

CONVERSATION SERIES:

INTERPRETERS ON INTERPRETING

WITH PEOPLE WHO USE ATYPICAL LANGUAGE

CURRICULUM GUIDE

IMPORTANT UPDATE: *The federal funding for CALI ended on September 30, 2026. While the educational materials developed through CALI remain available for professional development, the project is no longer active and does not offer any support services, including CEU processing. Interpreters seeking CEUs should consult the current CMP Approved Sponsors listed on the RID website.*

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Dedication



For Dennis

The inspiration for the *Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting with people who use atypical language* was Dr. Dennis Cokely, CALI's first Principal Investigator. The overarching vision of Dr. Cokely was that the work of the Center for Atypical Language Interpreting (CALI) would include the development of instructional resources that increase the ability of interpreter practitioners to serve the needs of those d/Deaf and DeafBlind individuals who exhibit atypical language use. His work included oversight of development of four modules of study and the beginning of a project addressing ethical decision-making through the use of unfolding scenarios relating to a broad range of interpreting assignments. His work regarding the unfolding scenarios was in the early stages when he passed away in August 2018.

In his honor, a team of CALI staff and consultants collaborated to bring his vision further along through the packaging of the Unfolding Scenarios Video *Series*, available on the CALI website. His vision is being further advanced through the publishing of seven (7) videos that comprise the *Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting for people with atypical language*. The aim of the *Series* is to provide access to the perspectives and experiences of master Deaf and hearing interpreters experienced in working with this portion of the d/Deaf and DeafBlind populations. The *Series* is to serve as a learning tool that inspires and stimulates further development and application of effective interpreting strategies and decision-making.

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How to Use this Resource

The Curriculum Guide is designed for use by interpreting educators, mentors, and supervisors, and to be used in conjunction with the seven (7) *Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting with people who use atypical language* video recordings. The goal of *Series* is to improve the awareness of issues associated with interpreting for d/ Deaf and DeafBlind individuals who exhibit atypical language use, and to enhance critical thinking and ethical reasoning of interpreting students and practitioners.

The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of the *Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting with people who use atypical language*, as well as suggested instructional activities for use of the 7 videos while teaching and mentoring interpreters to serve this portion of the deaf population.

Accessing the Series Videos Online

The *Series* videos can be found on the CALI website and via links in this and other accompanying documents. In the Curriculum Guide package, links to the 7 videos can be found in the *Series Details* section of this document, the *Index*, and the *Learner Handbook*. A summary of the topics and key points for each video is also available in the *Series Details* section.

Suggested Activities

Engagement with the Series

The Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting for people who use atypical language includes seven (7) videos and is designed to engage learners and practitioners in exploring the perspectives and experiences of Deaf and hearing interpreters who work with d/Deaf and DeafBlind individuals with atypical language use. Through this exploration, interpreting students and practitioners can gain insight into the techniques and strategies that have proved effective when interpreting with this portion of the deaf population. In addition, discussion of other relevant considerations—like language assessment processes, team interpreting dynamics, how an individual’s heritage and personal identity impacts their work as an interpreter, collaborating with hearing consumers, and factors impacting ethical decision-making—provide illustration of the range of skills and abilities required of interpreters choosing to specialize in interpreting with this portion of the deaf population. The overarching goal of the *Series* is to help learners and practitioners build upon the experiences and insights of successful Deaf and hearing practitioners, to increase their discretion, and prepare them to provide the level of interpreting services required to meet the needs of individuals who exhibit atypical language use.



The first video in the *Series* is an introductory video that includes a panel discussion with five Deaf Community members discussing a range of topics focused on deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use—terminology use and the dangers of labeling ‘differences’, the skills, knowledge and attitudes interpreters need to work with this portion of the deaf population, the contributions of Deaf interpreters, among other topics. The introductory video also provides an introduction to the other videos in the *Series*. The remaining six videos are of interpreting teams comprised of Deaf, hearing interpreter and/or BIPOC interpreters, discussing their experiences and strategies for working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language.

Reflection and Discussion

The *Series* is structured around principles of dialogical learning¹, which involves the building of knowledge between teachers, mentors, supervisors and practitioners through purposeful questioning and discussion. Fostering a thinking environment for active learning includes connecting learning to the interests of the learner, asking good questions, and using learning structures and teaching strategies that prompt learner thinking. The goal is that the experience of those facilitating the learning process and aspiring and working interpreters contribute equally to the learning process.



Several taxonomies have been created to identify levels of questions, and any of them can be helpful in

¹ Dialogical learning is based on the theory posited by Paulo Freire (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Bloomsbury Academic, NYC, NY.

determining the appropriate level for questions. Here are three levels of questions, described by Erickson, Lanning and French (2017)², that provide for a cycle of discussion that promotes critical thinking and synthesis of new learning. These three levels of questions are used throughout this Guide.

1. Know: Questions that prompt learners to demonstrate that they can remember information they have learned.
2. Understand: Questions that prompt learners to demonstrate that they comprehend the implications of the information they have learned.
3. Do: Questions that prompt learners to extend their knowledge and understanding to new situations or settings.

Including a mixture of questions that fit into all three levels promotes dialogic learning.

Reflection and Discussion Prompts

The first video in the *Series* is an introductory video that includes a panel discussion by Deaf Community members. Each of the remaining six videos in the *Series* involve two practitioners discussing their perspectives and experiences as interpreters providing services to deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. The key topics and points associated with each discussion is documented in a chart within the Video Details section within this curriculum guide. After watching each video, aspiring and working practitioners synthesize the information conveyed by discussing their responses to structured questions and engaging in related activities. The questions will help aspiring and working practitioners to use their own experiences to build on the success of the team of interpreters from each video.

The following are examples of questions that can be used during reflection and discussion:

- What is your overall impression of the discussion between the interpreters in the video? What stood out for you and why?
- If you were asked to summarize the video to someone else using 3-4 sentences, what would you say? What would you indicate is the primary take-away from the video?
- What from the video was new information for you? How does the new information fit with what you knew prior to watching the video? What questions about the new information still remain for you?
- What thoughts do you have about the strategies they identified as effective for working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use? Which of the strategies do you use already and/or you see other practitioners using? Which strategies were new for you? What strategies can you see yourself applying right away? In what situations? Provide one or two examples.
- Do you have a clear understanding of how the strategies work, what they look like in application, and how to go about implementing the strategies? Which of the strategies is the most challenging for you and why? What do you see will be required for you to become comfortable in applying the strategy? What resources exist to help you in your process?
- Describe the factors most frequently identified as contributing to atypical language use by

² Erickson, Lanning, and French (2017). *Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction for the Thinking Classroom*, Corwin Press: Thousand Oaks, CA.

some individuals in the Deaf Community. What has been your own experience in working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language? How did the interaction go? What did you find that worked and what didn't work in establishing and maintaining communication? Provide one or two examples of both.

- In the panel of Deaf Community members, there was a lengthy discussion about labels and concerns about how labels that mark differences in individuals can result in the marginalization or stigmatizing of individuals. What are your own thoughts about what is meant by 'atypical' language use and the implications of that term for deaf individuals? What is your own experience with observing or experiencing marginalization? What is the consequence of marginalization of differences?
- In the panel of Deaf Community members, there was a discussion about the fact that most interpreters are privileged in terms of their ability to hear and that most interpreters are white. What are your thoughts about the level of privilege held by interpreters? Have interpreters—and you specifically—spent time unpacking what it means to have privilege? What are some ways in which discussions and implications of privilege can occur within the field of interpreting? What are some of the implications of interpreter privilege for deaf consumers? What are some of the ways you have observed privilege being manifested within the interpreting community and within your own practice as an interpreter? What can interpreters do in response to the privilege they possess? With respect to privilege, what things have you specifically done and/or observed other individuals/practitioners doing in recognition of their privilege that promotes greater equity/inclusion in terms of deaf individuals?
- How would you describe your own heritage and identity? For example, did you grow up in a country other than the United States? Did you grow up speaking a language other than English? Were your parents or other family members immigrants? What elements of your identity are essential to you?

These questions serve as a starting point and can be added to and adapted by teachers, mentors, and supervisors based on desired focus and/or goals of the individuals with whom they are working.

Reflection and Discussion Formats

The following descriptions provide observations about and recommendations for facilitating discussion within different learning group sizes.

Individual



Teachers, mentors, and supervisors may find it most advantageous to engage with a student or mentee one-on-one to discuss their thoughts, observations and experiences related to each of the videos. This strategy works well for individuals who are introverted and tend to listen and observe (versus participate) in group settings. This strategy also allows for a more in-depth consideration of an individual's perspective than is possible in a group setting.

Dyads



Two colleagues can collaborate to view and discuss the videos. They can alternate sharing perspectives and their experiences. If the interaction is implemented in a structured and planned manner (such as following a set of prescribed questions or focusing on a set of objectives to be achieved during the interaction), it fosters collaboration and peer accountability. If there are multiple dyads functioning simultaneously, time can be set aside at the end of the reflection process for each dyad to share notable points from their discussion.

In terms of paired or small group discussions, they are most effective when monitored by a teacher, mentor, or facilitator to ensure that each participant is actively engaged and participating, discussing their observations and experiences.

Triads



The inclusion of a third individual in the discussion and reflection process can allow for greater variation of perspectives and balance in the discussion process—particularly if there are individuals who might otherwise dominate. In a triad, each person can take on a different task, allowing for rotation through roles. For example, one person is the person who will respond to questions; one person asks the questions, monitors the time, and takes notes; and one person provides the primary observations and feedback about the group discussion. As they take turns rotating through each of the roles to allow each person's perspective and experiences to be discussed, the balance in turn-taking is easier to manage. To engage in each role effectively, all participants must have the ability to discuss their observations about the videos and related questions in a clear, specific, descriptive and supportive terms. As with the dyad format, multiple triads can also report out about notable points from their discussion. Determining notable points includes looking for ways to add to the fuller group discussion by expressing perspectives that have not yet been portrayed by other triads.

