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Intentional Teaming: Experiences from the Second National Healthcare Symposium

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Abstract

The second National Symposium on Healthcare Interpreting was developed and hosted by the CATIE Center of St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN, on July 22-25, 2012. As one of six centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration to advance interpreter education, the goal of this symposium is "to improve the understanding of the complex role of interpreters, including the linguistic, cultural, social and ethical challenges inherent in these settings" (CATIE Center, n.d., National Symposium on Healthcare Interpreting section, para. 2). In 2012, 135 Deaf and hearing interpreters, interpreter coordinators and health care providers from 25 states, Canada and Australia attended the symposium to access research and best practices in medical and mental health interpreting. Attendees had the opportunity to advance their understanding of the complex nature of healthcare interpreting work, particularly with peers and professionals. Plenary and concurrent sessions were presented in either American Sign Language (ASL) or English, with interpretation provided for nearly all sessions. The symposium audience of healthcare providers and experienced interpreters, combined with dense, technical content and varying interpretation needs, presented unique challenges for the symposium interpreting team.

This article takes a closer look at those challenges and the process of intentional teaming that occurred so that the team could successfully provide effective interpreting services during the symposium. It also provides a documentation of the symposium's successful team approach, processes and reflections. Note that the information in this article is provided with the consent of the interpreting team and the presenters' gracious permission. Specific names are not used in the article because the focus is on the team and its dynamic rather than specific individuals. In this way, it is hoped that the examples and strategies shared can be applicable in other situations with different teams and events.

Introduction

In 2012, 135 Deaf and hearing interpreters, interpreter coordinators and healthcare providers from 25 states, Canada and Australia attended the second National Symposium on Healthcare Interpreting[1] to access research and best practices in medical and mental health interpreting. The symposium was developed and hosted by the CATIE Center at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN, on July 22-25, 2012. Symposium attendees had the opportunity to advance their understanding of the complex nature of healthcare interpreting work with peers and professionals. Plenary and concurrent sessions were presented in either American Sign

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[1] The CATIE (Collaborative for the Advancement of Teaching Interpreting Excellence) Center is one of six centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration to advance interpreter education. The goal of this symposium initiative is "to improve the understanding of the complex role of interpreters, including the linguistic, cultural, social and ethical challenges inherent in these settings" (CATIE Center, n.d.).

Language (ASL) or English, with interpretation provided for nearly all sessions. The symposium audience of healthcare providers and experienced interpreters, combined with dense, technical content and varying interpretation needs, presented unique challenges for the symposium interpreting team.

In this article we take a closer look at those challenges and the process of intentional teaming, an approach that supported providing effective interpreting services during the symposium. We provide documentation of the symposium's successful team approach, processes and reflections. Note that the information in this article is shared with the gracious permission of the interpreting team and the presenters. Specific names are not used because the focus is on the team and its dynamic rather than specific individuals. We hope that the examples and strategies shared can be applicable in other situations with different interpreting teams and events. While this is not a formal research project, we do see it as a case study ripe for analysis. Our goal is for interpreting teams to look beyond the traditional two-person dyad, to promote thinking of team interpreting in a broader scope and to understand the deliberate steps that lead to successful provision of interpreting services.

Team Interpreting Defined and Redefined

Hoza (2010) examines team interpreting through two studies documenting interpreters' strategies for team interpreting, and perceptions of effective team interpreting. These studies suggested that effective team interpreting does not just happen; there are specific, often intentional, processes that interpreters engage in to develop a collaborative, interdependent approach to the work.

In one study, Hoza interviewed interpreters and found that they identified four key elements of effective interpreting teams. In addition to strong skills, interpreters must possess personal characteristics and a philosophy conducive to teamwork, a commitment to the team relationship and communication, a commitment to the team, and willingness to trust each other. In short, interviewees stated that members of an effective interpreting team must be able to get along and work together well. These characteristics are also identified by Turner (2007) and Festinger (1999).

To address commitment and build trust, Hoza referred to Covey (2004) by looking at how people make emotional deposits with others to build trust. Hoza modified Covey's work and applied it to team interpreting in the form of six major deposits, as follows.

1) Understanding the individual. Appreciating the other team member as a person, as well as learning and keeping in mind what is important to that person in terms of his or her needs, goals, and desires as an individual and as a team member.
2) Attending to the little things. Being kind, courteous, and respectful; maintaining a rapport that is both positive and supportive.
3) Keeping commitments. Following through with strategies that you agree to use, and continuing to commit to make the team interpreting work.
4) Clarifying expectations. Making an ongoing effort to clarify expectations for each person that can benefit the team; these can include ways of signaling support, ways of

offering support, ways to handle situations that arise, ways to process what happens, and to make changes, etc.

