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INTRODUCTION

Interpreting for the deaf, as a recognized profession, is beginning to gain wide acceptance. This acceptance can be attributed to two facilitating factors: 1) the establishment of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and 2) an increase in Federal regulations and funds.

The establishment of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was the outcome of a workshop for interpreting held at Ball State University in 1964. Today there are state and local chapters of RID all over the country. Among the concerns of RID are development, professional evaluation, certification, and recognition of interpreters.

The second contributing factor to the growing profession can be accredited to legislation. For example, Public Law 94-142, passed in 1978, means children are now entitled to free, appropriate public education. Many parents of deaf children have elected to enroll their children in regular schools instead of schools for the deaf. To bridge the inevitable communication gap, a classroom interpreter is almost always necessary.

Demand for competent interpreters is becoming more widespread in a variety of situations. In addition, the number of people interested in becoming interpreters is growing rapidly. As a result, interpreter training programs have been established across the country to meet that need. There exist a diversity of programs a person can enter with hopes of becoming a competent interpreter. There are ten-week programs, two-year programs leading to an associate degree, or four-year programs leading to a bachelor's degree. Thus, more is being done to provide better interpreters which allows more opportunities for deaf people.

Training interpreters to be competent requires an understanding of what makes an interpreter competent. Barbara Babbini, et al., defined interpreter competency as:

> A conglomerate of skills . . . some more important than others, and that these skills are partly technical, partly psychomotor, partly cognitive, partly attitudinal and part experiential (Babbini, 1974, 20-21).

Some of the skills a competent interpreter must possess are manual dexterity skills, psychomotor skills, hearing (being able to hear), listening, vision (being able to see), and memory (ability to recall and recognize).

Moreover, a battery of aptitude tests for characteristics that the interpreter must possess needs to be developed. A need exists not only to predict achievement in interpreting, but as a means to help the students identify aptitudes and/or shortcomings in their skills. One test the Maryville College Sign Language-Interpreting Department will require of its majors, beginning Fall 1980, is to have their hearing tested. This paper will study another test with hope that this test will be included in a battery of tests. The area: Predicting achievement in reading fingerspelling.

PURPOSE

Fingerspelling is an important component of manual communication. Moreover, reading

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fingerspelling is the greatest barrier to sign language competence. There are names of people, places, and things that do not have signs. These words are often spelled out utilizing the manual alphabet. Reading fingerspelling is a skill that involves reading words spelled out on the signer's hands. Vicki Hanson, in her presentation reproduced in the *National Symposum on Sign Language Research and Teaching* (1980), found that perception of fingerspelled words is in terms of whole word configurations. She explained: "That is, when reading fingerspelled English words, it is possible to recognize a word from its pattern without being able to report the individual letters involved." This is extremely difficult.

When the signer fingerspells, it is normal to expect the reader to catch a few letters and/or miss a few letters. Thus, it becomes important for the reader to have the skill in anticipating words with letters omitted in the reading process. This is accomplished when the reader understands and follows the context well. Try this sentence: Th.... b..... went t.... the circ..... to se.... t..... f....nny c....owns. With context supplying and providing clues, the reader can "fill in" the missing information through prediction; *viz.*, The boy went to the circus to see the funny clowns.

If this analogy between reading printed words and reading fingerspelled words is accurate, then one would expect that those who possess skill in completing words with letters omitted should also do well in reading fingerspelling. Moreover, those who do not have that skill should not read fingerspelling well.

METHOD

SUBJECTS: Twenty-one undergraduate Maryville College students enrolled in the American Sign Language 103 class served as subjects. ASL 103 primarily involves the study of idioms used in conversations by hearing-impaired people using sign language.

Age of subjects ranged from 18 to 21 years with a mean of 19 years. Of the 21 subjects, 18 had one year or less signing experience. Fourteen subjects, with 2 undecided, declared interpreting as their major.

INSTRUMENTATION: The ASL 103 instructor presented two types of tests. One test was a list of 40 words each of which had one or more missing letters. The other test was part of an exam for the class. In that section, there were 25 fingerspelled words embedded in 40 sentences. (Copies of these tests may be obtained by contacting the author).

PROCEDURE: The procedure was as follows:

1) The subjects were handed a copy of the word completion test in class. The subjects were asked to fill in the missing letter or letters on as many words as they could within one minute.

2) The exam in ASL 103 was administered by the instructor who signed and fingerspelled 40 sentences to the class. The students' task was to record what had been signed or fingerspelled.

RESULTS

The number correct on the word completion tests were recorded. Mean correct score on the forty item word completion test was 26.1. The number correct on fingerspelled words on the exam was 18.9. A correlation coefficient, the Pearson r, for the two variables was computed ($r = .775$, $p = .001$). The results of the study are in Table I.

DISCUSSION

The results of this experiment suggest that there is a strong degree of relationship between the skill of reading fingerspelling and anticipation of context with missing information. We can encourage students in interpreting who lack skills in recognizing whole word configuration with missing letters to improve their skills in reading fingerspelling. One way is to encourage prediction of the context in classes or during practice.

The word completion test developed and used for this experiment is not, by any means, the only test. This area needs further development. However, I feel the most important

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step has already been taken. That is, it is possible to develop an aptitude test in interpreting so we may better guide our students in terms of their potential and/or shortcomings. I ask you to join with me in your interests and ideas so we may improve our services to prospective students in interpreting.

TABLE I

Subject	*Fingerspelling Correct* (X)	*Word Completion Correct* (Y)
1.	23	38
2.	15	27
3.	25	30
4.	17	32
5.	20	27
6.	12	19
7.	24	33
8.	14	28
9.	21	22
10.	18	26
11.	24	32
12.	25	27
13.	15	19
14.	21	34
15.	19	24
16.	17	27
17.	23	32
18.	22	20
19.	19	26
20.	23	25
21.	15	31
$N = 21$	$\overline{X} = 18.9$	$\overline{Y} = 26.1$ $r = .775$, $P < .001$

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