Small Groups



The greatest benefit to small group discussion (involving 4-7 individuals) is the opportunity to have a variety of perspectives offered. This makes for a potentially rich discussion of observations and considerations. Drawbacks include the potential for one or two individuals to dominate the discussion (which can be reduced through facilitation) and that considering multiple perspectives and experiences is more difficult due to time available for any given session. Options can include determining whose will assume what role through random drawing of names and/or selecting volunteers. Another option is that the small group meets regularly and over a period of weeks/months, so that the observations and experiences of each individual will be considered during a group process. Multiple roles can also be

assigned to members of a small group as well-a facilitator, a notetaker and timekeeper, and a clarifier/summarizer (who seeks or provides clarification when needed and articulates the "take-aways" from the discussion at the end of the process), among other possible roles. This is an additional way to assist participants in having ownership of the group process and outcomes.

Video Analysis

Learners and practitioners can be assigned the task of analyzing one of the seven (7) videos and to identify the key topics and points that were made. They can be asked to identify how the information from the video impacts various aspects of their work as interpreters-ethical decision-making, specific strategies to employ while interpreting, resources to bring to an interpreting assignment, how to negotiate for a team interpreter and/or other resources needed during a given assignment, among others. This activity could be expanded further by including the task of identifying community values that are discussed in the videos, models of decision-making (such as Dean & Pollard's Demand-Control Schema (2001), Llewellyn-Jones & Lee's Role Space (2014), or Yosso' s Cultural Wealth Model (2005), etc.) and best practices that are discussed in the videos, and the implications of each for decision-making by practitioners. Requiring learners to include reference or citation for the source of their observations promotes research skills and exposure to scholarship.



Projects

The videos can be used to create project-based or portfolio product learning opportunities, like the following examples:

- Students in an interpreter education program (IEP) and mentees interview several interpreters and collect their responses to discussion questions in order to create a comparison of their similarities and differences as well as the implications for consumers, practitioners and the field-at-large.
- In an IEP that emphasizes peer discussion, students are assigned one of the videos in the *Series* to facilitate. They develop the questions that will be discussed, create the discussion format, and facilitate the discussion process, inviting their classmates to summarize the key points that surfaced from the group discussion.
- In an IEP, students respond to discussion prompts based on all seven videos or a selected video and tape themselves responding-in English and/or in ASL. The video of their responses could be shared with a peer and all students could provide feedback to each other regarding the quality of their thinking, the quality of the presentation of their ideas and insights, and the quality of their public speaking skills.



Creation of Additional Videos

Students and/or practitioners can create a script of an interview they will conduct with master interpreters from their community and/or Deaf Community members, asking them about their experiences with deaf

individuals who exhibit atypical language use. The interview can include questions that address some of the same topics addressed in the *Series* - the use of terms to describe language use variations and differences in the Deaf Community, strategies utilized for communicating and/or interpreting with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use, interpreter privilege and its implications for deaf consumers, strategies for team interpreting, and any number of other topics. The interview questions could also explore topics not addressed by the *Series* videos-such as policies and procedures utilized by interpreting agencies to provide interpreting services to d/Deaf and DeafBlind individuals who exhibit atypical language, or how to increase practical experiences for aspiring interpreters to interact with this portion of the deaf population. They can recruit individuals to interview individually or as part of a panel discussion, and film the interview using a conferencing tool like GoReact or Zoom. The final product can be utilized as a portfolio product, as a class activity, group presentation, or any number of other purposes.

Other Applications

The videos from the *Series* can be used to enhance a wide variety of learning activities.

Suggested activities:

- Utilize the videos for viewing with a Community of Practice for the purpose of conducting discussions that focus on the identification and practice of strategies for interpreting with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. One video a month could be discussed. Facilitation of the discussion can be rotated among the members of the COP. Other topics that could be addressed include team interpreting considerations, ethical decision-making, how to negotiate for what is needed during the interpreting process (a Deaf interpreter, more time, access to props), etc.
- Certified practitioners could use the videos to work with a sponsor to create Independent Learning Activities for earning RID CEUs.
- Use the discussions as a model for how to talk about our work as interpreters and to apply the discussion process to explore other areas of specialization-such as interpreting in medical settings, interpreting for DeafBlind individuals, interpreting in legal or K-12 settings, etc.
- A Community of Practice involving mentors and/or interpreter educators can create examples of activities involving the use of the *Series* and share them with one another.

As *Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting with people who use atypical language* is disseminated and utilized, other additional applications are likely to surface. To assist with documenting applications that occur within the field, a sample Lesson Plan Template is available.

Lesson Plan Template

Lesson Title

Meeting Date(s) and Time(s)

Learning Objectives

What should learners know or be able to do when they have completed this experience? How will they be different?

Assessments

How will you determine that learners have successfully met the objectives above?

Required Materials

Which videos will learners need to access? What equipment will learners use to record their responses?

Content Presentation

How will you introduce the conversation(s), describe assignments for learners, provide opportunities for reflection, and conduct assessments?

Evaluation

How will you provide opportunities for learners to provide feedback and/or evaluate their experience?

Series Details

Webinar: Overview and Introduction to the Series- 1:45:31 in Length

Link: https://youtu.be/BSDLBOVr_ZU

Description: Dr. MJ Bienvenu provides an overview and introduction to *Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting with people who use atypical language* which is comprised of seven (7) videos. This video is 1:46:31 in length and includes three parts—1) the initial overview to the *Series* and introduction to the panel discussion, 2) the Deaf Community panel discussion, and 3) reflections on the panel discussion and an overview and introduction to the remaining six (6) videos.

Discussion Prompts:

- In the panel of Deaf Community members, there was a lengthy discussion about labels and concerns about how labels that mark differences in individuals can result in the marginalization or stigmatizing of individuals. What are your own thoughts about what is meant by ‘atypical’ language use and the implications of that term for deaf individuals? What is your own experience with observing or experiencing marginalization? What is the consequence of marginalization of differences?
- In the panel of Deaf Community members, there was a discussion about the fact that most interpreters are privileged in terms of their ability to hear and that most interpreters are white. What are your thoughts about the level of privilege held by interpreters? Have interpreters—and you specifically—spent time unpacking what it means to have privilege? What are some ways in which discussions and implications of privilege can occur within the field of interpreting?
- What are some of the implications of interpreter privilege for deaf consumers? What are some of the ways you have observed privilege being manifested within the interpreting community and within your own practice as an interpreter?
- What can interpreters do in response to the privilege they possess? With respect to privilege, what things have you specifically done and/or observed other individuals/practitioners doing in recognition of their privilege that promotes greater equity/inclusion in terms of deaf individuals?

Transcript of Part 1: The Initial Overview of the Series and Introduction to the Panel

Narrator: Hello, I am Dr. MJ Bienvenu, a consultant working with Northeastern University Center for Atypical Language Interpreting (CALI). CALI is a federally funded interpreter education project with sponsorship from the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. It is a project funded between January 2017 – December 2021 to prepare Deaf and hearing sign language interpreters to serve the needs of deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language.

The phrase ‘atypical language use’ refers to the use of sign language that does not conform to the recognized norms of a language community due to deviations in the form, content or function of the language. Atypical language use involves a variety of idiosyncratic and dysfluent characteristics, as well as gaps in application of various language features. These deviations are the result of many factors—early life language, social and educational deprivation, physical and cognitive or intellectual disability, trauma, among other related factors.

Interpreting for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language requires superior interpreting competency. The need for more specialized knowledge and competence within the interpreting workforce is the reason the CALI Project was established. CALI has created several pathways to prepare interpreters to address these special needs within the deaf population including:

Online modules that can be completed through a structured cohort approach or as independent study.

For those individuals accepted into a cohort, in addition to the online modules, participants will engage in:

Onsite classroom interactions for those individuals who are accepted into a cohort.

Community-based practicum

Supervised field work/induction

Online resources—such as a *series* of 12 videos of unfolding scenarios to assist interpreters in improving their ethical decision-making, 8 sample interpreter responses to the unfolding scenarios and discussions between team interpreters, and an annotated bibliography linked to articles, books, presentations on a range of related topics.

Webinars on topics related to a range of topics available online for viewing at any time.

These resources are available on the CALI website in both ASL and English at

<https://cssh.northeastern.edu/cali/>. Resources are available for study that will earn interpreters continuing education credits (CEUS) with RID.

This video, and the 6 others that accompany it, have also been developed by CALI as an additional resource for interpreters and Deaf Community members seeking to improve their knowledge and skills for working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. Specifically, what these 7 videos offer is access to conversations between Deaf Community members and Deaf and hearing interpreters about their experiences working with this portion of the Deaf population—the challenges they face, the strategies they have found effective, the type of skills and abilities they possess that facilitate their working relationships, the importance of linguistic and cultural competence, the importance of respect for consumers, the challenges associated with decision making by interpreters and finding common ways to discuss our values and frameworks with which we approach our work.

These 7 videos will provide you with access to conversations that include diverse perspectives—Deaf perspectives, CODA perspectives, BIPOC perspectives. Several of the Deaf and/or interpreters participating in these 7 videos are immigrants, or first-generation Americans born of immigrants. And, because they are talking with one another, you have access to rich insights you might not be exposed to if these individuals were talking with you directly. It is their relationships with one another and the communities in which they live that allow them to speak openly and frankly with one another—always with mutual respect and regard.

The first of these conversations is with a group of five Deaf Community members—April Jackson, Rosemary Wanis, Thomas Horejes, Keven Poore and me, MJ Bienvenu. We represent different regions of the United States—east and west coasts, the southeast and midwest. Several of us are Deaf of Deaf, several of us teach or have taught Deaf Studies and Interpreting, several of us work as advocates within the Deaf Community, several of us come from social work or counseling backgrounds. Two of the panelists work with CALI as online facilitators for modules and/or as field-study supervisors related to interpreting for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use—Rosemary Wanis and Keven Poore. All of us are Deaf interpreters and have long histories working in the Deaf-World and/or academia as professionals and navigating life as Deaf individuals.