5) Showing personal integrity. Being truthful about what you can and cannot offer, as well as how you work as a team, and following through with commitments to the team and expectations as mutually agreed upon.

6) Apologizing sincerely when you make a withdrawal. Owning and apologizing for any errors in judgment or any violations of any of the deposits/interpersonal features that support interdependence. (Hoza, 2010, pp. 134-135)

Another useful tool for examining group dynamics and development of the symposium interpreting team is the Tuckman (1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) model describing small group development. Boneright (2010) reviewed Tuckman's model, and how it has provided a structure for looking at the stages of team development. In her review, she noted this revision of the model:

Forming: Orientation to the task, establishment of relationships, creation of ground-rules and learning of standards.
Storming: Interpersonal conflict often around personal goals interfering with the tasks of the team.
Norming: Group harmony takes precedence with rules and norms accepted and members work with each other's strengths, weaknesses and learn to dialogue openly.
Performing: Team members function in problem-solving mode.
Adjourning: Separation of the team members (adapted from Boneright, 2010).

While this overall structure is one we adopted for this article, it became clear upon reflection that the interpreting team proceeded through the stages in a slightly different order: forming, norming, storming, re-norming, performing and adjourning. Because of the intentional establishment of expectations and norms at the outset of the team's work, which clarified the common goal of the team and overtly outlined how the team would address conflict, the storming component of the experience was minimal at most and led to a re-norming process that continued throughout the symposium. This suggests that there are ways to create effective teams in a relatively short amount of time with some proactive setting of norms and expectations.

Although the symposium interpreting team and coordinator did not specifically consider the work of these researchers prior to the event, in hindsight, it is clear that many of the processes and teamwork at the symposium exemplify the interdependent elements of collaboration identified in other studies and reflections. We illustrate some of those elements in our reflection of the team's performance and experiences during this event.

Forming

The symposium began on a Sunday evening with a welcome, keynote address and reception. Monday through Wednesday, events ran from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and consisted of a morning plenary session followed by multiple morning and afternoon breakout sessions. The breakout sessions varied in length from one hour to all day, depending upon the topic, with two to four

concurrent sessions at any given time. Sessions also were scheduled from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday evenings.

The presentation configuration varied. Each plenary and one evening session featured panel discussions, with a facilitator working with three to five panelists. One to three presenters led the breakout sessions. In sessions with both Deaf and hearing presenters, ASL was the primary communication choice, with a few exceptions to be discussed later. All 28 sessions required interpreting services, which were provided in various ways: platform (standing in front of the audience and next to the speaker for signing), open microphone (where everyone can hear the spoken interpretation), a closed FM system (where only those with headphones had access to the spoken interpretation), or chuchotage (escorting and providing and interpretation for a single individual), depending on circumstances such as audience needs and sightlines.

Team Selection. To handle the multiple requests and needs, the interpreter coordinator established and led the interpreting team. The coordinator, a certified interpreter and an interpreter educator with experience coordinating interpreting services for various events, including professional conferences, also coordinated interpreting services for the first symposium in 2010.

The team consisted of five full-time and two part-time hearing interpreters. While a formal application process was not required, several factors went into selecting interpreters for the symposium: consistency, competence, opportunity and diversity in strengths and experience. The interpreter coordinator wanted to ensure that the team did not consist of a homogenous group of interpreters with similar experience, skills and knowledge. Selections were made toward striking the right balance between competence and the skills and knowledge each team member could and would contribute. Team members were chosen by the interpreter coordinator, in consultation with the conference coordinators.

Relatively early in the process, a discussion ensued among the interpreters and the interpreter coordinator about providing interpreters at all. Our assumption was that the audience consisted of healthcare professionals or other healthcare providers who worked with or were Deaf or hard of hearing and/or used sign language. Eventually the team and conference coordinators determined that interpreters were a necessity because some presenters chose to speak English, audience members needed interpreters to mirror questions because of sightlines, and at least one attendee did not know sign language. Once the need for interpreters was determined, the team worked with the interpreter coordinator to offer suggestions about specific interpreting needs and configurations throughout the symposium.

Team Experience. Interpreting team members from the 2010 symposium were contacted for availability, and four of the five original full-time interpreters were also available for the 2012 symposium. Additionally, one of the 2012 full-time interpreters had been a presenter at the 2010 symposium. The consistency represented in this core group was important, since the collective knowledge and experience provided a strong foundation to the team. The interpreters, as a group, were then able to face the new challenges, such as the recalibration required of expanding the team with new members, and the inherent unknowns of the 2012 symposium. The fact that over half of the members had already successfully worked with each

other and the interpreter coordinator during the previous symposium certainly provided the group a head start in developing a combined confidence and trust in each other, in the process, and in the team.

