

Service Learning in Interpreting Education:

Living and Learning

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Introduction

In the space of 30 years the education and training of sign language interpreters has evolved from community endeavor to academic enterprise. Cokely (2000) writes

Whereas two and a half decades ago the vast majority of interpreters/transliterators entered the profession via an interactional route, today the vast majority enters via an academic route (p. 26)

This transition has served to increase the number of people who receive training, and has thereby helped to satisfy the growing demand for interpreters. While exact figures on employment are not known, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 1987 had a membership of 2554 (M. Bowhay, personal communication, December 9, 2003) where today the number stands at 10,412 (<http://www.rid.org/faq.html>, accessed 11/28/03). However, it is not clear that as we increase the quantity of interpreters we have also maintained the quality of their training. Moving the locus of our learning from the community to the classroom has had another, less desirable affect – that of removing deaf people and their communities from the center of our education. Our migration from

community to academy has come at some cost. In spite of the best efforts of the institutions of higher education (IHEs) many students complete their ASL course sequence (if not their entire interpreting coursework) without having had significant interaction with deaf people and communities.

We are certainly not the first to note the inherent compromise of institutionalizing our learning. In *The School and Society* (1902), the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey wrote movingly of the twin circumstances of social change and education at the turn of the 20th century:

...the clothing worn was for the most part not only made in the house, but the members of the household were usually familiar with the shearing of the sheep, the carding and spinning of the wool, and the plying of the loom. Instead of pressing a button and flooding the house with electric light, the whole process of getting illumination was followed in its toilsome length, from the killing of the animal and the trying of fat, to the making of wicks and dipping of candles. The supply of flour, of lumber, of foods, of building materials, of household furniture, even of metal ware, of nails, hinges, hammers, etc., was in the immediate neighborhood, in shops which were constantly open to inspection and often centers of neighborhood congregation. The entire industrial process stood revealed, from the production on the farm of the raw materials, till the finished article was actually put to use. Not only this, but practically every member of the household had his own share in the work. The children, as they gained in strength and capacity, were gradually initiated into the mysteries of the several processes. It was a matter of immediate and personal concern, even to the point of actual participation.

We cannot overlook the factors of discipline and of character-building involved in this: training in habits of order and of industry, and in the idea of responsibility, of obligation to do something, to produce something, in the world. There was always something which really needed to be done, and a real necessity that each member of the household should do his own part faithfully and in cooperation with others. (pp.10-11)

The reader of this quote will doubtless make the connection between the world Dewey describes and that of the rapidly evolving Deaf culture, where technology has so recently

wrought such tremendous change. If we may be permitted another lengthy quote, Dewey goes on to inspire a basic premise of this chapter (*italics ours*):

We cannot overlook the importance for educational purposes of the close and intimate acquaintance got with nature at first hand, with real things and materials, with the actual processes of their manipulation, and the knowledge of their social necessities and uses. In all this there was continual training of observation, of ingenuity, constructive imagination, of logical thought, and of the sense of reality acquired through first-hand contact with actualities. The educative forces of the domestic spinning and weaving, of the saw-mill, the gristmill, the cooper shop, and the blacksmith forge, were continuously operative. *No number of object-lessons, got up as object-lessons for the sake of giving information, can afford even the shadow of a substitute for acquaintance with the plants and animals of the farm and garden, acquired through actual living among them and caring for them. No training of sense-organs in school, introduced for the sake of training, can begin to compete with the alertness and fullness of sense-life that comes through daily intimacy and interest in familiar occupations.* Verbal memory can be trained in committing tasks, a certain discipline of the reasoning powers can be acquired through lessons in science and mathematics; but, after all, this is somewhat remote and shadowy compared with the training of attention and of judgment that is acquired in having to do things with a real motive behind and a real outcome ahead.

It must be said that the faculty of interpreting education programs (IEPs), populated by and large still by people with one foot in the practical world of the deaf and one in the academic, work hard to make opportunities for interaction with deaf people available to today's students. American Sign Language (ASL) classes routinely require attendance at Deaf events. Many courses include an invitation to Deaf guests for a variety of activities. However well intentioned this exposure is, it is difficult to see these opportunities as anything other than stilted and contrived. Members of the Deaf community here are not interacting with their peers or even with students. Rather they are appearing as representatives of their community, and as such are subject to all the ambassadorial baggage of any envoy. Whatever value these invitations have, they cannot

possibly fulfill the students' need to interact directly and meaningfully with individuals with whom they will one day work.

Dewey's view of society reflects the Deaf community of a previous generation, when Deaf people monitored the community of interpreters and controlled who did/did not pass muster. The abject dearth of Deaf representation in positions of authority in IHEs speaks volumes about the quality of the bargain made in transferring accreditation from community to college.

Language skill is foremost among the deficiencies found in substituting curriculum for community. Here the deck is already stacked against our students. The classroom is notorious for being an insufficient, frustrating environment in which to learn a language. The study of foreign language as an academic discipline in this country's schools has been neither popular nor successful. Literature on this topic is in no short supply. Reinert, (1970); Christison and Krahne (1986); Dornyei (1990); Ramage (1990); Roberts, (1992); Oxford and Shearin (1994); Mantle-Bromley (1995) are among the many researchers who have looked at the failings of traditional language learning in the classroom with an eye toward defining the problem and suggesting solutions.

