilizing cultural specific knowledge
      3. Utilizing cultural expansions for clarity

IV. Culturally Specific Linguistic Discourse Features
   A. Non-manual grammatical features
      1. Use of affect
2. Use of movement
3. Use of space
4. Use of pronominalization and referencing
5. Discourse features
   a. Narration
   b. Affirmation and negation
   c. Commands
   d. Questions
   e. Explicit and implicit information
   f. Use of turn-taking and pauses
B. Register match to situation and participants
   1. Sign modulation and/or vocal modulation
   2. Culturally appropriate linguistic registers
   3. Matching register to situation and participants
   4. Formal and informal differences
   5. Explicit and implicit differences
   6. Formal and informal politeness
   7. Direct versus indirect

V. Linguistic and Cultural Adaptations for Specific Cultural Assignments

A. Identify the linguistic diversity within specific cultural groups
B. Identify the individual versus the group differences
C. Identify the specific cultural norms and protocols for interaction
D. Apply cultural knowledge to a specific setting or assignment
   Examples:
   1. American Indian ceremony
   2. Chinese funeral
   3. Hispanic mental health session
   4. Keynote address by a renowned African American author

VI. Preparation for Assignments

A. Obtaining specific cultural information relevant to interpreting assignments, prior to acceptance, during, and after an assignment
   1. Pre-assignment preparation
   2. Obtaining specific culture information from Deaf consumer/hearing consumer/referral agency
      a. Questions to determine the consumer’s needs
      b. Questions to determine the specifics of the event
      c. Questions to determine the interpreter’s needs
B. Preparing and researching to deal with a culturally specific assignment
   1. Determining the individual and team qualifications for interpreting
      a. Interpreter with cultural competencies
      b. Certified Deaf interpreter team
      c. Interpreter teams with cultural competencies
   2. Planning for the assignment
   3. Pre assignment conferencing
   4. Identifying on-site “Cultural Interpreter/Advisor”
   5. Preparing to team interpret and be pro-active
   6. Conducting post-assignment conferencing
VII. Cross-Cultural Synergy Skill Development

A. Developing trust and acceptance
B. Cross-cultural partnerships
   1. In-group/out-group dynamics
   2. Cross-cultural interpreting teams
      a. Clear communication and information sharing
      b. Logistics of interpreter placement
      c. Problem solving
      d. How to “feed/back-up” other team members
C. Negotiation, self-analysis, and interpersonal skills
D. Giving and receiving feedback

Recommended Student Texts


Instructor Lecture Notes and Materials - See Attached Unit Notes

Identified videotapes have instructional guides which can form a model for use with other tapes.

Suggested Learning Activities

1. Provide lecture, class discussion and handouts on linguistic and cultural observational and analysis skills.
2. View NMIP and other videos of ASL and other signed language models from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
3. View NMIP videos and other of interpreting models from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
4. Moderate a panel presentation of interpreters from culturally and linguistically diverse communities followed by a question and answer period.
5. Moderate a consumer panel from culturally and linguistically diverse communities followed by question and answer period.
6. Assign field observations of interpreters working in a multicultural and multilingual settings.
7. Participate in activities and events sponsored by culturally and linguistically diverse organizations and communities.
8. Participation in a service-learning project involving individuals from multicultural and multilingual communities, such as an adult literacy program, or immigration preparation classes.
9. Service learning activities. There is a national movement in higher education to include service learning activities in the course curriculum. Participants volunteer at non-profit service organizations (e.g. Teach America to Read, Habitat for Humanity, Humane Society.) Participants must document their volunteer experiences and write a final paper about what they have learned from the experience. Participants are encouraged to volunteer in “Culturally Diverse” communities to obtain invaluable cross cultural experiences. Although, projects that emphasize services to the Deaf community would be preferable, exposure to another cultural group, or community can provide a relevant experience.

10. Assign journal writing of field experiences and observations.

11. Assign written reports on targeted communities with in-class presentation of field experiences and observations for class discussion.
Instructor/Student Resources

**Articles and Books**

*Communicating Interculturally: Becoming Competent.*


   Chapter 5 “Gender in Discourse” pp.119-142. Candace West, Michelle M Lazar, and Cheris Kramarae.
   Chapter 7 “Organizational Discourse” pp.181-205 Dennis K. Mumby and Robin P. Clair.


Porter, R. E. and Samovar, L. A. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication.*


Videotapes

NMIP Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Series:

1. Waubonsee Community College (1996) 6th International Teleclass Enhancing Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Interpreting Profession. September 27, 1996. Available from the National Clearinghouse on Rehabilitation and Training Materials and/or from Waubonsee Community College. Tape 1 TRT 2:00.00; Tape 2 TRT 1:00.00 [Videotape] Spoken English and Signed portions with Open Captioning.

This is the videotape of a live international teleclass from Waubonsee Community College. It features a multicultural panel with Dr. Glenn Anderson, Jan Nishimura, Jonathan Hopkins, Fidel Martinez and Mary Mooney, NMIP Project Director

2. El Paso Community College (1996). We Are Here - Focusing on Solutions [Videotape]. El Paso, TX: El Paso Community College. (TRT 00.28 ) ASL/English with English voice overs - Open Captioned)

An overview of the National Multicultural Interpreter Project and the need for including diversity in our sign language interpreting profession. Talk show format features Dr. Glenn Anderson, Jan Nishimura, NMIP Consultants and Mary L. Mooney, NMIP Project Director.