All of the interpreters were highly skilled, nationally certified interpreters. Nearly all team members held multiple credentials, including national, state, and/or specialized interpreting certifications. Interpreting experience ranged from three to more than 25 years, with some members having more specialized experience in healthcare and others in conference interpreting. Three of the team members were also interpreter educators. This maturity in experience meant team members were willing to put ego aside and work effectively towards a common goal (Brück, 2011).

CATIE Center events have a strong history of identifying ways students and new interpreters can be a part of an event and make valuable contributions while expanding their knowledge and areas of interest. The 2012 interpreting team required two more interpreters than 2010 to accommodate the expanded symposium schedule and complexities. Given the strength of the returning interpreters, the team had room for growth and could provide support for newer interpreters and incorporating new team members into the mix. One of the interpreters was a recent graduate of the St. Catherine University interpreter education program, who served as an intern during the 2010 conference. Although she was the least experienced team member in terms of years of interpreting, this interpreter had exceptional skills and made noteworthy contributions to the 2012 team.

The other new member was a highly skilled healthcare interpreter with many years of experience in the field, specifically with healthcare providers who were deaf or hard of hearing. She had planned to attend the symposium and contacted the planners to express interest in providing part-time interpreting during the symposium. Affectionately known as the "wild card" of the team given her lack of previous experience with the symposium or the group, this interpreter was asked to join the team. The schedule's demands were such that she ended up with a nearly full-time interpreting schedule and was a major asset to the team.

This group of seven interpreters (five female and two male), ranging in ages from early 20s to 50, brought a variety of experience and knowledge to their work. Four members of the team were from the Minneapolis/St. Paul area; three were from out of state: New York, Texas and Florida. Several interpreters had previous experience interpreting for symposium presenters. This diversity in skills and experience added strength to the overall interpreting team. The coordinator was confident that the symposium team consisted of some of the most highly skilled, well-respected interpreters from across the country and would serve the symposium presenters and participants well with their collective work.

Norming

Prior to the symposium, the coordinator communicated via email with the team members about their comfort levels and experience in working with presentation topics and specific presenters, and determined the preliminary team schedule. The interpreting team met for the first time on Sunday afternoon prior to the symposium's start. Festinger (1999) describes the importance of these kinds of direct team meetings in her work with interpreters in courts: "While scheduling

these sessions may be difficult to manage, team orientation should be a priority. The idea is to communicate directly and personally with the team members before they start, setting the tone for the trial" (p. 3). We agree wholeheartedly that the effort to create an initial space and time to connect results in a quicker and stronger path to performance.

The interpreter coordinator facilitated the initial meeting, which included a welcome and icebreaker activity, an update on the event logistics, the team schedule and preparation materials. The team reviewed the schedule and made some slight adjustments. Interpreters were paid for all the team meeting times as well as the conference hours; this payment reflected the value the CATIE Center and symposium coordinators placed on the work being done to make the interpreting team as effective as possible.

A large part of the initial meeting was spent discussing questions the coordinator asked the team to explore together, setting the stage for building the team's foundation. In essence, the authors perceive this as an application of Hoza's and Covey's works: opening the bank account for those necessary emotional deposits to develop individual and group trust. The coordinator used elements of Circle Processes (Pranis, 2005) with the group to facilitate discussion. For example, to reinforce equality, a talking piece was used—a small piece passed around in a clockwise fashion—so that only the person holding this piece could speak in response to the topic. This provided each team member time to reflect and an equal opportunity to respond while also affording each an opportunity to intently listen and acknowledge that each team member had valuable contributions to make. The questions addressed individual and collective goal-setting, preferences in giving and receiving feed while working with a team, giving and receiving feedback on the work, and developing group communication norms and expectations.

Since, as Russell (2014) states, "A foundational premise in team interpreting is that all team members are responsible for the success or failure of the work" (Team Interpreting, para. 3), clarifying the shared goals used to measure success is a vital part of the team interpreting process. The symposium team discussed the team goal for their work, and agreed that the obvious goal was to provide the best ASL and English interpreting services possible. The discussion surrounding this goal statement included sentiments about shifting and maintaining the team focus to the product (interpretations) produced by the team, whether in a team of two, three or more. As the interpreting work would be the team's responsibility and accomplishment (Russell, 2014; Shaw, 1995; Turner, 2007), the team talked about the importance of setting aside ego and focusing on what was good for the whole at any given moment. The discussion identified this emphasis on the whole as a necessary element of success and proved to be a key factor in team decisions throughout the symposium.