The discussion between the 5 of us is timely in that CALI is approaching its final year of funding and the impact of its resources and activities is becoming evident in the conversations happening within the Deaf and interpreting communities. In particular, conversations about how to discuss language use within the Deaf Community and its variations and deviations are increasing. Questions are arising about how we should discuss differences in language use among the deaf population—who decides the terminology that is used, what does it mean and for what purpose is it used, what is the impact of the terminology on stigmatizing or further stereotyping deaf individuals? A significant portion of the conversation between the 5 of us focuses on the role of terminology among professionals serving specific populations and the danger of terminology as a form of labeling, judging, or further marginalizing individuals. It is hoped that our discussion will provide insight in support of the conversations happening in our broader communities and will contribute to the important conversations that are taking place by offering a range of perspectives from within the communities.

In addition to discussing terminology and labels, the panel will discuss other topics relating to communication and interpreting with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical use of sign language. The discussion is about 1.5 hours in length. After the group discussion, I will be back to offer some key points from the discussion. Thank you and enjoy.

Part 2: The Deaf Community Panel Discussion Key Topics and Points

Key Topic Addressed: Defining atypical language use, its characteristics and contributing factors.

Key Points:

[April Jackson – 13:37]

The term atypical is not used by Deaf people in general but seems to be a term that has emerged as the effort to address the need for linguistic access of some deaf individuals has become more of a priority. Linguists and Deaf professionals working with these populations have introduced the term.

[April Jackson – 14:10]

It is a term that can help agencies assign the appropriate interpreter for certain requests and help interpreters to better prepare for assignments— versus the often inaccurate indication that a consumer has “no language”.

[Rosemary Wanis – 15:01]

When the term was first introduced within the Deaf Community it was seen as offensive—a way of labeling Deaf people as not being normal. One of the reasons the term may be resisted within the Deaf Community is that its source came from outside the community via academia. It was an invented term introduced to us for categorizing a portion of our community.

[Rosemary Wanis – 15:45]

The Deaf Community itself has yet to find the terms for describing the wide range of language variation that exists within the community. The community values embracing all of its members without distinctions that create inequality.

[Rosemary Wanis – 15:56]

Those of us who have grown up Deaf recognize and are accustomed to the wide range of language variation that exists and are able to easily make adjustments in the way we communicate to accommodate one another. When labels lead to judgements about status, privilege, difference, etc., we become conflicted and uncomfortable. So, when we use the term atypical, it is important that we are clear that we are referring to language use in an effort to help interpreters better prepare for meeting the demands of interpreting assignments.

[Thomas Horejes – 16:28]

Words and labels are powerful! Who decides what words are labels are used to describe a community of people? Consider the word ‘typical’— that word already conveys a position of privilege. Who decides what is typical and therefore sets the baseline for what is then considered

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atypical? Most often these types of labels come from a white-centric view. So, we must be very careful about what labels we adopt, who assigns the label, and how and when such labels are used and for what purpose.

[Thomas Horejes – 17:06]

We each have two identities—a personal identity and a social identity. Do the individuals whose language is considered atypical embrace that term as part of their personal identity? If not, that in itself is telling. It also seems that a cross-section of individuals are grouped under the label of atypical language users—such as those with physical or cognitive disabilities as well as immigrants who may have a sign language other than ASL.

[Thomas Horejes – 18:10]

It's important to recognize that what is considered typical to ASL may not be typical in other signed languages. ASL may conflict with cultural and social norms of other signed language communities from other parts of the world. Bottom line—the use of terms and labels carry power and is political. We need to be careful in how terms are used and be clear about our intention. And, we need to make sure that the labels used are accepted and agreed upon by the individuals they are used to reference.

Key Topic Addressed: What labels other than atypical may be more useful or appropriate in describing sign language use that does not follow the norms of the Deaf Community?

Key Points:

[MJ Bienvenu – 18:40]

Other terms that have been suggested are 'unique' or 'dysfluent'. Are these more accurate/appropriate?

[MJ Bienvenu – 18:55]

The resistance to labeling as a way to marginalize or further marginalize people is important to consider. That is not what the CALI project is attempting to do. CALI is focused on language use within a specific portion of the Deaf Community. It is typical that most people who speak the same language (in spite of coming from a range of different backgrounds) can understand one another because of language patterns that are recognized by those who use the same language. When you encounter someone who uses the language in ways that do not follow the common or standard patterns and their use makes it difficult to understand them, their use is atypical (meaning not common or typical).

[April Jackson – 20:07]

The issue is WHO will decide and HOW? It seems that it is the Deaf Community that should conceive the label through a community-based discussion and collaboration with our members and scholars.

[Keven Poore – 21:17]

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There has been discussion on social media by Deaf interpreters that the label ‘atypical’ is negative and inappropriate. Other labels like ‘unique’ have been suggested. However, as signed, ‘unique’ means ‘special’ which also can carry negative connotation—such as special education. As it is used within the CALI project, the term atypical means ‘not representative’ of the way ASL is commonly used. It is not a label that is assigned to people, but rather a way of identifying language use. When interpreters receive requests for interpreting services, agencies often indicate consumer language use with terms like ASL, oral, English signing, etc. These types of labels assist interpreters in preparing for assignments and making sure assignments are staffed by interpreters with appropriate skills and abilities. However, the issues involved in interpreting for a range of individuals who may use sign language in an atypical manner are complex. As a result, interpreters may need more information to appropriately prepare for assignments.

[Thomas Horejes– 23:23]

Perhaps focusing on the ways of describing variation of language use that already exists in ASL (the use of the ‘range’ sign) is sufficient, if we can identify a term that represents that sign. Similarly to registers—there are different labels for different types of register. Perhaps something similar can be conceived for different type of ASL use.

[MJ Bienvenu – 24:15]

It is important to clarify that when we are discussing atypical use of sign language, we are not talking about established variations—such as Black ASL, Academic ASL, or regional dialects. We are speaking of the use of signing in a manner that is incomplete, incoherent and/or difficult to understand. It is not a variation of ASL. It is a way of using language that is impacted by a broad range of factors—such as language/social/educational deprivation, physical, mental and cognitive disabilities, etc. In some instances, it is a term used to refer to deaf individuals who have no formal language at all but use gestural- spatial behaviors to attempt to communicate.

[Rosemary Wanis -- 26:02]

CALI’s focus is on the way language is being used and not on labeling individuals as atypical. The project works hard to distinguish between individuals and language use by individuals. And the reason there is a focus on this in training interpreters is because the traditional strategies used by interpreters are insufficient to meet the needs of deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. Interpreters need to acquire new skills, new techniques and strategies to meet the information access needs of these individuals.

[Thomas Horejes – 27:27]

It’s important to challenge our thinking about the use of the label atypical. We have not yet had enough research or discussion within the Deaf Community about what label is appropriate for describing this type of language use. We need more research and community dialogue before deciding and assigning a term. We should view what CALI is doing as a starting point versus the deciding point.

[April Jackson – 28:35]

CALI has identified a term that allows them to move their work forward. It is a term that is now being evaluated within the Deaf Community. Through this community discourse, the term can become clarified/adjusted/adopted. It will just take time and education/information dissemination.

[Thomas Horejes – 30:19]

Oral deaf individuals who acquire signing ability may be considered atypical in their use of sign language by members of the Deaf Community. In some instances, it creates stigma. That should be avoided, and the focus should be on providing communication access in the most effective way possible. In terms of strategies that have worked, an iPad is a resource for showing pictures and other graphics (such as colors) that can be useful.

[April Jackson – 32:44]

One key strategy is to make the process interactive—engage the deaf individual in negotiating the information in small chunks and through a back-and-forth interaction. This often involves a lot of depiction—the interpreter taking on the role of the consumer and/or others and acting out what is being discussed or what is being asked. It almost becomes like building a story with the deaf consumer through acting out information. The challenges faced in working with this portion of the Deaf Community depends on the variations in their life experiences and the complexity of the questions being asked or the information that the professionals are trying to elicit. Other strategies include using or drawing pictures, objects that can be manipulated, and other materials that can assist with conveying the desired information.

[Keven Poore – 34:53]

Sometimes the interpreter is not prepared with props because the information they received about the assignment was not accurate. In such cases, you have to use whatever is available in the actual space—pictures, calendars, furniture, space for moving about and enacting events. Also, in some instances the deaf individual's ability to communicate clear and accurate information is limited. Relying on others in the environment—such as family members, advocates, case managers, or those who work with the deaf individual on a daily basis—is a helpful strategy. They can often provide clarification of some of the pieces of information the deaf individual communicates and/or suggest ways of getting information across. Being creative, flexible, and patient enough to take the time required are important attributes for interpreters.

[Rosemary Wanis – 36:06]

Keven's comments are a beautiful example of dialogic interpreting—the process of using interaction and elicitation strategies to negotiate information and meaning. It also illustrates an open process of communication, where everyone engaged in the interaction assists and contributes to the process of negotiating information and meaning. Additionally, he discussed the willingness of Deaf interpreters to use props, drawing, acting and other creative strategies to achieve communication. It involves a willingness, patience and ability to try different techniques to achieve success.

Key Topic Addressed: Limitations of the NAD-RID CPC and how interpreters can gain the guidance and insight needed when working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language.

Key Points:

[MJ Bienvenu – 37:14]

CPC is written from the lens of white deaf people who are often in professional positions and know how to self-advocate. It does not address the experiences of the broader range of deaf individuals and their lived experiences. As the panelists talk about making linguistic and role adaptations when working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language, the potential for functioning in a way that is in conflict with the NAD-RID CPC exists. If interpreters are committed to doing no harm, they may make adaptations that are not discussed in the current tenets and guidelines and then be accused of acting unethically or crossing role boundaries.