There is no reason to believe that the study of ASL is exempt from this condition of apathy. In fact, there is some evidence that ASL is even more susceptible to student insensibility than other languages might be. Omaggio (1986) suggests "...it takes 720 hours of instruction under ideal conditions to enable a student with a superior aptitude for languages to reach Level 3 [superior] in oral skills in French or Spanish" (p. 20). Although no research supports this information in the study of ASL, it stands to reason that the limited hours our students spend in a classroom (typically anywhere between 90

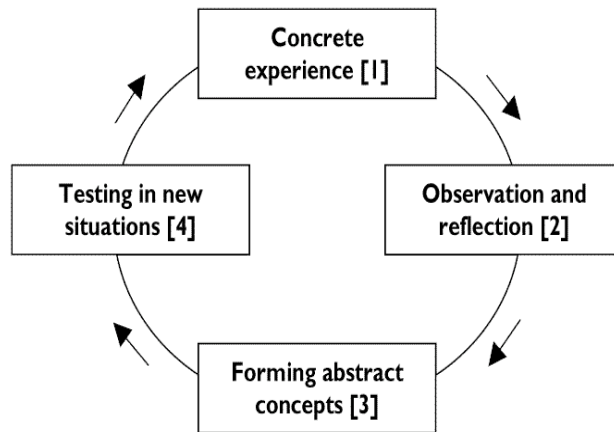
to 240 assuming 3 to 4 hours per week in 10/18 weeks per quarter/semester) are inadequate. The actual use of ASL with native and near-native users is paramount for the high level of proficiency interpreters require. Jacobs (1996) makes a strong argument that the amount of time the typical student spends studying ASL in the classroom falls far short of standards for learning truly foreign languages (TFLs). Compromises common to the classroom, in particular the lack of meaningful interaction with the Deaf community, all too often result in students woefully deficient in two areas of central concern to interpreters: culture and language.

Dewey (1902) identifies a “tragic weakness” in classroom instruction. Speaking of classroom instruction in general here, (not specifically of the language classroom) he states “...it endeavors to prepare future members of the social order in a medium in which the conditions of the social spirit are eminently wanting” (p. 15). In an effort to address that “wanting”, those shortcomings, we have begun to implement a Service Learning approach in our IEP. This chapter continues with a discussion about the distinction between academic learning and experiential learning and then offers our working definition of Service Learning and examples of efforts that are sometimes confused for it. From that foundation, an overview of our Service Learning courses is presented, with representative comments from students.

Academic Classroom or Interaction and Experience?

The problem of artificiality in the classroom is not unique to education in sign language interpreting. Recognition of the important distinctions between academic learning and what Rogers (1969), (1994) calls “personal” or “significant” learning has led

to schools of thought on experiential learning. Kolb and Fry (1975) created (below) a model of the experiential learning cycle.



<http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-explrn.htm>, accessed 10/19/03

Much work on experiential learning uses a model similar to the one above. Other research has sought to develop the model further. Jarvis (1994) is notable in his exploration of the many possible individual responses to a given learning opportunity. His model is especially useful in its recognition of the fact that the outcome of potential learning experiences is not always learning. Jarvis organized possible non-learning outcomes into categories including Presumption, Non-Consideration, and Rejection, all of which reflect the varying degrees and ways in which a person can experience a learning opportunity and yet remain unchanged by it. See (<http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-explrn.htm>) for a very useful discussion on perspectives on experiential learning.

What combination of experiences, then, both academic and social, will lead to literacy, to cultural and linguistic competence? Literacy, the ability to function in a culture, can only come from intensive interaction with that culture. Interpreters, per force, work between different cultures. If biliteracy is accepted as a *sine qua non* of qualified

interpreters, what can IHEs do to address the shortcomings of classroom and curriculum in preparing interpreters?

Service Learning: a definition

An interesting approach to this question can be found in literature on Service Learning (SL), a form of experiential learning that emphasizes students' need to reflect on the dynamic relationship between self and community. We shall, for the purpose of our discussion here, define Service Learning as an approach to teaching and learning that combines credit-bearing academic work with service to the community. Valerius and Hamilton (2001, p. 339) see SL as "characterized by students' engagement in their local communities to apply and learn course concepts". In offering a definition of Service Learning, we should also be forthright in stating what Service Learning is *not*.

First and foremost, we do not construe volunteer interpreting assignments to be proper SL opportunities. Students, by definition, are deficient in skills that meet the needs of the community. There is a school of thought among interpreter educators that urges interpreting students to accept volunteer assignments, labeling them as low-risk, *pro bono* opportunities. We question the wisdom of such work. Anyone who considers Girl Scout meetings, Tupperware parties, or youth sports to be low-risk has simply not looked carefully enough at the complexities and pressures these settings present to a student.

The literature for *pro bono* work in other fields (most notably law and medicine) is written for professionals, not for students. It should be noted here that medical and law students must pass much more strenuous screening than do most interpreting students before gaining admission to their programs and the attendant "pro bono" work therein. There are no real opportunities in these disciplines for those who have not yet developed

the skills necessary to perform the task, although most professions require an internship or practicum that, typically, includes direct supervision from instructors or practitioners. Other chances for *pro bono* work, like those found in organizations like Habitat for Humanity, happen only under the strict supervision of experienced professionals.

In the field of interpreting, the notion of *pro bono* work is widely discussed, but is largely absent from the literature. Two significant exceptions are Tipton and Findley (1998) who write of *pro bono* work as a symbol of the status in our profession and who offer guiding principles for accepting such assignments, and Cokely (2000), whose clear and succinct explanation conforms to the perspective of other professions:

When professionals undertake *pro bono* work, the expectation is that they will perform the work as if they were being paid. *Pro bono* work can be described as, “Do the work you do to earn a living, do it just as well, but just don’t get paid for it this time” (p. 34).

This definition calls into question why so many educators allow students to deceive themselves into thinking they are, indeed, providing a service to the community.

Arguably the hearing community benefits from this volunteer effort because they do not have to pay for interpreting services that might otherwise be unavailable, but it is doubtful that the Deaf community benefits in any way. How can students “do it just as well” if they cannot yet “do it”?

Moreover, there is little discussion of the potentially deleterious affects of placing students in “interpreting” situations too soon, and without adequate supervision. It is demonstrably the case that students lack sufficient language skills. By putting students in low-risk situations, we may be deceiving them (or allowing them to deceive themselves) about the quality of work they are capable of doing. Kruger and Dunning (1999) offer convincing evidence that students who are unskilled routinely overestimate their ability.

“Not only do these people reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the metacognitive ability to realize it.” (p. 1121). “Erroneous conclusions and unfortunate choices” is an interesting description. It aptly describes the problem from the perspective of the student. It does not, however, come close to describing the problem from the perspective of the recipients of this “interpreting”. The shibboleth that “something is better than nothing” has no more validity today than it did a generation ago when deaf people were presumed to be grateful for whatever snippets of information people in power cared to toss their way.

