Dual Accommodations:
Interpreters and Speech-to-Text Services

TS Tip Sheet

Overview

Providing both interpreting and speech-to-text services is commonplace when an audience is comprised of several deaf individuals who rely on different communication modes (e.g., ASL, lip reading, etc.). This dual accommodation occurs most frequently at large magnet events, such as conferences. It occurs less frequently for an individual student in a postsecondary setting, but is appropriate under certain circumstances.

In what academic situations is it appropriate to consider providing both interpreters and speech-to-text services?

There are a number of special circumstances where providing both accommodations is advantageous and, in some instances, necessary.

- **Highly technical and complex content:** Dual accommodations are generally used in upper-level courses that are highly technical or complex in nature. They are also used in classes that are highly interactive. Examples include medical, legal, and foreign language classes. In these settings, the student often relies on the sign language interpreter for the communication content, but references the speech-to-text service to capture the specialized vocabulary.

- **Dual services are also appropriate during a dissertation defense:** During this high-stakes event, the individual can monitor how their signed communication is being voiced by viewing the real-time captioning and immediately clarify concepts and correct interpreter misinterpretations.

- **Primary but not complete reliance on speech-to-text:** In this situation, the speech-to-text provider may be the primary provider of information for the student, with the interpreter assuming a smaller role, such as only voicing what the individual is conveying in ASL.

- **More than one deaf student:** When there are several deaf students in a class, there is a good chance that the students will have different communication accommodation needs; hence the need for more than one accommodation.

- **Campus-wide events:** During large events such as graduations or conferences, it is prudent to provide both interpreters and speech-to-text services if the campus expects a number of deaf individuals in attendance, including students, family members, or friends. By providing both accommodations, event planners are able to create access for all and perhaps minimize a scramble to find providers for a last-minute request for a specific accommodation.

Because ASL is a language with its own grammar, vocabulary, and nuances, conceptually accurate signs are not always available for the specialized vocabulary being presented. Speech-to-text services provide access to the highly specialized vocabulary while interpreters provide effective communication access to discussions and other classroom interactions. With both services, students have a more equitable learning experience.

NDC National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes

Are there any special logistics to keep in mind when providing dual accommodations?

To successfully provide dual accommodations, it is important to keep the lines of communication open between all the parties involved during service provision. It may take some trial and error to determine how the instructor, the interpreter and the speech-to-text provider will work together. It is important to allow for flexibility. If the mode of instruction changes during the class, such as from lecture to interactive group work, it may be necessary to switch roles.

The Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 2010 Standards for Accessible Design suggests the key to ensuring effective communication is to consider the nature, length, complexity, and context of the communication, as well as a person's normal method(s) of communication. The most important person to involve in the discussion of accommodation planning is the deaf individual.

Related Resources

- Speech-to-Text Services: An Introduction:
  www.nationaldeafcenter.org/introstt

- Remote Speech-to-Text Services:
  www.nationaldeafcenter.org/remotecaptioning

- Hiring Qualified Speech-to-Text Providers:
  www.nationaldeafcenter.org/hiringstt

- Sign Language Interpreters: An Introduction:
  www.nationaldeafcenter.org/introsli

- Interpreters as a Reasonable Accommodation for Testing:
  www.nationaldeafcenter.org/interpreterstesting

- Sign Language Interpreters in the Classroom:
  www.nationaldeafcenter.org/classroominterpreters

- Hiring Qualified Sign Language Interpreters:
  www.nationaldeafcenter.org/hiringsli

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Requirements for Effective Communication:
  www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm

Additional resources on this subject may be available at **www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resources**.