[Rosemary Wanis – 39:32]

The RID Standard Practice Papers (SPP) are out of date—particularly the one involving Deaf Interpreters. It was written in 1997. This paper needs updating as it can offer guidance on some of these issues. Currently, the only mention of dealing with language variation is in the Deaf Interpreter SPP.

[April Jackson – 40:18]

The CPC definitely needs to be updated to reflect the current state of interpreting, changing demographics within the Deaf and interpreting communities, and the actual experiences of working practitioners. It needs to reflect the diverse ethnic, racial, cultural and linguistic factors that impact the decision-making of interpreters.

[Keven Poore – 41:11]

The critical principal in the CPC is DO NO HARM. The understanding of what this principle means in the practice of interpreting needs to be instilled in the decision-making process of practitioners. When the CPC doesn't make explicit statements regarding certain interpreting settings and language variation, interpreters must rely on the requirement to DO NO HARM and their discretion. Discretion comes from experience, competence, and reflective practice.

[Thomas Horejes – 41:50]

Also, interpreters need to recognize that sometimes taking on an assignment for which they are not appropriate due to skill or other factors can do more harm than not having an interpreter at all. Admitting they are not right for a job seems to be difficult for some interpreters. The consequence of moving forward when they should withdraw can be devastating—particularly when the situation involves decision-making about healthcare, finances, liberties, and other life-altering decisions.

[April Jackson – 42:48]

Two important internal guides are an interpreter's discretion and their ability to be honest about their abilities and qualifications. Ideally, when hearing interpreters work with Deaf interpreters, the collaborative process can lead to a greater level of insight, honesty and integrity.

Key Topic Addressed: The greatest challenges facing interpreters within the CALI program and the greatest challenges facing interpreter education programs in terms of preparing qualified graduates.

Key Points:

[Keven Poore – 44:27]

The greatest challenge of practitioners continues to be the length of time it takes to truly master ASL. The ability of hearing individuals who learn ASL as a second language as adults to gain a level of mastery of ASL that is comparable to most Deaf interpreters is limited. As a result, hearing interpreters must be humble and admit that their limitations have consequences that impact working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. Accordingly, they should ask for help, working with Deaf interpreters, and seeking to serve the interests of Deaf people.

[Rosemary Wanis – 45:58]

One of the greatest challenges in preparing interpreters is that much of the training materials are of white Deaf individuals with competent use of ASL in studio settings. This is not the real world and doesn't sufficiently expose students to the breath of diversity that exists in the Deaf Community. As a result, their skills and abilities for working with a diverse community of Deaf people are limited. These practitioners need strong self-awareness and monitoring skills to be able to acknowledge when they do and do not have the capacity to adapt their way of interpreting to meet the specific needs of diverse consumers. In these situations, it is the interpreter that is atypical because they are not capable of interacting with the diverse Deaf Community in the way that it needs and expects. Interpreter education programs need to improve in what materials they use when teaching, the diversity of consumers to which they expose students, and the amount of real-world exposure interpreting students receive before entering practice. The CALI program is filling a significant gap in providing program participants exposure to a more diverse and complex population of Deaf individuals who rely on interpreting services.

[Thomas Horejes – 48:18]

Also, two-year programs are not long enough to support students gaining mastery of ASL, Deaf Culture, and interpreting. Cultural competence is definitely lacking in many novice interpreters. Language and culture are intertwined. As well, teachers in programs tend to be white and focus on an academic approach to learning ASL versus community-based approach. The Deaf Community needs to be more involved in the preparation of interpreters. It's true that there are fewer Deaf Clubs and Deaf-centric gatherings than in the past, but programs need to do a better job of collaborating with Deaf Communities to provide greater opportunities for use of the language in authentic, real-world interactions versus the classroom. There are state associations

of the deaf and their meetings and conferences, among other settings.

[April Jackson – 50:06]

The lack of cultural competence is also evident in the resistance of many interpreters to accept feedback from Deaf consumers. When Deaf consumers are willing to correct interpreters and offer direct feedback, it should be embraced and integrated. Instead, what often happens, is that interpreters will tout the fact that they have been trained or graduated from a college program—implying that they know better than the Deaf consumer. This reflects poorly on the interpreter and the program they completed. Typically, these programs are filled with white, hearing teachers with limited to no Deaf teachers. Programs need to incorporate many more full time Deaf teachers—including Deaf BIPOC teachers. Many interpreter education programs are not welcoming to BIPOC students. Changing the demographics of the teaching staff could improve this and create greater diversity in the interpreters available to the Deaf Community. This would be a win for Deaf people.

[MJ Bienvenu – 52:10]

Based on the comments of the panelists, it seems the greatest challenge before interpreter education programs is who they hire and who they recruit into their programs. More diverse Deaf people need to be hired and more BIPOC students need to be actively recruited and supported.

[Rosemary Wanis – 53:33]

Another way in which IEPs are lacking is helping interpreting students to become aware of their own biases. If interpreters enter with limited exposure to diversity, they likely have many hidden biases and need to spend time unpacking those biases and the assumptions associated with them. This is one of the first things that the CALI program attempts to do with program participants—explore with them their personal biases and the associated implications.

[MJ Bienvenu – 54:23]

The more qualified you are, the better able you are to identify what you are able to do and what you can't.

Key Topic Addressed: Suggestions for interpreters who have interpreting experience but may lack the specific expertise to interpret for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language. What are strategies they can use to improve? What approaches are most effective?

Key Points:

[April Jackson – 54:40]

Certainly, working with a Deaf interpreter as a team is an important starting place.

[Thomas Horejes – 55:27]

Prioritize information. Utilizing a model like Gish, or something similar, and focusing on the goal of the interaction, determine what is the essential information to convey. Engage others in the process to help determine what is essential to communicate. Often, interpreters are not aware of the end result that is being sought by the participants within the interpreted event. Also, the interpreter needs to have strategies for trying to keep the information conveyed by the deaf consumer on track—navigating through extraneous information that is being expressed to get to the essential response. In my own experience, I might work for up to 20 or 30 minutes negotiating information before I am ready to convey to others what has been communicated by the deaf consumer.

[April Jackson – 56:46]

There is also merit in conveying ALL the information that is expressed by the deaf consumer, rather trying to decide what is essential and what is not. The other participants in the interpreted event often have knowledge and insight I am not aware of and so by conveying everything that is communicated, they can decide what is important and what is not.

[MJ Bienvenu -- 58:08]

So, it seems one of the strategies that could be employed is going back and clarifying information, relying on information that is gained during a pre-assignment discussion, etc. This can include offering correction to something you interpreted earlier during the assignment, once additional information is offered by the consumer that makes their previous comment clear.

[Rosemary Wanis – 58:25]

Learning that accurate interpreting for deaf consumers who exhibit atypical language requires TIME to process for meaning, is one of the most impactful outcomes of the CALI program. Interpreters learn that they must take the time that is needed to achieve effective communication. Strategies, such as making implicit information explicit, utilizing props to convey some ideas, acting out events, etc., take time. The process cannot be rushed if the goal is effective communication. This means managing turn-taking and asking participants to wait until the interpreting process has been completed.

Key Topic Addressed: The use of labels to categorize individuals is common within the American system of government funded services/systems. For example, the funds for CALI come from the Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Often both interpreters and deaf consumers do not feel the labels are appropriate. How can the general public be educated about the range of variables that exist and can impact the way in which Deaf people function and use language (without minimizing deaf individuals or feeding stereotypes or biases that may exist within the general public)?

Key Points:

[April Jackson – 1:00:33]

How do deaf individuals view themselves versus how they are viewed by others. Who gets to decide? Sometimes, deaf individuals agree to the labels. Sometimes they are just unsure or

unaware. The problem with labels is they can be divisive and marginalizing—even when the labels are used by individuals who know their stuff. I think we need to pay attention to how they talk about themselves and their experiences. What I have found most effective is to interact with deaf consumers in a way that leaves them feeling respected, understood, engaged. I want deaf consumers to feel that I am here WITH them and FOR them.

[Thomas Horejes – 1:02:18]

I don't think individuals who exhibit atypical language use perceive themselves as odd or off the mark. They express themselves in the way that is natural to them and the perception of difference comes external from others. So again, as we use the term atypical, we are potentially perpetuating the idea that the person is atypical. As I previously mentioned, this has implications for both our political and personal identity. For example, in terms of the law and political system, for me as a deaf person to access certain legal rights (ADA for example), I must concede to the label of being "disabled", even though on a personal level I do not view myself as a disabled individual. So, as we are talking about this portion of the deaf population, we need to recognize that at least on a personal level, we are asking them to concede to a label with which they do not identify. It is my hope that CALI will use this label during the interim to arrive at a place where discussion of deaf individuals with atypical language use doesn't carry such a negative connotation. My main point is for us to recognize that in spite of labels that may be assigned by the government in order to access services, I can define my personal identity in a manner that is of my determination.

[MJ Bienvenu -- 1:05:17]

I find it interesting that within the Deaf Community we already have many ways of defining communication as it occurs by Deaf people. We discuss those who use oral, cued speech, those who use SEE, those who use ASL (and the degree to which they use it effectively or not), etc., and these terms inform interpreters how to prepare for and perform while interpreting...but, we see the use of the term atypical as inappropriate. The terms like oral, SEE, etc., can carry a negative connotation too, but they are deeply embedded in the Deaf and interpreting communities. And they are used to promote the selection of the most appropriate interpreter for specific deaf consumers. The entire goal of the term atypical is to support the process of securing the most competent interpreters possible.

Key Topic Addressed: The number of atypical language users within the Deaf Community is increasing. Services for this particular audience are not increasing at the same speed. In some communities, there are advocates, case workers and other professionals available who work with deaf individuals with limited or atypical use of language. But not in all communities. How can the availability of these sorts of service providers be increased?