It is known that many students come to the study of ASL laboring under gross misapprehensions about the relative difficulty of the subject and about the length of time it will take them to become fluent. (Peterson 1999, p.??). We have yet to explore fully the ramifications of this sort of volunteer work. A student who volunteers is likely to see him or herself as successful at the task of interpreting. When this success does not translate into similar success in the classroom (or in the grade book), the credibility lost is liable to be that of the teacher and program, at least in the eyes of the student. This paradigm is often seen in ASL classes as well. “But my deaf friends understand me just fine...” is a common refrain from students who are frustrated by the important differences between language and communication.

“Community service” is another false synonym for Service learning. Community service is a commonplace in IEPs. Many interpreters, interpreting faculty, and students make comments such as, “I’ve been doing service learning for years” when most often what they have been doing is better described as community service (i.e. service to a specific community). Students give their time to the community by assisting with

committee work, productions at the Community Theater, or holiday events. Certainly there is a need for such a commitment from our profession. However, often without realizing it, when we volunteer, we have a different relationship with members of the community. “Volunteerism suggests a paternalistic, one-way relationship in which the community is the sole beneficiary of services, while not recognizing the benefits received by students” (Valerius and Hamilton 2001, p. 340). Lane (1992, p.33) clearly saw the problems inherent in a helping relationship:

Whenever a more powerful group undertakes to assist a less powerful one, whenever benefactors create institutions to aid beneficiaries, the relationship is fraught with peril.

We hold that Service Learning is a recursive phenomenon, wherein students learn the significance of membership in a community while reflecting on the importance of reciprocity and the symbiotic nature of learning and living.

Service Learning: an approach to education

By fixing the locus of SL firmly in the domain of experiential learning, we are recognizing the need for practical application outside of the classroom of the skills learned inside the classroom. Service learning is distinct, however, from other forms of experiential learning in several important ways. The most obvious difference is that reflection is a vital component of SL. Students are required not only to participate in community activities, but to also reflect actively on their participation. Through reflection students are able to construct schema for the community, for themselves, and for their place in the community. Ehrlich (1996) holds that SL comprises “...the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study so that each strengthens the other.” (p. xi.)

A second way to distinguish SL from other forms of experiential learning is in the primary purpose of the endeavor. In general, experiential learning can be said to be student-centered – its purpose is that students have an opportunity to apply academic learning in a social situation. An example of this in our practice is the common requirement that ASL students attend Deaf events. The premise of such a requirement is that the student needs more contact with the Deaf community. The purpose of SL, on the other hand, is to satisfy community needs. By demonstrating that the student's need is subordinate to the community need (the common good) SL students and community alike affirm their traditional roles in the social contract.

We seek, then, to distinguish SL from those activities that are common to sign language and interpreting coursework. In requiring thorough reflection and exalting community over individual, SL is an approach that has much to offer interpreting education programs. From the perspectives of the IHE and the community, SL can be seen as a commitment by the institute to recognize and serve the needs of the community. From the perspective of the program, SL can be seen as a means by which the efficacy of curriculum can be assessed. From the perspective of the student, SL is a guided entrée into the Deaf-World.

An Approach to a Service Learning in Interpreting Education

Having investigated SL programs at other institutions (and in other disciplines), we recognize that SL is likely to be more successful as a holistic approach to an entire curriculum than as a single add-on course. The efforts we have made at our school are necessarily prefatory. We look forward to seeing our curriculum infused with an SL perspective.

One of our first steps was to identify a community liaison. We are fortunate to have a large and diverse faculty. One member of the faculty in particular is quite well-established in the local Deaf community. Working together with her we were able to establish a number of venues for our students. Community buy-in is essential to the success of a program such as this. We began with placements in the local Deaf club; Wednesday nights are popular for Euchre, a popular card game. Approximately ?? Deaf individuals attend the weekly competitions. Students at this placement primarily functioned as servers; once the tables were set up and the score pads distributed, drinks were ordered and delivered to tables. We are also fortunate to have a positive (although limited) relationship with the local residential school. Students were placed in the middle school dormitories to help with whatever was necessary: math tutoring, explanation of a project, moving boxes during renovations, etc.

We are still in the early phase of establishing the courses and the approach so we began with four one-credit courses, presented as electives. The initial course, presented during spring quarter of the 2002-03 academic year and again during fall quarter of the 2003-04 academic year, has now become SL II.

Our plan includes four one-credit SL courses (see appendix C), to be taken sequentially during the six quarters of the IEP; the ideal schedule would include SL I during the first or second quarter, SL II during the second or third quarter and so on, completing the requirements prior to beginning the Interpreting Practicum (sixth and final quarter). SL I focuses the student's energy on the community at large (i.e. *not* the local deaf community). Placements are arranged through our campus volunteer center². At this writing, two students have completed this initial course. SL II is a fairly structured

association with the local deaf community (either at the Deaf Club or the residential school) and it has been offered twice; seven students have completed the requirements. SL III allows for more flexibility and students play more of a part in determining their own placement(s); three students are currently enrolled. And finally, we envision SL IV to be the student's choice: visiting an isolated deaf elder in a nursing home, "adopting" a deaf family who needs additional child care, etc.; this course has not yet been offered.