Goal Setting and Expectations. The next part of the goal-setting discussion focused on the interpreter coordinator's goal, which was to provide coordination of and support to the team of ASL and English interpreters. The coordinator explained her plan to be present, yet not in the way of the team's work, and to provide as much preparatory material and information as was available. While some preparatory materials were emailed to the team prior to the conference, the coordinator also organized hard copies of the materials in an expandable folder on site, sorted by day and presentation. She also assured the team that throughout the symposium, more materials would be available for review once secured. Team members noted that the materials

and other information gathered through research and meetings with presenters prior to presentations helped them approach their work with greater confidence.

Within the coordinator's goal of supporting the team's collective work, she offered two sets of expectations for the team to discuss, adjust, and clarify as needed. The first set of expectations related to the coordinator's role and function (not listed in a particular order):

  Listen to and support the team in their work. Each interpreter on the team could expect the coordinator to listen to concerns and ideas and support each interpreter in such a way that he or she would succeed, both individually and as a member of the team.

  Make thoughtful, inclusive decisions. The coordinator assured the team that any decisions that impacted their work and working environment would include them, to the extent possible, and would reflect thoughtful consideration of the team.

  Communicate issues, concerns and questions in a respectful manner. When concerns arose, the coordinator would address them with the individual and/or team in the most respectful way possible, including making sure the conversation was private and timely.

  Troubleshoot and solve problems in the most inclusive, respectful manner. Reflecting the sentiments of the previous two expectations, the coordinator would respectfully facilitate problem solving and troubleshooting of issues involving logistics, language needs and consumer preference by including the team member(s) as much as possible.

  Be flexible. Acknowledging the team spirit, the coordinator assured the group that she would be inclusive and flexible, to the extent the situation allowed, so the team could successfully complete its work.

  Provide leadership and guidance. The coordinator assured the team that she would provide guidance and leadership that reflected the good of the whole. In essence, the coordinator would serve as the face of the team for the conference presenters, attendees and the team.

  Be professional in the truest sense of the word. Professionalism would be reflected in all conduct and actions of the coordinator, so the interpreting team, symposium coordinators, presenters and participants could trust that the interpreting team was working to its maximum potential and their communication needs were in good hands.

  Have fun and enjoy the experience. We agreed that this point would help us keep the work in check, acknowledging that if the team had fun and used laughter as a part of the process, we would succeed, and the conference presenters and participants would enjoy their work together, too.

In the second set of expectations, the coordinator offered a list for the team (not listed in a particular order).

Embrace the concept of teamwork. To clarify the meaning of this expectation, the coordinator reiterated the goal of the team: to provide communication access for all symposium participants. To do this, the group agreed that this required everyone to work together toward that common goal, to know that each member of the team was contributing to that goal in different ways, and in turn, was responsible for the end result.

Be respectful of differences. The team acknowledged that each person on the team was skilled and had the requisite qualifications to do the work and that each team member brought different strengths to the team. To acknowledge these differences, and those of the symposium presenters and participants, the team reaffirmed a commitment to respect all differences.

Communicate issues, concerns and questions in a respectful manner. The coordinator acknowledged there would be concerns, issues and questions that would arise throughout the symposium. Conflict would be a natural part of the process. As such, she needed to know that the team members would communicate and address those concerns in a respectful, private, and timely manner, with the person(s) involved in the conflict and with the coordinator, as needed.

Support each other in the accomplishment of our overall goal. The coordinator expected that each member of the team would be a staunch supporter of the others, identifying successes and providing encouragement so the team as a whole would succeed.

Be flexible. The team acknowledged that this classic adage in the profession would serve the team well as a reminder to be open to adjustments as they needed to be made, not to take any of them personally, and to trust that adjustments would be made for the betterment of the whole.

Be professional in the truest sense of the word. Just as the team could expect the coordinator to be professional in word and action, the team members would also be expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Not only would this build trust within the team and with the coordinator, but that trust would extend to the presenters and participants as well, knowing that communication was interpreted by trustworthy professionals.

Have fun and enjoy the experience. As mentioned earlier, the coordinator wanted to remind the team that this experience, while challenging, should also be enjoyable. Humor and fun would help reduce stress, increase energy levels, and add to the overall experience of everyone on the team.

These expectations, and the conversations surrounding them, clarified what each individual could contribute, and most importantly, set the tone for the week's work. The expectations were captured on flip-chart paper and later posted in the interpreters' workroom.