Key Points:

[Rosemary Wanis – 1:07:11]

The term atypical gives us a baseline frame of reference that can be used to explore the broader context of the deaf individual and their needs for support and assistance. When we can support our use of the label 'atypical language use' by offering specific examples of language

deficiencies that exist or where gaps in language use exist, it paves the way for broader discussion of the consequences associated with language limitations and what support and assistance that may be required for the deaf individual as a result. Service providers working with deaf individuals who exhibit language limitations can explore what is available and what is not (but needed) and work collaboratively in their communities to seek such services. This then places the responsibility on the community-at-large to respond to the needs of all of its members. Increasing the number of Deaf interpreters is an important starting place.

[Thomas Horejes – 1:08:29]

Our conversation is shifting to a discussion of human rights and civil rights for all individuals. The issue is not about how an individual uses language, but rather how to protect the right to access and inclusion for a particular group of individuals. It's about how to strengthen the system so it can accommodate the needs of all individuals. Robert E. Johnson, a linguist, wrote an article about a community in Mexico that was predominately comprised of individuals who can hear, but also there were deaf residents. Within that community a large portion of the residents who can hear are able to sign because they believed it was an imperative to the equity of all the members of the community in which they lived. They realized it was their responsibility to learn to accommodate the needs of those residents who relied on sign language, rather than expecting deaf residents to be able to speak and lipread. That was their frame and it how the issue of supporting the needs of deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language should be framed. If this frame can be achieved, then it can shift the current status of support services offered in our communities to be more inclusive.

[Keven Poore – 1:09:39]

I see the issue a bit differently. Interpreters are being assigned to work with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language more frequently. It may be because this portion of the deaf population is increasing, OR perhaps because they are being less sheltered and over-protected by families and/or institutions. Regardless, interpreters need the skills, techniques and resources necessary to appropriately serve these individuals and ensure they have an appropriate level of access—that they can participate in the decision-making that impacts their life. Theories of interpreting have changed! As allies of the Deaf Community, interpreters are now concerned with empowering the deaf consumer. That is the focus of the CALI training and resource development. It is hoped that eventually, the training and resources will be available to the vast majority of practitioners nationwide.

Key Topic Addressed: Can any interpreter who enters practice interpret for those deaf consumers who exhibit atypical language use? Is it just a matter of training? Or are there other considerations?

Key Points:

[Keven Poore – 1:11:49]

It takes a combination of abilities— a unique set of interpreting skills, a strong foundation of discretion, the ability to negotiate meaning and develop rapport with consumers, etc. There is that “IT” quality.

Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting for people who use atypical language
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[April Jackson – 1:12:07]

I often equate it to doctors. Not every doctor can do everything. There are doctors who specialize and/or who are more skilled and adept at specific areas of medicine than others. Similarly, with interpreters. Working with an audience of deaf consumers who exhibit requires specialist interpreters. So, it is not reasonable to expect that all interpreters have “IT”.

Key Topic Addressed: Often, interpreters work with hearing consumers with misconceptions, misinformation or biases about deaf people. What recommendations do you have about what interpreters should/can do in response?

Key Points:

[April Jackson – 1:13:15]

Educate! Take the time to replace their incorrect assumptions with correct information.

[Rosemary Wanis – 1:13:37]

I strongly believe in shifts in the role space of interpreters and how it broadens or narrows depending on the context and circumstances of an interpreting assignment. So, if the timing and place are right, interpreters can offer information and resources to consumers. Another option is to ask the agency that sent the interpreter to follow-up by providing resources and information to the hearing consumer. I recall a time I was interpreting and was engaged in consultation with an attorney in a case involving a deaf person. The attorney was frustrated by the difficulties in communicating with a deaf person. As the hearing interpreter team and I were trying to provide information to him about what was impacting the communication challenges, he kept insisting that if the person had ‘a brain’ then they should be able to communicate! It was if he was assuming the deaf person was “using their deafness” to evade responding to his questions. It was very oppressive. We ultimately had to get the judge involved to resolve the situation by reprimanding the attorney for his insensitivity and erroneous perceptions. So there are consequences to hearing consumers having misconceptions and inaccurate assumptions. Ultimately, the judge indicated that if the attorney could not accept the deaf client as they were and make adaptations in his counsel/approach, he may need to be replaced with a different attorney. So, as interpreters we can always try our best to educate, but we may not always be successful in correcting someone’s thinking.

[Thomas Horejes – 1:15:21]

It’s important for interpreters to remember that many deaf people have trauma based on lived experiences. As a result, it is sometimes hard for them to speak-up and self-advocate when confronted with hearing individuals who don’t understand our experience—including interpreters. So, when deaf individuals do express their concerns or offer criticism, interpreters are encouraged not to take it personally. Use it as an opportunity to improve communication access for the deaf consumer. Interpreters can benefit from having training about trauma and its implications on human interactions. The training can help interpreters to learn how to build trust and create a safe place. This seems even more important when working with deaf consumers

who exhibit atypical language skills. I can't even imagine how difficult it must be for them to express their perspective and feelings. Creating a safe place for them to work through their communication challenges is essential.

[Thomas Horejes – 1:16:30]

For example, I notice how in the CALI videos of deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language, the filming is taking place in what look like sterile spaces...which may not be the safe or comfortable space for the deaf individuals being filmed. I look forward to the time when there is a panel of deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language who can express their perspectives on these topics.

[April Jackson – 1:18:51]

Going back to MJ's specific example of the narrative that doesn't respond to the question asked. In my experience, when this happens, I have to shift to a format of asking restricted questions with YES/NO responses rather than open ended questions (like, "What happened yesterday?"). Knowing the goal of the interaction, structure the restricted response questions to narrow down to the response being sought.

[MJ Bienvenu -- 1:19:27]

April makes a good point. Getting to the answer may take time—it's a process. It may be that the deaf consumer is extremely isolated and when in the company of people who can sign, becomes excited at being able to express themselves and it results in an extended narration. Some of what is in that narration may be things that have happened to them or that they have observed but have had no one with whom to communicate about it until now. But, in the immediate, the individual is within some system that is looking for answers to specific questions. It's very challenging and interpreters are there and attempting to manage these variables.

[Rosemary Wanis – 1:20:26]

It is a process that also requires cultural mediation. The deaf consumer may not know the expectations of the system and how it works. This can be explored during the language assessment phase of the assignment, before the interpreting process begins. Likewise, the hearing consumer may not know or understand the experiences of the deaf individual. So, the interpreter will have to engage in a mediation of both expectations and process, as well as language. And, how that is done may depend on the context—is this a mental health assessment, is this a meeting in an attorney's office, are we at a doctor's appointment, etc. Strategies may vary depending on the context in which the interpretation is occurring. Ultimately, it is typically the hearing consumer/professional service provider who guides the interaction process, and the interpreter is there to support the goal of the interaction and facilitate the interactional process. And in the midst of that process, where there are gaps in understanding on the part of either participant, the interpreter may have to contribute information.

[Keven Poore – 1:21:23]

Other contextual considerations are whether this is a reoccurring assignment, have the consumer and I worked together before or is this the first time. Strategies you will employ is you already have a trusted relationship with the deaf consumer may differ if you are still in the process of building that trust. Also, who else is involved in the communication event? Are there others who can assist and offer support? In other words, how the interpreter responds likely depends on a myriad of factors. Interpreters have to be adept at monitoring the pulse of the situation and work to respond accordingly. It is also important to keep the hearing consumer apprised of what is happening in the negotiations with the deaf consumer. They may be able to offer assistance when it is needed as well.

Key Topic Addressed: What advice would you give to working or aspiring interpreters regarding working with deaf consumers who exhibit atypical language use?

Key Points:

[April Jackson – 1:23:42]

Be patient. It takes a lot of work. There is a lot involved in the process. The ultimate goal is to do our very best to convey an accurate message. If you are not a patient person, or someone willing to invest the time required, this is not an appropriate area of specialization for you.

[Rosemary Wanis – 1:24:08]

In addition to being patient, be flexible. Have the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Recognize that interpreting is not a process that is limited to your hands. Use other strategies—like props, visual aids, acting out things, relying on others in the room who can assist with communication and/or may know the deaf consumer better, etc. Be open/transparent, use open processing so everyone is collaborating to achieve the desired goal. Be willing to stretch yourself and explore more deeply the concept of role and what application of the interpreter's role looks like in different situations. Don't be locked into simultaneous interpreting as 'the way' interpreting has to happen. Use consecutive interpreting, as well as other interpreting strategies. Adapt what you are doing over the unfolding of the assignment, as needs change or new needs arise. Invest in the process.

[Keven Poore – 1:25:20]

For new, novice interpreters, I suggest allowing yourself to work with challenging videos that require you to work through comprehension. Embrace struggle as a natural part of learning. Don't just stay within your comfort level—challenge yourself to stretch. Take risks, be curious, ask questions! Look beyond what is familiar to you. When you try new things, it will also enhance what is your norm/familiar. And, be honest! When you don't understand, or you don't know, say so. And then use your knowledge of resources and individuals to get the help you need. Take risks while in school/training and surrounded by teachers, mentors and colleagues who can support and assist you. Don't take risks in actual assignments where you might be practicing on deaf consumers.

[Thomas Horejes – 1:26:58]

Be humble! This type of work is humbling/sacred. Recognize the power dynamics that are involved. Interpreters are often in a privileged position—recognize the implication of that and the responsibility associated with mediating the interactions of others. Focus on empowering the deaf consumer to function with the highest degree of autonomy as possible. Be attentive, patient, intent on doing your best to convey an accurate message for all involved in the interaction. For interpreters who come from a position of privilege, get bias training so you understand the implications of implicit bias—learn to recognize what you may be overlooking or denying. If as an interpreter you find yourself resistant to feedback or comments from consumers, unpack the reasons why. Is it about trying to maintain your position of privilege/power? If so, stop, examine, unpack, and grow. This will enable you to engage with deaf consumers from a position of respect and humility. Also, recognize that labels of any kind can become stigmas that are used to marginalize people. Labels relating to language use can become identity stigmas because language use is often tied to our identity. Be sensitive to the fact that language, culture and identity are deeply intertwined. Recognize that although now we are using the term atypical, this is the result of our current level of information and it is not necessarily the right term for addressing the type of language use being discussed. It is the term currently being used but will likely continue to evolve.