Analysis of Students' Postings

This discussion centers on our initial offering, which has now become SL II; there were five students in that first one-credit section offered spring quarter of academic year 2002-03 and there were two students in the second section, fall quarter of the following academic year. Three students were placed at the residential school and participated in a wide range of activities, including: pick-up basketball games, structured tutoring, play rehearsal, moving boxes to prepare for building renovation, etc. Their orientation included meeting the Director of Residential Life and several dormitory supervisors; times for their weekly visits were established and logistics were explained. (Each of the three was on a different schedule). The four other students opted to function as servers at the Deaf Club's weekly Euchre games; their orientation included meeting with a Deaf faculty member who loosely supervised their work (introduced them, help them explain why they were there, how long, etc.). In addition to "time on site", each student was required to submit two online postings per week, the "reflection" part of the course. It was estimated that the supplemental readings and the writing would require approximately one hour per week (see appendix A, Syllabus for SL II). We believe the online postings to

be the key to the success of these courses. Not only are the students actively involved in the community, they are reflecting upon that involvement; McKeachie (2002, p. 170-171) espouses the power of the process of writing

"Why does writing improve thinking? Skill in thinking is like musical and athletic skills. It takes practice to improve - particularly practice that enables one to see what works and what doesn't. Much of our thinking remains in our minds, where it is not exposed to review. The very process of putting thoughts to paper forces clarification; seeing them on paper (or on the computer screen) facilitates our own evaluation; and receiving comments from peers or teachers provides further help. Note that most of these educational gains do not require that writing be graded. Writing is to facilitate learning and thinking. Thinking in turn results in class discussions that are animated and thoughtful".

Postings were due twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays at 8AM (additional samplings from the course postings can be found in Appendix B). The initial postings were required to explain the sites, responsibilities, etc. and also, students were required to express their own goals for the experience. Initial postings were also to reflect information gleaned from the required readings (Rubin and Thompson 1994).

The first posting for the second week was meant to elicit a clear summary of the student's placement and, more importantly, whether chapters four and five ("Planning Your Language Study" and "The Communication Process") illuminated any initial language issues. Student 1's comments, although a bit long, validated the offering of this course to the instructor! This was a good student, diligent in his/her work up to this point, but there was never a hint of this depth of analysis when he/she was using ASL in classroom communication; we specifically draw your attention to the underlined comments (underlining ours)

Student 1: Well, as for my duties at the Deaf Club, they seem to be very easy when they are written down on paper. Basically, My duties are to serve drinks to people playing Euchre. However, when this is put into practice, it becomes anything but easy. Within this past week, I have been confronted with many of the issues presented in Chapter 5 of the text along with a few that were not mentioned at all. So far, the vocabulary and grammar have not been all that challenging. I ask them if they would like a drink, and then they tell me what they want. On the other hand, there is a sense of culture within this environment that I do not believe that I could learn in any formal setting. Embedded in the simple task that I have described there lies a plethora of subtle cues and rules that I am just beginning to understand (i.e. when to wait, when to ask, who to ask, how to ask, and how long to wait before asking again).... There are quite a few references in Chapter 5 to social status and how different cultures deal with that. Within this particular setting, there are a number of people with very high social status. I am learning through trial and error what social addresses are appropriate and which are not..... Service learning is really giving me a chance to see what I have learned on a theoretical level put into action in a real life situation. In this case however, I feel that I am speaking more of the cultural information that I have learned over the years rather than the linguistically based information. I feel that by the time I have finished my obligation with this assignment, my language proficiency with ASL might improve; perhaps a little or perhaps a lot. I am sure however, that by the time I finish with these ten weeks that my understanding and appreciation of Deaf culture in general and this community specifically can only deepen greatly.

Student 7: My first week at the Deaf Club was different from other visits there. At other times, I entered there as a guest and have always been nervous, feeling a little like an intruder. This time, I was required to be there and although I was still nervous, I was less nervous and for different reasons (what if I spill something?!). Everyone was very kind and if they didn't know why we were there they would ask. People that I spoke to that I didn't already know always wanted to know if I was an interpreter and why I was there. It was easy to strike up conversations with anyone. With the pressure of "I am here to socialize and I must speak to people" taken away, I actually socialized and spoke to people....Ironically, I had a conversation with someone that night about how different it was to go to the Deaf Club and use the language vs. learning it in a classroom. Even with the best teachers, one cannot create all of the situations that occur in real life. In learning a language, you have to explore it. A good way to do that is to get stuck and work your way through it. In other words, if I want to discuss something in class, I can plan out my question or my comment before I say it. I can use signs that I know are correct. If I am involved in a real conversation, I must communicate. If asked a question, I must answer it. I may not know the correct signs or have time to plan out the answer so I am forced to say something in the best way that I can.

During the fourth week, the discussion centered on Rubin and Thompson's chapter 8, "Taking Charge of Your Learning". Students were prompted to consider how they have taken charge of their learning and to consider how they could do so as they look toward their second year. The honesty of Student 2 was enlightening, especially as he/she realizes that second language learning for an interpreter is an ongoing process:

Student 2: *Hmmm...I am always on the look out for interesting ways to learn this language. I often find myself impatient with the whole process. It all started with the prospects of getting into the [IEP]. My first assessment resulted in a recommendation to start ASL I, when all I wanted to hear was I am ready for ASL IV. I can still remember how frustrated I was to hear that I needed ASL I, because this had put my plans of starting the Interpreting Program on hold for a WHOLE year. Now I'm looking back and thinking that was TWO years ago! Where did the time go??? I can't believe how much I have learned in these two years. The real revelation is the amount YET to learn.*

And, Student 6 expressed surprise at a Deaf person's reactions to the naturalness of his/her signs:

Student 6: *Recently, one of my friends at the Club and I were chatting. At first the conversation was a bit more serious/formal. Eventually, we got into a fun, playful exchange. Without realizing it, I became very relaxed, wasn't thinking about making a mistake, and had a great time. Part way through this exchange, my friend said to me, "Why don't you sign like that all the time? I was taken aback and confused by what he said. I asked him to explain what he meant, and he told me that my ASL had become much more smooth and fluent, my body had loosened up, and I was using my space much better....*

Later, in the seventh week, the discussion centered around just how much personal information one should share with these new acquaintances (at the Deaf Club) such as: should one really be trying to establish friendships? how close should one become with one's future "consumers"? These discussions often arise in IEPs and, as far

as we know, are addressed appropriately. However, it seems that Student 3 gained some valuable personal insight as he/she reflected on the issue; again, we draw your attention to the underlined segments:

Student3: Because I am a quiet person and not very comfortable conversing with strangers (especially in my L2) I feel that I am at a disadvantage within the Deaf community. First there's the obvious fact that the less I participate, the less of that essential interaction I'm getting. But I've resolved that it will just take me more time. More to the point of this discussion though, because I'm not outgoing and comfortable, I have felt myself viewed with suspicion, as though I must not really be interested in becoming involved. With hearing people, there is usually a grace period for getting a conversation going, a few minutes of finding what you have in common, etc..I have found that, often with Deaf people, if it doesn't flow right away they give up and lose interest. And, because I'm not "open" I fear that I am perceived as insincere about my interest in the community. Since I can't change my personality, I don't know how to remedy this except to keep on going back and prove myself slowly over time. I don't know if anyone else can relate to this, but it is an aspect of our topic that is very relevant to me.