Performance Norms

The team created and documented a set of group norms to guide individual behavior toward the newly established goals. To create this list, the coordinator posed three questions for the team to consider: To achieve success, how will we be together as a team? How will we communicate? How will we address conflict? The group was given time to note their answers individually, then

discussed their responses as a group, which led to the development of the group norms for the team.

How will we be together? This question asked the group to consider what elements were needed in their work environment for them to succeed individually and as a whole. In terms of the physical space, the group agreed that in addition to debriefing and recharging between assignments, the interpreting room could also be utilized for meeting and preparing with presenters. Other than that, the interpreter workroom was to be a space primarily occupied by the team members only. Another norm was explicitly giving each other permission to take care of her/his own needs; it was emphasized that each team member needed to take personal care in order for the team to succeed. Norms related to how the group utilized time also made the list, specifically as a statement that team members would check in at the interpreting room regularly, and that each person would arrive early to each assignment, to connect with their teammate(s) and clarify duties prior to beginning the work.

How will we communicate? The norms listed above regarding checking in regularly and showing up early for assignments also related to norms the group set regarding communication. In addition to being intentional about communicating with each other, the team also gave each other the directive to communicate needs clearly, going so far as to list "Speak Up!" as one of the norms. A statement about open communication and debriefing the work also made the list of group norms: it was made explicitly clear that the norm was that the work would be discussed, with the premise that the work itself was the subject of discussion, not the interpreter as a person. All of these norms clearly expressed the team's desire to have specific times and a place to discuss the work, which was expected, not an option.

How will we address conflict? The coordinator discussed conflict as a natural part of the work. Strategies for dealing with conflict were necessary *when* conflict happened, not *if* it happened. The potential for conflict between members of the team, with the coordinator, presenters, and participants was heightened by the nature of the environment. This was a national symposium, the content was dense and technical in nature and many bilingual people were in the audience, including other interpreters. As such, the group needed to identify ways to manage the pressure successfully, so that hard feelings and unresolved anger were not the result of the situation, to the extent it could be controlled. To that end, "nobody is perfect, and that's OK!" made the list of norms. All of the norms addressing communication fed this idea of conflict management. The group specifically predicted that a great source of conflict might occur when they were working together and the interpretation produced by one (or more) of the members was incorrect. How would the team correct the work? When and how would members switch out with teammates? Who would make the decision to switch? The team discussed this at length, and decided that the norms that would remind them of the team approach to this situation would be: "Nobody is perfect and that's OK!" "The team will be there if/when needed and that's OK! We will ask questions and debrief later." And finally, "It is OK to take the microphone/hands or give up the microphone/hands if needed (for repairs, etc.)."

The topics and progression of the discussion started with goals, and moved to expectations and group norms, which addressed Covey's six areas of emotional deposits (Hoza, 2010). Exploring these three questions individually, and as a group, within the context of identifying group norms

that would help create a successful work environment was a powerful process. Grounding these deposits in the work at hand developed initial trust among the team members, clarified their understanding and approach to the work, as well as what they could expect during the symposium.

Performing

The team arrived early the first evening of the symposium. All the norms and expectations were posted on a wall in the interpreter room, materials were available in the accordion file, and blank paper was on another wall for notes. One of the first assignment-specific conversations addressed the opening keynote, a solo presenter who used spoken English. Normally, this would be a relatively easy, clear scheduling decision: two interpreters to work in a traditional lead interpreter and feed interpreter roles, switching off at agreed upon intervals (Bar-Tzur, 2004). However, with the team's emphasis on a shared product, a team of three interpreters was assigned: two interpreters in the lead (i.e. primary) and feed (i.e. supporting) interpreter roles, with the third serving as a monitor of process, product and audience needs. The arrangement succeeded for the audience and the interpreting team, allowing the attendees and interpreting team to begin the symposium successfully.

After the initial keynote, the team met for 40 minutes to debrief and determine the arrangements for a morning panel. This demonstrated the team's will to follow through on commitments and to be in the position of providing the best work possible. Team members shared their strengths and challenges they anticipated with the next morning panel's content, presenter language choice (ASL or English), and familiarity with each presenter. Assignments were reaffirmed based on this discussion, with the understanding that any interpreter was allowed (and expected) to change his or her assignment if he or she felt more effective in a different role.

Dean and Pollard's demand control schema (2006) served as the common language for much of the preparation and debriefing work of the team members. This schema is an adaptation of occupational research originally conducted by Karasek and Theorell, which takes a dynamic view of work tasks and frames them in terms of the demands (challenges) the worker might face at any given moment, and the controls (resources or decision latitude) the worker may employ to respond to the demands. Within the course of any interpreting team discussion during the symposium, various demands were discussed, as well as control options that the team might use prior to, during, or after an assignment to address the specific demand.

