

The answer is in the question: The difficulties of interpreting in multiple choice examinations.

Many of us can appreciate how stressful examination situations can be, but consider the additional stress of having to rely on examinations being translated into Sign Language and maybe we can then appreciate how our Deaf clients feel. However, it's not only the deaf client that feels stress at this time. The interpreter may also be under pressure and may be experiencing stress. In which case, they may have to consider the four areas below.

In the United Kingdom, the Deaf Education Support Forum Survey 2010 (<http://www.acsw.org.uk/PDFs/DESFSurvey2010.pdf>) found that of the 768 staff reported upon, 35 (5%) are listed as interpreters and of those, only 7 are fully qualified. This indicates that most people interpreting in educational exam situations are unregistered with the national awarding body, the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (www.nrccd.org.uk), and are potentially untrained. It is therefore very important to consider our own actions and the actions of those who we work with, in relation to these topics.

Thanks go to the Scottish Qualifications Authority (www.sqa.org.uk) and the Association of Communication Support Workers (www.acsw.org.uk) who have compiled extensive information relating to confidence in interpreting for examinations and from where much of the following information is available.

Lack of Preparation:

The interpreter may have a schema of the situation they are entering but may not have had access to the questions in advance, so they will be reliant on their skills in sight translation to ensure that the text is translated correctly. They should:

- ✓ Anticipate potential problems and liaise before the event. Try to use the resources of other interpreters to assist.
- ✓ Have a basic knowledge of the subject matter of the exam.
- ✓ Meet the candidate before the exam so that the candidate is comfortable with interpreter.
- ✓ Always review what they have done, but this is especially important if they have not had adequate preparation. Think about your own actions with regards to your practice and performance. Post setting consider the scenario on a professional and personal level. Discuss your reflections with your supervisor or colleagues through group supervision or mentoring.

Neutrality:

The candidate and interpreter may have a long standing relationship, leading to the possibility that the interpreter may inadvertently sign in a manner which could reveal the answer to the question. How does the interpreter remain totally neutral?

- ✓ Record everything you do. For example, if the candidate asks you question, write on a pre-populated coversheet "Signed the whole of question number... etc".
- ✓ Try to make sure the exam is videoed. However consider child protection issues if the candidate is under 18 years of age.
- ✓ Report to the invigilator any incidences of untoward activity immediately, and be aware of your own actions which could be viewed as untoward.
- ✓ Do not support the candidate when there is no invigilator present. You should not perform two roles at the same time - interpreter and invigilator as this is deemed unethical. Should an issue arise later, there is no 3rd party to witness what took place.
- ✓ Do not support more than one candidate at any one time. This creates additional difficulties also more time with one candidate than another could be deemed as favouritism.

Leading the examinee:

Choices of how to translate a text and non verbal cues may inadvertently provide the candidate with the answer to the question, or give an indication to modify or change the answer. So, how does the interpreter overcome this?

- ✓ Do not look at the candidate's answers - there may be leakage which suggest changing answers.
- ✓ Do not aid the candidate by offering facts or suggestions.
- ✓ Do not indicate when the answer is complete.
- ✓ Do not advise the candidate which questions to answer.
- ✓ Do not advise the candidate when to move to the next question.
- ✓ Do not advise the candidate of the order in which questions should be answered.
- ✓ Do not advise the candidate which questions to review for possible change.

New vocabulary and testing spoken language skills:

Very often, the subtleties of a sentence structure or the placement of a comma in a sentence can disrupt the candidates understanding the question. This is fundamentally testing knowledge of carrier language and not necessarily subject knowledge. Also, how is the negotiation of new vocabulary established under exam conditions, bearing in mind that this may link to the other areas mentioned on this poster?

- ✓ Try to pre-empt subject specific words and phrases but these cannot be signed and must be finger-spelt or lip-spoken only. Non technical or non subject specific terms can be signed, but the interpreter should take care not to change the meaning, add information or explain the question.
- ✓ If the exam is assessing the candidates native spoken language skills or a foreign language, the interpreter should be aware that Sign Language Interpreting is not permitted.
- ✓ Differing question words require a different style of answer. Interpreters should be aware of Bloom's Taxonomy to be fully conversant with question and response forms.