This student has hit upon the key to success as an interpreter, the success that our profession gained naturally in years gone by, before we became isolated in academia. He/she sees that acceptance cannot be forced and it cannot be accomplished in a short period of time (e.g. one or two visits to an ASL class). Acceptance in the deaf community must be earned and the deaf people themselves, as gatekeepers, have the power to accept these new students...or not. This student has decided that acceptance is worth the effort, and has decided to "...keep on going back and prove myself slowly over time".

Finally, at the end of the quarter, students were required to write a final summary of their service learning experience (all questions are in Appendix B). We believe it is worthwhile to call attention to several specific comments. When asked if there was

anything "unexpected that you learned from your experience about the population you worked with" (question two), several students had interesting comments:

Student 2: *Seeing the "Life of a Deaf Student in a Residential School" really hit me to see how very structured their lives are during the week. I mean, I have read about residential schools in general, but to be a part of it was incredible. I assumed that what I read in textbooks had to be a thing of the past....For example, I can now set my watch to the time I see the kids leave the school for the day, leave the cafeteria after finishing dinner, begin their study time, rec time, etc.*

Student 4: *Having been told the difficulty [deaf] kids have learning the English language, it was not totally unexpected when I saw that happen. However, the extent of the problem did surprise me. On a few occasions, I assisted a couple of the girls with their English homework....[I]t became obvious they had no idea what they were really being asked. I would ask the kids what the question meant and they would shrug their shoulders. It certainly was not easy when I tried to explain it to them. It was obvious how frustrating the whole process was to the kids....It was a real eye opener seeing firsthand the struggles the kids had with the language*

Student 6: *I learned that people who are deaf are human just like people that can hear.... This is something I will take with me as I continue on in my career and in my personal life as I become more involved in the Deaf community. I will continue to be aware of cultural differences, but will not focus on it so much. I will try to use the point of view, "How would I react/feel if this was a group of hearing people?"*

Student 7: *I think that I am most surprised by how much [my classmate] and I think alike. So many times our reactions were the same to events or to topics posted. I have wondered about this in the past but seeing it in writing confirmed it for me. We all tend to feel as though we are unique in our learning experiences and that we as individuals are the worst at this, that, or the other thing, and it turns out that we are feeling and experiencing the same things (for the most part). We are going along the same path and it seems that many of our experiences and reactions are typical. I keep telling myself to take comfort in that but in the midst of a bad day I forget. It gives me hope to think that I am following a course that others have followed and to see that they have come out successfully.*

Question three asked students to consider what they had learned about themselves by participating in this experience:

Student 6: *What I learned about myself is that I can persevere. I began this program in December 2001. At that time, my family life was in great turmoil. It has not been easy for any of us, but my family knows that I am doing this because it is my life dream and it will benefit all of us. I have tried to be a role model for my children and display that no matter what the obstacles, you can get through and achieve your goals, but sacrifices must be made along the way. The important thing is to keep focused on your goals and try not to lose touch with the things that mean most in your life, your family. My experience at the Deaf Club has been enlightening because even though I felt fairly comfortable around people who are deaf, it was intimidating going to the Deaf Club where I would be one of the only hearing people there. I was worried that I would not be accepted, or that they would be suspect of my intentions. Through my continued involvement, I have been accepted and have made some good friends.*

Student 7: *As far as learning about myself, I like the idea that I have taken control of my own learning. Before that topic came up, I had never really thought about it fully. Now I think about it a lot and it gives me a sense of power.*

Question four asked students to consider how this entire experience would impact them now and in the future, and we offer several excerpts here:

Student 1: *I hope that I have made an initial impression on those that frequent the club as someone who might be a little awkward but also someone who is genuine and not a threat in any way.*

Student 2: *I realize the benefits of getting involved in the Deaf community...I push myself to get involved in events that will start to make a name for myself in the Deaf community.*

Student 3: *I intend to pursue the friendships that have begun with a couple of the dorm ladies.*

Student 4: *I feel fortunate to have been a part of something that is very important to the Deaf Community...the residential school.... For both the students and the staff, it is not just school or work. They are family. Now when someone talks to me about his or her experiences at a residential school, I am a little closer to understanding what it really means.*

Student 5: *I believe my involvement in this assignment has provided me with a good opportunity to be recognized and welcomed by many of the people I have met. It is up to me to stay connected in some way, so I'm planning to stop in this summer and attend other events as they arise.*

***Student 6:** Last night at the Deaf Club, [one deaf man] announced to everyone that [my classmate] and I had finished our "tour of duty." Everyone gave us a round of applause and thanked us for coming. Many expressed that they were sad to see us go and many hugs and good wishes were given. When I told people that I was a member and they were stuck with me, they expressed surprise and were thrilled that I would continue coming. Of course one of their next questions was, would I be playing euchre now? Once I told them I was already in the Friday night league, they let me off the hook, but did ask if I was available to sub for them if they needed me. When I left last night, I did not feel things had ended, but instead a new chapter has begun.*

A few comments about the online aspect of this course are necessary, due to the controversial nature of online learning for interpreting students. We have often had other instructors ask "what was missing?" when we discuss online work. Nothing is missing; certainly, the course is different than a face-to-face experience but we believe that the reflection that occurs online is far superior to comments made in the classroom. The process of putting thoughts onto the course website facilitates learning and thinking, just as McKeachie said. And the sharing with peers builds confidence and rapport in this young interpreting community.