As a practice, the team observed the following protocol throughout the conference: 1) pre-assignment team meeting and discussion, 2) service provision with team interaction and support, 3) debrief and recovery, 4) refocus for the next assignment. As was predicted, each panel and plenary dictated varying levels of process and discussion. This protocol supported the team's intent to continually evaluate effectiveness, to be truthful, and to apologize honestly for any actions or decisions that led to complications in the interpreting process or product. While the pre-work led to very few incidences involving apologies (in essence, very little storming), team members shared during debriefing sessions the few situations where they needed support sooner than they asked or failed to provide support in a timely manner.

Each debriefing gave the team greater understanding of each other as individuals and as professionals. Although each interpreter came into the symposium with a set of assignments, each day brought adjustments and reassignments based on participant feedback or attendance as well as the discoveries about each interpreter's own strengths and preferences.

Teaming in High-Demand Sessions. During most panel presentations, nearly the entire interpreting team was at work. The interpreting team for panel presentations typically consisted of four interpreters working from ASL to English, and a fifth interpreter on stage to interpret from spoken English and to mirror questions from the audience presented in ASL (which would then be interpreted into English by the team).

One panel consisted of four individuals and a facilitator. The facilitator was hearing and used ASL. The panelists were Deaf, hearing, and hard of hearing; all but one used ASL. The remaining panelist used spoken English. Since the English-speaking panelist would use a microphone, it was determined the spoken English interpretation similarly would be broadcast using open microphones, rather than choosing an FM or chuchotage approach.

The initial plan was that each interpreter would be assigned to interpret for a specific panelist. Two interpreters were assigned to interpret into ASL for the panel anything said by participants in English; two other interpreters were assigned to interpret into English any signed comments from the audience. Each interpreter, including the one on stage, had a designated feed interpreter as the first source of support. As happens in these situations, reality turned out quite differently. Each of the four interpreters ended up signing to the panel at one time or another, the designated voice for one panelist often needed to interpret short exchanges for a different panelist than their primary assignment, and each primary interpreter's support person changed constantly depending mostly on availability and occasionally on proximity. While there was no overt decision made to flex the designated roles, interpreters quickly realized the need for fluidity. As soon as the first interpreter stepped into a role not designated, each team member began to attend to the whole process more widely. While there was an occasional moment of two interpreters starting at the same time, by and large, the team communicated effectively enough to maintain the message integrity even while roles were switching.

Most of the team adjustments happened with very little observable discussion or leadership. The main means of communication between the team members consisted of short spoken comments (e.g. "I got it") and/or the taking or handing off the limited number of microphones available. For example, Interpreter A was working from ASL to English for a designated panelist with Interpreter B serving as a support person. When the panelist assigned to Interpreter B spontaneously added a comment, Interpreter C reached for one of the microphones to provide interpretation while Interpreter D automatically moved into a support role for C, rather than Interpreter B leaving his/her active support position. Meanwhile, the interpreter on stage, originally designated for the audience, signed the spontaneous comment to other panelists who did not have a clear view of the commenter's signs.

In at least one case, an interpreter working from ASL to English was having difficulty comprehending the speaker. While the support interpreter was offering feeds, it became clear that the message was breaking down. A third team member told the lead interpreter to hand the

microphone to the support interpreter, which the lead interpreter immediately did without question. Once this handoff occurred, the lead became the support and the support became the lead and the interpretation process continued. This team was successful because the interpreters maintained focus on the message, and holistic responsibility for message equivalency and accessibility. This did not mean individual team members did not have fears, misgivings or questions about the unfolding team dynamics. In keeping with the norms, and with the guidance of the interpreter coordinator, these issues were openly discussed in debriefing sessions throughout the symposium.

One of the most unusual teaming configurations came out of a spontaneous set of changes that evolved over the course of a presentation. The presenters were a team of hearing interpreters and were presenting in spoken English. The original team was a single interpreter on stage working from English to ASL with a feed/team in the front row of the audience. The team and presenters agreed to a protocol for switching lead interpreters and the presentation began. It became clear very quickly that the presenting team had a lively and dynamic relationship and would often engage in dialogue with each other. The lead interpreter turned to the feed and asked him/her to come onstage as well. The team interpreter, without hesitation, came up to the stage. The interpreting team then each took on the work of one presenter, allowing the presenters the freedom to dialogue and providing the audience with a clear indicator of who was speaking.