This project was co-sponsored with UALR who produced and disseminated the videotape. Available from Media Services 4301 W. Markham, Slot 608, Little Rock, Arkansas, AR 72205.


This is a biographical narrative divided into shorter segments of a Deaf African male who is pursuing higher education in the United States. The tape can be used for ASL to English interpreting and for multicultural discussions. The tape is not captioned. A script is available.


This is a biographical narrative divided into shorter segments of a Deaf American Indian female who attended a residential school program. The tape can be used for ASL to English interpreting and for multicultural discussions. An instructional guide and script is available.


This is a biographical narrative divided into shorter segments of a Deaf Japanese American male. The tape can be used for ASL to English interpreting; and for multicultural discussions. Two versions are provided one without interpretation; and one with a model ASL voice interpretation by Jan Nishimura.
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<td>This is a spoken lecture incorporating vocabulary and concepts dealing with American Indian/Alaskan Native issues. The lecture material can be used for English text analysis; ASL interpreting practice both consecutive and simultaneous, and for building pre-interpreting skills. The lecture can be used for multicultural information and discussion. An instructional guide and transcript is available.</td>
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<td>This is a talk show format discussing multicultural interpreting issues from a Deaf consumer perspective. It is intended for information on multicultural and multilingual issues and perspectives. It can be used for ASL to English interpretation.</td>
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<td>This is a talk show format discussing professional issues from an interpreter’s perspective. There are eight interpreters participating. Open captioned.</td>
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<td>This is a lecture on Asian values and interpreting issues from the perspective of the NMIP Asian/Pacific Islander Team Leader - Jan Nishimura. The lecture material can be used for English text analysis, ASL interpreting practice both consecutive and simultaneous, and for building pre-interpreting skills. The lecture can be used for multicultural information and discussion.</td>
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<td>This presents an oral reading with a model ASL interpretation. The material can be used for English text analysis, ASL interpreting practice both consecutive and simultaneous and for building pre-interpreting skills. The lecture can be used for multicultural information and discussion.</td>
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The three segments were designed to give an overview to interpreting within the African American/Black community. The lecture material can be used for English text analysis, ASL interpreting practice both consecutive and simultaneous, and for building pre-interpreting skills. The lecture can be used for multicultural information and discussion.

   Segment One: Asian Religious Paths TRT 16.03
   Segment Two: HIV Outreach Project TRT 18.22

   The lecture material was designed to be stimulus material for interpreting practice. The two segments can be used for English text analysis; ASL interpreting practice both consecutive and simultaneous, and for building pre-interpreting skills. The lecture can be used for multicultural information and discussion. A transcript is available.


   This videotape was designed to provide mental health professionals and sign language interpreters information on providing services in multilingual and multicultural contexts. It uses a narration and vignettes to demonstrate some of the complexities of providing appropriate hearing and Deaf multilingual interpreters.


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   This presentation is designed to provide some access to issues within our international interpreting community. The presenter provides an overview to some of the issues of the sign language interpreting profession in Mexico. He repeats his presentation in Lenguaje de Signos de Mexico and in spoken Spanish.


   This presentation is an insight into the important relationship of world and cultural views with mental health and medical practices. The lecture provides valuable information on Curanderismo.
and some views on Mexican folk medicine and illness. The lecture material can be used for English text analysis, ASL interpreting practice both consecutive and simultaneous, and for building pre-interpreting skills. The lecture models some Spanish vocabulary and code-switching in Spanish. The lecture can be used for multicultural information and discussion.


This is a sample recruitment videotape that depicts a need for diversity within the profession. It can be used as a promotional tool. A student recruitment manual and sample recruitment brochure are also available. Jeff Bowden is featured in the interpreted ASL translation.


This videotape is designed to provide some brief samples of potential interpreting assignments and consumers. It is meant to stimulate discussion of the diversity of assignments that both coordinators of interpreting services and sign language interpreters encounter. There are 13 examples including both signed and spoken samples. Accompanying descriptions of the assignments and the workshop training activity is provided.


This are biographical anecdotes divided into shorter narrative segments from a Mexican National and Mexican American experience.

Segments included are:
- "Interpreting in the Family" by Pauline Arroyos (TRT 8.15)
- "Why I Became an Intermediary Interpreter" by Pauline Arroyos (TRT 5.33)
- "Communicating Within My Family and Our Community" by Raul Luna (TRT 5.12)
- "Eye Surgery" by Sofia Baca (TRT 7.35)

The tape can be used for ASL to English interpreting and for multicultural discussions including the need for Deaf interpreters. These samples are in ASL only.


This is a signed demonstration of the states and capitol cities of Mexico. A listing of the states and capital cities is provided.

Note: Please contact the National Multicultural Interpreter Project if you would like to have individual copies of the NMIP videotape products. These are available for duplication at cost from NMIP. Contact NMIP at email NMIP@epcc.edu or 915-831-2432 V/TTY for more information.
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These materials are permanently available from the RSA Project and/or the National Clearinghouse on Rehabilitation and Training Materials.