Implications for future

We find the value of incorporating a Service Learning approach to interpreting education to be self-evident. It is an honest effort to balance the playing field in terms of Deaf representation in curriculums and programs. It is a means by which programs can facilitate students' transition into the community of interpreters. There is abundant literature extolling the virtues of Service Learning in today's academy. There is little evidence that Service Learning has found its way into interpreting education. We acknowledge that our own program is in the very early phase of implementation. But, as Service Learning gains currency with our community, students, and faculty, we hope to

see this approach infused into all of the courses across our curriculum, until Service Learning is seen not as a thing students do but as a way of characterizing everything that students do. Valerius and Hamilton (2001) also remember to consider the faculty member's point of view when they cited Collier and Lawson (1997): "although facilitating a service learning class is time consuming, many faculty members also report increased teaching satisfaction...". The comments from our initial offering last spring validated our belief that there was a need to re-connect interpreting students with the community with whom they will be working. We believe that the excerpts from the students' postings clearly show their support for this approach to learning. And, in end-of-the-quarter informal meetings with some of the Deaf adults (dorm supervisors at the residential school), they expressed their pleasure at having interpreting students participate in routine activities. Also, we know members of the Deaf club enjoyed the students' participation, as reported in the last student excerpt above. We are hopeful that this shift, away from rigid and singular classroom learning and back towards interactions with individuals in the community will enhance and inform the next generation of interpreters.

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Appendix A Syllabus

Special Topics: Service Learning in Interpreting Education II
(initially offered as Service Learning I, Spring 2002-03)
National Technical Institute for the Deaf/Rochester Institute of Technology
Dept. of ASL and Interpreting Education
Christine Monikowski, Ph.D.
0875-598-02

Pre-requisite: Permission of the instructor
1 credit

Required text: Rubin, Joan and Thompson, Irene. 1994. *How to be a more successful language learner: toward learner autonomy*. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.

Course description: This course requires the student to have a reciprocal relationship with the Deaf Community. The student provides a service to the Deaf Community, applying his/her knowledge of ASL to real interactions. This course requires the student to be an interested language learner and a student of ASL. Concerns arising about the student's role in the placement will be addressed with the instructor as well as form the foundation for reflection groups and online postings.

Objectives:

- Become knowledgeable about the site and the people and how this site fits into the greater Deaf Community
- Identify "benefits" of learning ASL in a community
- Compare and contrast learning in the community and the classroom
- Reflect upon these differences and discuss
- Apply current and past classroom knowledge of ASL to real interactions
- Learn about yourself: how do you fit into the Deaf Community? What contributions can you continue to make to the Deaf Community?

The student is required to:

- Participate for a minimum of 30 hours per credit hour (including classroom/online time);
- Provide a minimum of 20 service hours to the Deaf community;
- Participate in weekly reflection groups (one hour per week) and complete required postings, read articles, etc.

On-site service	20 hours
Online discussion/reading	10 hours

Total**30 hours****Grading System:**

Because this is a distance course, and because we will not actually “see” each other every week, it is extremely important that you participate in the discussions on a regular basis. These are a required part of the course. You need to think about things before you post. I suggest you compose your thoughts in a “WORD document” on your computer first then you can “cut and paste” this into your posting; you will be graded on quality of content...how well can you synthesize information? A simple “I agree with her” is insufficient.

Every posting will be graded according to the following:

- Acceptable – Excellent; work is complete and content shows analysis; clearly exceeds minimum requirements; spelling and grammar are accurate.
- Not Acceptable – Unsatisfactory; work is complete but shows little analysis; deficiencies in quality OR work not completed on time.

This course is Pass/Fail; you must complete the required number of hours and the required number of postings to pass the course. Students will be evaluated on the extent to which they complete the objectives, determined by the course instructor. Reflective activities/online postings require excellent English skills, analysis, and comprehension of topics.

Students will:

- Complete a minimum of 18/20 postings during the quarter (2 per week)
- Complete an end-of-the quarter self-evaluation
- Directly inform the instructor of any absences BEFORE the absence occurs
- Dress in a manner appropriate to the setting
- Demonstrate professional attitude
- Inform the instructor of any difficulties/problems in a timely manner
- Complete the requirements for the course

Postings

You are required to post to the “MyCourses” discussion group two times a week, and you must post in the appropriate category in “discussions”. The week always begins at Noon on Mondays and it is divided into two “sessions”: first session = Noon Monday to Thursday 8AM; second session = Thursday 8AM to Midnight Sunday EST. You must post at least ONCE during each session (more postings are always welcome). Each week’s work must total TWO postings. This posting may, depending on the topic and our readings, be something like a thoughtful reflection of how the article relates to your view of “service learning” or an ongoing discussion of your observations about language in use. Postings will be graded pass/fail; late postings will NOT count. You are required to

submit eighteen out of twenty postings to fulfill course requirements. Each posting will not be “graded”; it is assumed that your participation will reflect quality work.

"Why does writing improve thinking? Skill in thinking is like musical and athletic skills. It takes practice to improve - particularly practice that enables one to see what works and what doesn't. Much of our thinking remains in our minds, where it is not exposed to review. The very process of putting thoughts to paper forces clarification; seeing them on paper (or on the computer screen) facilitates our own evaluation; and receiving comments from peers or teachers provides further help. Note that most of these educational gains do not require that writing be graded. Writing is to facilitate learning and thinking. Thinking in turn results in class discussions that are animated and thoughtful". McKeachie p. 170-171

Appendix B

Online Reflections

Selections from the "Posting" section of the syllabus are expanded here. Weekly online discussion prompts and selected student comments (*in italics*) are included. The final postings (Week 10, Posting ONE) include summative reflections on the students' experience throughout the quarter.