The presenters, being interpreters themselves, immediately accepted the new configuration, made an overt statement about how much more effective the interpretation could be with this approach and then returned to their presentation. At the first break, the interpreting team and presenters conferred and agreed a third interpreter would be helpful as a person to interpret the audience questions and comments. The interpreters told the coordinator they needed a third team member. At the same time, one of the other team members learned he/she was not going to be needed for the remainder of his/her session and was asked to join the team for this presentation. Again, without question, the third interpreter joined the first two on stage and sat in a chair off to the side until there were questions or comments from the audience to be interpreted.

The team members felt the work had been successful and this was confirmed by enthusiastic response from Deaf audience members as well as the presenters. Audience members felt they were able to clearly recognize who was speaking and that the interpreters were better able to represent the style of each speaker by remaining "in character" throughout the presentation. Interestingly, this approach addresses a common complaint by Deaf students in a study conducted by Brück (2011). In her survey, the strongest desire from post-secondary students watching teams of sign language interpreters in their classrooms was to be able to understand the interpretation with the least effort possible (p. 78). The workshop presenters also felt the dynamic of expanding to a presentation group of five instead of two enhanced the presentation, and were thrilled at the resulting energy and audience participation.

Immediately after the presentation, the presenters joined the interpreters in the interpreter room to debrief. The presenters indicated they were comfortable with letting go of control of the interpretations because they were so intent on their message being clear and had had a chance to see and trust the quality of the interpreting team's work. The presenters were willing to literally share the stage with three other people. The interpreters were comfortable with interacting with

the presenters, trusted each other implicitly and were able to navigate and negotiate the changing configurations professionally yet openly. This mutual trust and respect led to one of the most unusual teaming experiences of the symposium, but one of the most dynamic and successful presentation experiences for the attendees.

Team Functioning During Other Symposium Events. While the scenarios described above are examples of some of the most complex work done by the team, much of the symposium interpretation was more traditional. Most interpreted sessions had a team of two interpreters with occasional need for a single escort interpreter. Even in the more traditional configurations, the team relied on previously agreed-upon norms and expectations to guide behaviors. For example, as each session started, the interpreter coordinator checked to make sure all interpreting needs were covered. If the coordinator determined a change was needed at any time, even during sessions, team members responded to the request and shifted sessions or roles without question. Any concerns were saved for the debriefing session within the confines of the interpreter room. In addition, any interpreter who found a session starting without a clear need for services checked in with the coordinator before taking a break or doing any other preparation to make sure all needs were covered. The team maintained its connection as a whole, seeing the entire set of sessions as part of each interpreter's responsibility regardless of what they were originally slated to do.

The interpreter coordinator played a critical role in maintaining group focus, facilitating discussion, and fielding concerns or requests from the symposium organizers, participants or presenters. The coordinator served as the chief troubleshooter, allowing the team to focus on preparation, interpreting work, debriefing and self-care. The coordinator also maintained the interpreter room, kept the team fed (with a mix of healthy snacks and a lot of chocolate), updated materials as much as possible, and dealt with technological glitches or issues. Meals were sometimes ordered and brought into the interpreter room while other times interpreters took agreed-upon breaks to leave the symposium to eat.

Performing Leads to Re-Norming

The team dynamic was consistently emphasized through morning and dinner break meetings. As many team members as possible would gather to discuss a variety of topics: consumer needs, interpreting choices (for consistency), expectations and continued debriefing. These discussions required a lot of honesty and, in some cases, an admission of an error in judgment either in the work or the choice to interpret in a particular mode or for a particular speaker. The team used such admissions as a way to discuss how members juggled intrapersonal and environmental demands, and how personal habits and ego factored into decisions. The interpreter coordinator facilitated the discussions as much as possible, bringing the team back to the norms as needed. The team members themselves sometimes had to reference the norms (particularly the one about no one being perfect) to be able to move on from the less successful moments in the work.

We should note that the members of the team were aware early in the process that the experience they were having was somewhat unique and might make a good article for publication. To that end, notes were taken during discussions and follow-up emails documented the comments team members made about their experiences. In fact, the interpreting team also documented some of

their work on video (with permission from the presenters). The videos were shared with team members as a way for them to review their own work and process in this environment.