Transcript of Part 3: Reflections on the Deaf Community Panel and Overview of the Remaining Six Videos

NARRATOR: What a rich discussion! So many important points were made. There are a few key points I want to reinforce. First, a bit more about the term ATYPICAL. When the interpreter training grants were announced in 2016 by the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services, the term used in the federal register was language DYSFLUENCY (disfluency). This term is commonly used to refer to difficulties of a language user in the production or articulation of a language. Stuttering is an example. The production of signs by a Deaf individual with cerebral palsy is an example. Although this term can apply to some instances of deviation in language use among the deaf population, it isn't a broad enough term to encompass all of the examples of deviations observed by interpreters and other service providers within the Deaf Community.

Prior to applying for the grant, the administrative team of Northeastern University's American Sign Language Program conducted an informal survey within the Deaf and Interpreter communities to determine what might be a more appropriate and inclusive term than DYSFLUENT, allowing the grant to prepare interpreters to work with a broader portion of the Deaf Community representing some of the changing demographics within the Deaf Community. There was greatest agreement around the term ATYPICAL, and thus it became the term adopted in the grant application.

The term ATYPICAL means that the language use being observed is not representative of native use of ASL. That it is not representative could be for a variety of reasons—including, but not limited to, dysfluency. However, what is essential to its meaning is that atypical use of sign language is NOT about a variation of sign language used by deaf people—such as a dialect, regional variations, Black Sign Language, etc. Atypical language use is not referring to a new or unique form of sign language. It refers to the expression of various types of linguistic dysfunction that may impact both the understanding and production of sign language. This is an important distinction in that atypical use of sign language requires significant accommodation to meet the individual's need for communication access and inclusion. Accommodations are not only related to use of a broad and innovate range of communication strategies, but also the amount of time required to achieve understanding, the number of interpreters that may be needed to staff an assignment, the level of success that can be achieved, the other support services that may be needed to support the success of the deaf individual, among others.

Preparation for interpreting assignments that involve deaf individuals who use atypical language requires more planning time and consideration. Interpreters being notified in advance of the fact that the consumer they are being asked to interpret for is someone who exhibits atypical language use can help ensure that interpreters who are not qualified to take on such assignments decline them (rather than arriving to an assignment and learning of the reality after the fact). Knowing in advance also allows interpreters to advocate for the use of Deaf interpreters and additional time for

language assessment and establishing effective strategies for communication. Knowing in advance allows interpreters to bring resources—such as props, pictures, and other materials—that can be relied upon during the interpreting process. Knowing in advance allows the participants of the communication event to discuss goals, expectations, and outcomes, and to form a collaborative approach to meeting the needs of the deaf consumer. Knowing in advance helps to ensure that the deaf consumer receives the greatest degree of access and inclusion possible.

Another important point that was discussed by the Deaf panelists was the importance of interpreters being self-aware and honest about their abilities and their limitations. The belief that “any interpreter is better than no interpreter” is potentially dangerous and harmful when attempting to provide access and inclusion to deaf people who exhibit atypical language use. Interpreters may feel vulnerable to the pressure to fill assignments for which they are not qualified or do not feel comfortable and need to develop the boundaries necessary to decline when it is appropriate and ethical to do so.

Part of ethical practice is relying on your discretion as an interpreter. As was discussed by the panel, discretion is the ability to make reliable, sound and ethical decisions while interpreting. Discretion is something that evolves and matures over time through reflective practice. Reflective practice is a process of analyzing your work on a consistent basis for the purpose of growth and improvement. It can be done on your own, but is most effective when done with colleagues and/or mentors who can assist in helping you to identify aspects of your work you may overlook or of which you are unaware. Reflective practice offers a form of peer review and accountability that interpreters often lack but need. The great thing about engaging in peer review is that even if you live in a rural area, technology affords the opportunity to connect with other colleagues. The maturing of your discretion through reflective practice is a critical part of becoming a respected and reliable practitioner. Deaf consumers deserve your very best!

One final point from the Deaf panel discussion relates to the importance of Deaf Community involvement in the training and vetting of interpreters. The panel members emphasized that more interpreter education programs need Deaf faculty members—including BIPOC Deaf individuals! The inclusion of more BIPOC Deaf individuals in running and/or teaching will help to ensure a greater number of BIPOC interpreters entering and completing training programs. The gaps that many IEP graduates experience in terms of language and culture could be reduced by earlier and more frequent exposure to a broad range of Deaf individuals.

This applies to training materials as well. The diversity evident within the Deaf Community needs to be represented in the training materials. As well, those materials need to more accurately reflect the real-world experiences of Deaf individuals and the range of language variation that exists. Deaf individuals of greater diversity in more diverse settings is needed in the training materials to better prepare interpreters for real-world interpreting.

Not only is there a need for more Deaf engagement in training, but also in the vetting

of interpreters. Deaf people understand their needs much better than anyone else and should be more involved in deciding who interprets for them and in what settings. This is particularly true for BIPOC Deaf individuals.

How do we achieve more engagement of Deaf people in the training and decision-making about interpreters? It needs to be intentional. The interpreting industry and interpreting practitioners need to make a deliberate and intentional commitment to seeking the engagement of Deaf individuals in decision-making that impacts their daily lives. If each interpreter practitioner or educator, interpreter referral center or agency owner or staff person, committed to using their scope of influence to ensure the involvement of more Deaf people in the decision-making processes associated with interpreter education and the provision of interpreting services, greater engagement could be achieved. And as a result, the provision of interpreting services to Deaf consumers would be greatly advanced!

Before wrapping up this video, I want to take time to introduce you to the other 6 videos that are a part of the *series* of 7 new videos being released by CALI. The remaining 6 videos are focused on teams of interpreters discussing their experiences working with Deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. Five (5) of the 6 tapes involve BIPOC interpreters—an important source of knowledge and experience that has too often been left out of conversations about interpreting. Several of the BIPOC interpreters are also CODAs or have deaf family members. In some instances, their Deaf parents are immigrants, and these interpreters have unique life experiences to offer. Four of the six tapes include a Deaf and hearing interpreter discussing their experiences working with individuals with atypical language use. The fifth tape involves two Deaf interpreters discussing their experiences. The sixth tape involves two BIPOC Coda interpreters sharing their experience.

Topics addressed in the six videos vary, but includes discussion of cultural and linguistic identity and the role it plays in the interpreting process and decision making, team interpreting considerations and challenges, strategies used during the interpreting process, ethics, values and frameworks that support decision-making, gaps that exist in the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct, reflective practice, interpreter training, mentoring and professionalism, among others.

The videos are organized in a logical sequence, with this introductory video being the first in the *series*. However, each video can stand alone and the six subsequent videos in the *series* can be watched in whatever order best suits your purposes. The six teams of interpreters are Carla Shird & Su Kyong Isakson, Su Kyong Isakson & Kristina Miranda, Rayni Plaster Torres & Mark Morales, Rayni Plaster Torres & Monica Gallego, Trenton Marsh & Jennifer Harvey, and Samond Bishara and Michelle Draper.

There are several take-aways from the six videos of conversations between interpreting colleagues. First, interpreting is a complex and challenging process that requires a superior level of linguistic and cultural competence, self-awareness, and professional maturity. The complexities of interpreting increase as the linguistic limitations of the deaf consumer increase. The solution is even greater degrees of cultural and linguistic competence and collaboration with other interpreters—typically

one of which is Deaf and/or a native signer.

Second, consistent and reliable ethical decision-making is not based on the ability to follow a set of rules or guidelines. It is based on the ability to think critically and responsibly, to have a clear sense of purpose and intention, have a highly developed discretion to rely on, and being grounded in the values and beliefs of the profession of interpreting.

Discretion is developed from several sources—the theories and ethical frameworks upon which the profession is built and relies, the engagement in reflective practice with colleagues, mentors and supervisors, experience over time, a commitment to moral and ethical development, and self-awareness and monitoring.

Third, while the foundation of successful interpreting is linguistic and cultural competence, its cornerstone is relationships. The ability of interpreters to develop trust and rapport with consumers of interpreting services is essential to establishing and sustaining relationships. This requires that interpreters have well-developed interpersonal skills. Intrapersonal skills are also necessary, knowing yourself, your abilities and your limitations. Interpreters need to have the ability to monitor your behavior and reactions. Interpreters need to have the ability to ask for help when needed and to admit/own mistakes when they occur. Reflect professionalism and maturity in your work and your commitment to a successful outcome. Interpreters need to be humble and transparent about their process, and what is transpiring during the interpreting process. When these qualities are balanced with demonstrated respect for consumers, our colleagues and ourselves, it sets the tone for collaboration with all those involved in the interpreted event.

And finally, continued professional development is essential. The communities we serve are always changing, so no matter our years of experience and overall competence, there is always the need to learn more and to grow as the field and consumers advance.

There will likely be many other take-aways you gain from viewing and thinking about the 6 videos of conversations between interpreting colleagues. It is the hope of CALI that these materials contribute to your own decision-making skills and processes. To further assist with that process, there are curricular materials that are available. A Curriculum Guide for Teachers, Mentors and Supervisors and a Handbook for Interpreters are available to be downloaded. These two documents include strategies and activities for using the 7 videos discussed for improving ethical decision-making in general and specifically when working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. The documents are located on the CALI website under the tab for the videos. We wish you all continued success in your work as interpreters!

Conversation 1: Su Kyong Isakson & Carla Shird – 34:46 minutes

Link: <https://youtu.be/NciGqUV0y8M>

Description:

This is a discussion between a Deaf and Coda interpreter that is focused on the unique experiences of BIPOC³ interpreters who provide interpreting services to deaf individuals who are immigrants to the United States. Carla Shird, CDI, discusses her experiences and strategies interpreting for Deaf immigrants, and provides insight into the importance of both linguistic and cultural competence. She identifies specific examples of cases where cultural knowledge of the deaf individual's home country was instrumental in establishing and sustaining communication. Another unique aspect is a discussion by Su Kyong Isakson, NIC, of Yosso's⁴ Model of Community Wealth as a framework for clarifying the values that contribute to the ethical decision-making of BIPOC interpreters.