Postings

You are required to post to the "MyCourses" discussion group two times a week, and you must post in the appropriate category in "discussions". The week always begins at Noon on Mondays and it is divided into two "sessions": first session = Noon Monday to Thursday 8AM; second session = Thursday 8AM to Midnight Sunday EST. You must post at least ONCE during each session (more postings are always welcome). Each week's work must total TWO postings. This posting may, depending on the topic and our readings, be something like a thoughtful reflection of how an article relates to your view of "service learning" or an ongoing discussion of your observations about language in use. Postings will be graded pass/fail; late postings will NOT count. You are required to submit eighteen out of twenty postings to fulfill course requirements. When posting, it is important to be aware of "netiquette": be professional, supportive, focus on the work. If you can offer a suggestion on how to improve, be kind and positive. You will be graded on your analysis and thoughtfulness, your professional demeanor, and your English. Take time to work on this before you post, rather than simply "composing at the keyboard".

Week 1

Chapter 1 - You, the language learner

Chapter 2 - The language learning process

Chapter 3 - Clarifying your objectives

Posting ONE

1. Introduce yourself to your peers. Explain your service site and the activities involved.
2. Goal(s) for the quarter
 - Think about one goal, related to language learning, that you want for this quarter and share it with us (chapter 3 may be helpful for this); don't worry if this goal is not "crystal clear" in your mind...that's part of the reason you're posting it...so we can all read it and offer some comments.

Posting TWO

Read one other person's "goal" for the quarter and provide feedback: Is it clear to you? Do you think it's "do-able" in these ten weeks? Does it relate to anything you've read in our text? Take some time to "reflect" on the goal your peer has established and make a sincere effort to ask some helpful questions of your peer. The goal here is not to pick someone else's work apart but, rather, to offer some professional perspectives that perhaps your peer did not consider.

Week 2

Chapter 4 - Planning your language study

Chapter 5 - The communication process

Posting ONE

Provide us with a brief “summary” of your first week’s service. Try to present the info in such a way that we get a clear understanding of what it is you are actually going to do on a weekly basis. Incorporate chapters 4 and 5 in this posting and posting two for this week. Something about “informal situations” v. the classroom (as it relates to your site)?? Or maybe “negotiating meaning”? or anything else that hit you in the readings??

Posting TWO

Now that you’ve had a bit of time to think about it and gotten feedback from your peers...does your original goal still make sense? Do you want to make any adjustments? Given the comments your peers made, your readings, and actually going to your site...what is realistic? And what do you wish you could do? Don’t forget to incorporate your readings into this posting. I don’t want you to “beat that dead horse” so if you’re satisfied with what you have, great. Relate what you’re doing to some of the topics in the readings.

Week 3

Chapter 6 - The nature of language

Chapter 7 - Language learning resources

Posting ONE

We're focusing on the "creative" and "systematic" nature of language, specifically English. Considering our text's explanation of these two topics, just how creative can one be? Do "creative" and "systematic" complement each other? Can you think of examples? Our second posting will focus on ASL...but let's start with English.

Posting TWO

What about ASL? I'd like you to continue the discussion from posting one, week three...think about ASL. We will continue this discussion next week too. So, as you spend time with members of the Deaf community, think about their language use, their "proficiency" in ASL, their 'creativity' within the "systematic" constraints. What do you see people do? who? with whom? when? What are your initial thoughts?

Week 4

Chapter 8 - Take charge of your learning

Posting ONE

Take Charge of Your Learning - Chapter 8

Well, seems like this Service Learning is an excellent opportunity for you all to "take charge" of your learning. But, it's not the only way. What about the classroom? Let's look at this for this first posting; can you think of ways that you can take charge of your classes? (I'm not supporting a coup d' etat, don't misunderstand me...smile). But are there things you have tried to do? Were they successful? Any "tips" you can pass along to others? You're completing your first year here; in retrospect, what could you have done to make language learning more successful? (You know the old "if I knew then what I know now"). Looking forward to your thoughts and reactions to the chapter,

Posting TWO

Anyway, so, you're all "taking charge" of your learning. You all talked about "if I knew then" kinds of things. Well, you are finishing your first year and you have all of NEXT year to look forward to ;-). Now's the time to make your "wish list". Tell me TWO things (activities, events, study techniques, whatever) that you would like to do next year. Be creative! Think "outside the box". We're all waiting to see what your ideas are!

Week 5

Chapter 9 - What you know can help you

Posting ONE

A – So, everyone has some "ideas" for his/her "wish list". Now, take one other person in this course and give him/her feedback. Do NOT all reply to the same person. If you're "here" first, you can select whomever you want. If you're a bit later, you take the person who has not yet received feedback. The point?? Everyone must receive feedback from someone.

B – So, you both have some "ideas" for a "wish list". Please take some time to give some feedback to each other. Have you ever considered that idea? have you tried it? did it work for you? was it helpful/boring/wonderful/etc. Are you interested in trying it? Are you interested in putting one of these ideas on your "list of things to do"??

Posting TWO

Now that you've gotten some feedback on your "wish list", begin to develop a "plan" and think about how you could actually implement this activity, technique, whatever. You can modify your idea, depending on the feedback you received from your peer, or from your own ruminations since then. Let's see if you can actually come up with ideas about how to implement this idea...if not now, then in the near future.

Week 6

Posting ONE

Time for an update: We have just passed the half-way point. I think it's time for a recap: What are you doing at your site? Has anything/everything changed since you began? Are you developing any "relationships" (since that seemed to be a goal, either major or minor, for just about everyone)? Think about the PEOPLE you're interacting with. We're interested in knowing more about Deaf people as "individuals", rather than as that group, THE DEAF COMMUNITY.

Posting TWO

A – Hello everyone...I'd like you to follow up on a few thoughts from the first posting for this week (mostly from students 2 and 5). The general question/point is, how much info does one share with new acquaintances in the Deaf community...given that these acquaintances may well become friends and/or "clients" (or consumers...I really don't care for either word but that's beside the point). You may want to go back and re-read student 2 and 5's posting one from week six. The issue is an extremely important one and if it hasn't "hit you" yet, it will. So, I'm interested in your thoughts and ideas; has this been something you've already thought about? mulled over? or has it not yet been an issue for you?