While major storming was circumvented by the use of the expectations and norms, the symposium was not without challenges for the team both individually and as a whole. Even with commitment, flexibility, competence, and a shared goal, team members struggled with a number of issues common when interpreters find themselves working together. All the members discussed the awkwardness of knowing when, how and even if to correct or add information to an interpretation that was working but could be enhanced by information the team could share. How can an interpretation that is "good enough" be weighed against potential disruption caused by the team interpreter adding information? How can members of a team (of any number) manage to provide a consistent level of product when each interpreter has strengths and weaknesses in any given content area? What are effective and comfortable boundaries when interpreting for a colleague or interpreting as an escort for a single individual? These and other topics were part of debriefing discussions.

We include some quotes from the team members here to illustrate the depth and focus of the discussion as well as the willingness of the team members to be somewhat vulnerable during these debriefing sessions.

A few interpreters interpreted from ASL to spoken English for a hearing panelist who chose to use ASL and they found the effort unsettling and uncomfortable:

> Intrapersonal and interpersonal demands (were) introduced by the fact of interpreting a presenter from their second language to their (and the interpreter's and most of the audience's) first language, where monitoring and criticism are rife and the interpreter's process is more open and subject to analysis. Both the audience and the presenter's access to both sides of the interpretation make this one of the hottest of hot-seat situations.

Another interpreter felt stymied as to when to intervene in a situation where errors were made and not corrected by either the lead or the feed interpreter:

> What are the criteria for taking over? How does one not in the hot seat determine when a colleague should cede the hot seat to someone else? I'm not sure we as a team determined what that criteria was. After how many instances of dropped detail or requirements for a phrasal feed should someone take over the mic? How does one determine when the message is in-equivalent enough to rightly take the mic? How does this apply for the English to ASL process? When does a teammate know to give the hook to their onstage colleague if the 20 minutes is not up?

An additional interpreter commented on the process of working with the team as a whole.

> I found myself needing strategies to fit the new model, to be able to let go of individual responsibility for the product and allow the team as a whole entity to be the interpreter instead of just the people on the hot seat. It was ego, yes, but not in the sense of how we

traditionally talk about how interpreters have an ego. For me, it was more that, under stress, I was using the strategies I was accustomed to utilizing instead of trying to develop new ones that fit with the new norm.

Overall, the team facilitated successful language access in a confident and expert manner. In this reflective analysis of the collective work, it is believed that intentionality achieved in the following areas led to success. First, willingness of the individual team members to trust, and to work in a trustworthy manner, by actively engaging in the team process, demonstrating commitment to the common goal, and actively communicating status, needs and outcomes. Intentionality required constant process analysis by making time to debrief, always identifying what went well and not so well, determining how to maintain the successes and how to improve.

Adjourning: Conclusions and Recommendations

As mentioned before, notes were captured during full team discussions. At the conclusion of the conference, each team member was asked if they would like to contribute towards an article or essay about the team experience. All gave their permission and reinforced the key points they felt needed emphasis in the article. The coordinator and interpreters made deliberate efforts to connect before heading home, a final deposit in the emotional bank account. Not only did these final connections allow for a clear adjournment and end to the event, they confirmed the commitments the team had to each other in potential future events.

Soon after the end of the symposium, the coordinator contacted team members through email to ask for any contributions, thoughts or comments that might be included in an article. Most team members sent in a few thoughts or suggestions for what to include in our reflection. All team members have had a chance to review this article and have supported its publication.

We believe the forming and norming processes used with this team were key to the successful performance of the team. Within the team as a whole, the deliberate creation of a clear structure and framework within which the team could develop, including establishing an environment and conducting specific conversations allowed members to achieve consensus and commitment to a common goal, be it within one interpreted event or the symposium as a whole. Team members were able to identify a shared philosophy and approach to the work. Members relied on conflict and stress management techniques through conversations with each other and the coordinator as well as through constant revision of scheduling depending on member strengths, consumer needs and workload balance. Intentionality requires respectful communication, regular debriefing and adherence to common norms and expectations for all interpreting team members as well as the interpreting coordinator.

Our recommendations also include having a designated coordinator whose job is clearly defined and who is not considered an active member of the interpreting team (unless needed as back up). The coordinator's job includes establishing the team, facilitating the meetings and team discussions, providing structure and clarity to the assignment, provides problem-solving and leadership to the team. One of the expectations and norms of the group must be active coordination and regular communication between team members and the coordinator.

Although the work of intentional teaming requires more effort than perhaps a traditional conference team approach, the end result was an experience that benefitted the interpreters as much as the presenters and participants. The opportunity for professional growth in a supported environment was an invaluable experience. The fact that the team members wanted this experience shared in this article is a testament to their perception of the value of an intentional teaming process.

The documentation of the approach, processes and reflections are offered here as one example of a successful team. While each interpreting team is different in size, make up, and nature of the work, we hope others can pull ideas from this article to enhance their collective work.

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