Discussion Prompts

- What do you see as the benefits from interpreters possessing knowledge of the language and culture of the Deaf Community from the inside-out versus as a second language learner who is a sojourner to the community? What might be some of the additional challenges that exist as a result of being an 'insider' of the Deaf Community?
- What does it mean to respect Deaf people? What does it look like when interpreters are exhibiting genuine respect and regard for Deaf people.
- What are some of the unique considerations when interpreting for deaf immigrants? What are some specific preparation strategies an interpreter should employ when accepting an assignment involving a deaf immigrant?
- What are some possible ways in which interpreters can gain greater cultural competence—not only in the American Deaf Culture, but in the cultures from which deaf immigrants come?
- What does collaboration between Deaf and hearing interpreters look like? What are essential ways that Deaf and hearing interpreters can demonstrate respect and support for one another?
- When conducting language assessments with deaf consumers, what is the purpose and what is the process? How are the findings from the language assessment process used by the interpreters during the interpreting assignment?

³ The acronym BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. People of color is a general umbrella term that collectively refers to ALL people of color — anyone who isn't white. But because POC is so broad, it loses the specificity that is useful in identifying and addressing separate struggles faced by people of color with different ethnic backgrounds. BIPOC reflects the desire to draw attention to specific injustices impacting Black and Indigenous people—including those who are Deaf. <https://www.healthline.com/health/bipoc-meaning#short-answer>

⁴ Dr. Tara Yosso is a teacher and researcher who has applied the frameworks of critical race theory and critical media literacy to examine educational access and opportunity within Communities of Color. Yosso's model of Community Cultural Wealth (2005) explores the talents, strengths and experiences that students of color bring with them to their college environment. The model identifies six (6) forms of capital nurtured and developed through the experiences of marginalized communities--aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital. See <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/first-generation-college-student-/community-cultural-wealth.10> for an explanation of each. Also see Yosso, T. J. (2005) *Whose Culture Has Capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth*. In *Race Ethnicity and Education*. Vol. 8, No. 1, March 2005, pp. 69-91.

- If you were describing the interpreting process to an immigration officer or some other individual involved with the immigration process, what would you say and why? Team with someone and role play what you would say. Discuss what was clear and effective and what might benefit from adjustment and try again. Rotate this activity.
- Identify two or three of the strategies discussed by the interpreters for interpreting with deaf immigrants. Describe how these strategies could be useful to you in your own practice—in what situations, for what purposes, in what ways?
- What are the five (5) types of capital associated with Yosso's Model of Cultural Wealth? Discuss an example of how interpreters would exhibit these 5 types of capital during their decision-making as interpreters. What contribution do you see Yosso's Model bringing to enhancing your own ethical decision-making?
- How can interpreting agencies improve the information they provide to interpreters about assignments for which they are scheduled? Why do you think this information is often missing in assignment information? What is the implication for consumers and interpreters as a result of insufficient (or possibly incorrect) assignment details? Discuss specific examples as it relates to your own work as an interpreter.
- How would you define discretion and its application to the work of interpreters? In what ways is discretion improved through reflective practice? In what ways can interpreters engage in reflective practice? Identify two or three examples.
- What is your primary take-away from this video? Discuss how that take-away will impact your daily practice and instances when you are interpreting for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use.

Content Summary:

Topics Addressed	Main Points
Introduction to Yosso's Model of Cultural Capital and its application to interpreting with BIPOC deaf individuals and immigrants	Ethical decision-making involves more than just a set of rules or guidelines to follow. It involves a strong foundation in language and cultural competence.
What it means to respect consumers and their lived experiences	Yosso's Model of Cultural Capital provides a theoretical foundation that BIPOC interpreters can rely on for guidance that gives recognition to the unique knowledge and skills needed by interpreters working within marginalized communities. It is a model that fits their lived experience and the communication access needs of the deaf consumers they serve.
The importance of cultural competence—it's not just language	
Interpreting strategies and techniques and associated challenges	Negotiating meaning with a deaf immigrant who uses sign language in an atypical manner requires that the interpreter have substantive cultural knowledge and experience (with the culture that the deaf consumer is from), as well as visual-spatial language expertise (not specifically tied to ASL).
Training and IEP considerations/gaps	
Preparation considerations	Discretion and judgment by interpreters come from reflective practice and ongoing unpacking of assignments with colleagues and

Conversation 2: Mark Morales & Rayni Plaster Torres – 46:59 Minutes

Link: <https://youtu.be/81qRtYIKD7w>

Description:

In this video, Rayni Plaster, CDI interviews a Deaf Interpreter, Mark Morales, who has extensive experience in interpreting for deaf individuals who immigrate to the United States, primarily from Mexico. Together, they explore the role of the interpreter and how it is adapted to accommodate the needs of deaf individuals who are not fluent in American Sign Language and/or exhibit atypical language use. Establishing the interpreter role and interpreting process with both deaf and hearing consumers is discussed, as well as some of the implications associated with assuming explanations are understood or sufficient. When misunderstandings arise, how to make adjustments and/or corrections are also discussed. Strategies used by interpreters when working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use are explored and applied to specific interpreting scenarios.



Discussion Prompts:

- How would you approach the language assessment with a deaf consumer you are meeting in the lobby of a doctor's office? What things would you discuss and why? How long would you engage in the assessment? What specifically would you be looking for and why? How would you know you have sufficient information to proceed with interpreting? In what ways would you use the information from the language assessment during the assignment? How would you engage the hearing consumer in the process? What are the implications of NOT conducting a language assessment as part of your assignment preparation?
- Imagine you and a team interpreter are assigned to interpret an appointment at a doctor's office with a deaf individual who exhibits atypical language. During the language assessment phase of the assignment, it becomes clear that you will need to use consecutive interpreting and that it is likely to require additional time to establish and facilitate communication. How would you go about making this known to the medical team? How would you go about negotiating for the additional time needed to achieve effective communication? Role play an interaction with the nurse or doctor where you explain your role, the interpreting process, the need for consecutive interpreting and potentially more time than has been planned.
- Why is it important for the cultural identity and worldview of the interpreter to align with the deaf consumer? How does it impact the interpreting process? How does it impact trust and rapport? How does it impact team interpreting relationships?
- Why is it likely that in most assignments with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use the interpreter will have to use multiple strategies over the course of an assignment in order to achieve the greatest degree of linguistic access? What are examples of strategies that might be used, and which strategies are more likely to be used for what type of questions?

- When interpreting questions from the hearing consumer to the deaf consumer what is important for the interpreter to consider? How does the interpreter gain an understanding of the type of question being asked, what type of information is being elicited, and how the information will be used? Why are these elements important?
- What are some of the challenges associated with team interpreting for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use? What are some of the notable differences in role between a Deaf and hearing interpreter and how might these differences impact the interactions between the interpreter team? Imagine you are part of a Deaf-hearing team interpreting for a deaf individual who exhibits atypical language use during a doctor's appointment. How would you explain the roles of the team interpreters to this individual? How would you explain it to the doctor and/or nurse? Role play the explanation process.
- What life experiences have you had that can contribute to your understanding of world views and life experiences that differ from your own? For example, have you traveled extensively internationally, or did you grow up as part of a military family that relocated often? If interpreters have narrow or limited life experience and knowledge of cultures other than their own, what are some activities they can engage in to increase their appreciation of diverse experiences—particularly the experiences of individuals from marginalized communities? What is the consequence of not having an appreciation of diverse life experiences and cultures?
- How has the COVID epidemic impacted interpreting? With the increase in the use of online tools for connecting consumers—like Zoom—what are new considerations interpreters must keep in mind? What is the implication of using technology when working with deaf individuals who use atypical language?

Content Summary:

Topics Addressed	Main Points
Accepting assignments—what you are told versus what you are confronted with when you arrive	Deaf interpreters and hearing interpreters bring different worldviews and life experiences to the interpreting process. These can become even more evident when teaming an assignment that involves a deaf individual who exhibits atypical use of sign language.
Establishing role/role definition with both the deaf and hearing consumers (can be an ongoing process throughout the assignment)	Deaf interpreters will often use strategies and techniques that hearing interpreters (HI) are unfamiliar with or are beyond their capacity. This can make the HI uncomfortable and lead to efforts to have the Deaf interpreter function more 'traditionally' (versus effectively). It is imperative that the interpreters do sufficient advance preparation to get on the same page prior to beginning the assignment. Also, they must have trust and respect for one another during the interpreting process so they can resolve issues that may arise.
Language assessment process with deaf consumer	
Goal of language assessment	
Building trust and rapport with deaf consumers	
Importance of knowledge of the deaf consumer's cultural framework and life experience and ability to use it	The cultural and linguistic background of the interpreter contributes significantly to the communication process when working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language

while negotiating meaning Application of interpreting strategies to different interpreting assignments Issues with time and sequence of events Being sure of what the hearing consumer is asking about and whether they want a general or specific answer Complications of interpreting during COVID and use of technology such as Zoom (reduced space and movement) Role boundaries, CPC and application of discretion HIs and DIs teaming together—challenges and considerations	use. The more the cultural identity and worldview of the interpreter aligns with the deaf consumer, the more effective the rapport between them will be. When working with deaf consumers who exhibit atypical language use, the interpreter needs a wide range of communication strategies (such as use of drawing, props, acting out information, flexible visual-spatial language use, etc.) to be effective. In most situations, the interpreter will have to use multiple strategies over the course of an assignment in order to achieve the greatest degree of linguistic access. When interpreters are working with deaf consumers who exhibit atypical language use, it is imperative that a sufficient amount of time is taken to communicate information sufficiently to create understanding. During such processes, it is important to keep the other participants in the communication process aware of what is transpiring. This is one of the benefits of a Deaf/Hearing team of interpreters.
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Conversation 3: Su Kyong Isakson & Kristina Marie Balao Miranda – 40:32 Minutes

Link: <https://youtu.be/HeN0ktDxIrM>

Description:

In this video, two Coda interpreters of color, whose parents immigrated to the United States, discuss their unique interpreting experiences working within communities comprised largely of deaf immigrants. They focus on how heritage and identity play a significant role in their work as interpreters. As well, they discuss how norms and expectations of their heritage culture informs their decision-making as interpreters. As part of this discussion, they reference Yosso's Model of Cultural Wealth and discuss application of the model to specific interpreting situations and/or decisions made while interpreting. Further, they discuss the importance of interpreters keeping focus on the deaf consumer(s), their goal(s) and their needs in terms of communication access. This will help interpreters remain humble. Interpreting for Deaf individuals is a gift—one that requires a focus on service versus personal benefit.