B – Hello...I'd like you to consider a few things, as you continue to reflect on "relationships" at your sites. The general question/point is, how much info does one share with new acquaintances in the Deaf community...given that these acquaintances may well become friends and/or "clients" (or consumers...I really don't care for either word but that's beside the point). The issue is an extremely important one and if it hasn't "hit you" yet, it will. So, I'm interested in your thoughts and ideas; has this been something you've already thought about? mulled over? or has it not been an issue for you yet? Quite a few years ago, there was an article written about the "third culture", interpreters. We had one foot in the Deaf world and one foot in the hearing world; I don't particularly like that "third culture" thing, but I do think we're in an unusual situation. We are involved in the lives of Deaf people through our work...and yet, we're trying to develop more "social" relationships too. I'm interested in your perspectives and I look forward to reading your postings.

Week 7

Posting ONE

Well, everyone's thoughts/ideas/opinions about the 'how much is too much' discussion are terrific! I'd like to continue this thread one more time. Have you had the opportunity to talk about this with working interpreters? What about Deaf consumers? I'm not expecting

you to have a full-blown "relationship" with a Deaf person you just met this quarter so maybe you're not comfortable broaching this subject yet...but do you have another "confidant" you could talk to about this?

And, after reading your peers' comments, anything else about this issue come to mind? It's NOT going to go away; we need to work this out and become comfortable with our position in the Deaf community (although, again, I'm not expecting this in ten weeks!!). You will find your way with time.

Posting TWO

Hello all...I'm a bit stuck here. I'm having a great time with the topic we've been discussing but I don't want to wear you out and/or beat that dead horse (is that one of your idioms from ASL VI???). I also want to try to respond to some of the feedback from the survey about giving YOU the opportunity to post what YOU want to talk about. We have SEVEN postings left, including this one. During week 10, the last two postings will be: one, post a summary of your placement (I'll give you more specifics) and two, give feedback to one of your peers about his/her placement. That leaves us FIVE postings; so, for this current posting (week 7, #2), I'd like some ideas of what you want for the remaining four (weeks 8 and 9). I have plenty of ideas and I could post something and your respond...or would it be better to give you all the floor...you could either have a "topic" or simply "reflect" in general. Looking forward to your thoughts and ideas,

Week 8

Posting ONE

Their own thoughts on the experience...

Posting TWO

Hello all.... your comments and postings are extremely thoughtful and thought-provoking!! I always look forward to reading them, and I enjoy the "thinking" I do as I read them AND as I go about the day. So, for this posting, I'd like a bit of discussion on THINKING about the activities. The major focus of this course is "reflection". Yes, the doing is certainly important but the reflecting on the doing is primary. Sometimes we all are so busy that we sort of end up "going through the motions" and this was an opportunity to apply that "meta" approach to your time onsite (well, if not exactly onsite then at least after the fact). Please comment on what you think of the "metacognitive" approach to language use. Did you like having some time to reflect? have you always reflected on your language learning but never in such a structured way? or not???

As always, I look forward to your "reflections".

Week 9

Posting ONE

Hello everyone...ok, here's the plan for the remainder of the quarter and Service Learning.

This week, in this category, feel free to continue the topic of "meta" learning...or whatever you like. I will only have this one category for this week.

For next week, week 10, you will have two postings. One is your "summary" (posting one). The second posting is your comments about someone else's posting. There are five of you so make sure everyone receives comments from someone! That is, the first one to post gets comments from the first "responder"; the second gets the second, etc...you can figure this out, I'm sure ;-). I am setting these up today (Monday 5/5); feel free to do these earlier if you'd like (although the first posting is due by Monday 5/12, as usual). I know you're all getting 'crunched' for the end of the quarter and I wanted to give you a little time if you need it.

So, that's two postings for the last week.

In addition, I will be distributing a regular course evaluation form. I'll send you an email soon about how we're going to do that; the course evaluations are not set up online so you'll have to do them by hand...just like you do for your regular courses.

Week 10

Posting ONE

Final summary/last posting

This purpose of this posting is for you to reflect on the experience of the past quarter in a meaningful way. It would be a good idea to read through all the questions first so you can get an overview of what they include. One paragraph addressing each question should be sufficient, although feel free to say as much as you want!

#1 – Please rate your experience and then discuss why you rated it that way:

5 – great experience, learned a lot

4

3 – ok experience

2

1 – bad experience, didn't learn anything

#2 – Was there anything unexpected that you learned from your experience about the population you worked with?

#3 – Was there anything you learned about yourself from this experience?

#4 – How do you think your service learning experience will impact you now and in your future?

Posting TWO

Please take a few minutes to respond to one classmate's summary. Be sure everyone has a response from someone!! This has certainly been an enjoyable experience for me; thank you all so very much for your attention and your participation. It seemed that every posting was interesting and meaningful!! I appreciate your thinking and I really cannot tell you how much time I spent "thinking about your thinking".

"Qui docet discet." Seneca
(He who teaches, learns).

Appendix C

Course Descriptions for the Four Courses

Service Learning I requires the student to participate in a volunteer activity in the general Rochester community (the hearing community, not the Deaf community). Collaboration is ongoing with the RIT “Student Volunteer Center” which aids in students’ on-site placements (<http://svc.rit.edu>); this course is a pre-requisite to the other Service Learning courses. Courses must be taken in this specific sequence.

Service Learning II requires the student to have a reciprocal relationship with the Deaf community. The student provides a service to the Deaf Community, applying his/her knowledge of ASL to real interactions. Students cannot take Service Learning II unless they successfully complete Service Learning I.

Service Learning III can be either a continuation of SLII or involve a different placement.

Service Learning IV requires the student to develop his/her own project within the Deaf community. It is assumed that students will have developed contacts within the Deaf community as well as have explored their own preferences (e.g. Deaf elders, residential school, etc).

¹ The authors owe a debt of gratitude for the support and encouragement received from our Deaf community colleagues. We also acknowledge the generosity of spirit and energy of our students. Without the cooperation of both students and community, this project would be impossible.

² The RIT Student Volunteer Center at the Center for Campus Life is a campus-based clearinghouse for RIT students, faculty, and staff who are interested in making a difference in their community. The center provides information on the volunteer needs of more than 200 agencies in the Rochester community; during AY 2002-03, approximately 5000 student placements were completed.