Discussion Prompts:

- What is your overall impression of the discussion between the interpreters in the video? What stood out for you and why?

- If you were asked to summarize the video to someone else using 3-4 sentences, what would you say? What would you indicate is the primary take-away from the video?
- What from the video was new information for you? How does the new information fit with what you knew prior to watching the video? What questions about the new information still remain for you?
- What thoughts do you have about the strategies they identified as effective for working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use? Which of the strategies do you use already and/or you see other practitioners using? Which strategies were new for you? What strategies can you see yourself applying right away? In what situations? Provide one or two examples.
- Do you have a clear understanding of how the strategies work, what they look like in application, and how to go about implementing the strategies? Which of the strategies is the most challenging for you and why? What do you see will be required for you to become comfortable in applying the strategy? What resources exist to help you in your process?
- How did the discussion of Yosso's Model of Cultural Capital fit with your own experience? What frameworks do you rely on to help you with your decision-making as an interpreter? For example, do you utilize Demand-Control Schema⁵ or some other framework? How do these frameworks compliment your application of the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct (CPC)? How does the value system internalized from your family of origin impact your identity as an individual? How does it impact your decision-making as an interpreter?
- What are the factors that you employ as an interpreter to decide when to use consecutive versus simultaneous interpreting? When using consecutive interpreting, do you take notes? If so, what form do the notes take? Have there been instances when using consecutive interpreting was the best choice for the deaf consumer, but not for the hearing consumer (due to time restraints or other factors)? If so, what did you do? If not, what would you do in such an instance and why? Discuss your decision-making process with a peer and compare/contrast the factors leading to your final decision.

Content Summary:

Topics Addressed	Main Points
Coda interpreters with immigrant parents and the lived experience of growing up within the immigrant portion of the Deaf Community	When interpreting with BIPOC and/or immigrant deaf consumers, humility is critical. Humility involves an openness to feedback, not taking things personally, respect for consumer preferences, being able to set your ego aside for the purpose of honoring the goals of the interaction you are interpreting.
Many of the skills relied on by interpreters working within the BIPOC and immigrant Deaf communities acquire their skills from lived	Keeping your focus on the deaf consumer(s), their goal(s) and their needs in terms of communication access, will help interpreters remain humble. Interpreting for Deaf individuals is a

⁵ Dean and Pollard (2001) used the framework of D-C theory to examine the nature of demands and controls in the interpreting profession specifically. They defined four categories of job demands that act upon interpreters: environmental demands, interpersonal demands, paralinguistic demands (formerly referred to as linguistic demands), and intrapersonal demands. Controls are skills, decisions, or other resources that an interpreter may bring to bear in response to the demands presented by a given work assignment. Controls for interpreters may include education, experience, preparation for an assignment, behavioral actions or interventions, particular translation decisions, (e.g., specific word or sign choices or explanatory comments to consumers), encouraging –self-talk,” or the simple yet powerful act of consciously acknowledging the presence and significance of a given demand and the impact it is having on an interpreting assignment.

experiences versus what they are taught in interpreter education programs The disconnect between what is taught in IEPs and what interpreters working within the BIPOC and immigrant Deaf Communities confront and experience The differences between what the hiring agency tells the interpreter versus what the interpreter encounters once on the assignment What kind of questions interpreters need to ask before accepting assignments The importance of cultural competence in working with immigrant populations Examples of application of Yosso's Model of Cultural Capital to some of their interpreting experiences Teaming challenges—particularly with white interpreters and the struggle to get on the same page Gaps in the NAD-RID CPC in terms of working with BIPOC and immigrant deaf populations	gift—one that requires a focus on service versus personal benefit. One of the challenges that must be faced during interpreting assignments involving deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use is the need for more time than the 'system' has planned. Interpreters are key in ensuring that the time needed to establish clear and effective communication is secured. It is deaf consumers who suffer when interpreters do not take the time needed to achieve effective communication. Discretion and judgment by interpreters come from experience and reflective practice. Interpreters benefit from examining their decisions and actions with valued colleagues for the purpose of unpacking assignments and understanding the variables impacting what transpired.
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Conversation 4: Monica Gallego & Rayni Plaster Torres – 1:03:55 Minutes

Link: <https://youtu.be/IZdhk8dJrGw>

Description:

In this video, Rayni Plaster Torres, CDI interviews Monica Gallego, a certified trilingual interpreter who works extensively with deaf immigrants. Topics addressed include how to create a collaborative environment for interpreted interactions, assessing language and communication access needs, strategies for utilizing the experiences of



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the Deaf Consumer with their family members as a source of insight and information, engaging with hearing consumers, the role of notetaking during consecutive interpreting and post- assignment, among other topics. The linguistic and cultural experiences the interpreter brings are an integral part of building the trust and relationship required for a successful interpreted interaction. And the specific knowledge the interpreter has of the life experiences of the deaf immigrant in their country of birth, the more negotiation of meaning can occur. A critical part of the discussion between Rayni and Monica relates to the importance of the team interpreters being on the same page regarding how they will approach the work, divide duties, share responsibilities and support one another. The outcome of the interpreted interaction will depend in large part on how effectively the team interpreters work together. This will be particularly true when one of the team interpreters brings strong cultural awareness and competence relating to the consumer's native culture, and the other does not. It requires an additional level of respect and trust in the trilingual interpreter member of the team.

Discussion Prompts:

- What is your experience with consecutive interpreting? In what situations do you use it? How comfortable are you in utilizing consecutive interpreting?
- How do you introduce the idea of using consecutive interpreting to the consumers of an interpreted interaction? Assume you are in an assignment where consecutive interpreting is the appropriate choice. Role play agreeing on how you will implement consecutive interpreting with your team interpreter and then with the consumers. What guidance and direction will you give to the consumers regarding how to support the application of consecutive interpreting?
- Monica discusses her use of notetaking during the assignment and how she gives those notes to the deaf consumer to take away from the assignment and for reference afterwards. What are your thoughts about this process? Is it one you are familiar with? What would it change in your practice to utilize notes and to provide them to consumers? What barriers would keep you from doing so? What benefits would come from doing so?
- The importance of taking the time necessary to interpret clearly and accurately was discussed during the interview. Monica mentioned that it was common to be booked for an hour when in reality three hours was needed to interpret for the deaf immigrant. She emphasizes that when working with deaf immigrants, taking the time necessary to achieve comprehension and understanding is critical. What are the implications of this reality for your own schedule as an interpreter? What elements of your schedule would you need to change to ensure you had sufficient time to interpret for someone who required more time? How would you go about preparing to do that? How would you negotiate the need for additional time to complete your work with a team interpreter? With the hearing consumers? With the deaf consumer? What options exist if sufficient time is not available in a single appointment? What barriers exist to you taking the time that is needed? How would you overcome those barriers? What are the implications for your own ethical duty, the deaf consumer and the system if the appropriate amount of time is not taken?
- What are the ways in which an interpreter can confirm that comprehension has been achieved? What are three or four ways the interpreter can elicit confirmation from deaf consumers? Why is eliciting confirmation necessary and important? How can confirmation be elicited in a way that is culturally appropriate and respectful of deaf consumers? What are examples of elicitation techniques that are NOT culturally appropriate or respectful to deaf consumers?
- Interpreters need to be able to discuss their observations about the effectiveness of the communication process in professional ways. This requires interpreters to be able to describe both

typical language behaviors and those that are atypical so that all individuals involved in the communication process can make informed decisions. What are ways in which interpreters can do this without marginalizing deaf consumers?

- Role play describing to the various professionals who might engage with a deaf consumer who exhibits atypical language use the issues impacting interpreting. Consider how your description may vary depending on the role and responsibility of the professional you are working with. Role play providing the description to a medical doctor who is seeing the deaf consumer for a general physical, to a immigration case worker who is guiding the deaf consumer through the process of settling into the United States, to an attorney who is handling the immigration process for the deaf consumer and his/her family, to a teacher assisting with linguistic integration. Engage with at least two other interpreters as you do the role play so that one can assume the role of the professional, and one can observe and provide feedback on the process. When providing feedback, the focus should be on the clarity of the explanation (easy to understand by someone unfamiliar with deaf people and their experiences), is efficient in terms of the time it takes, is respectful and professional. You can all rotate roles until you all feel more comfortable providing descriptions of language use of the deaf consumer and challenges for the interpreting process.
- How would you describe the difference between explicit and implied meaning? In what circumstances is it important for the implied meaning to be conveyed in an interpretation? What factors influence the decision to make what is implicit, explicit? What are the considerations an interpreter must keep in mind when conveying implicit meaning? How can these considerations be monitored by the interpreter and their team interpreter? Provide some examples of implicit meaning from assignments you have done in the past and the implication of that information for the assignment outcome.
- Consider the following text in an ASL Vlog by Jesse Conrad. He is talking about an experience with an earthquake in Virginia. Identify five or six examples of explicit information being communicated. Identify five or six examples of implicit meaning embedded in the text. What is the implication of the implicit meaning for the overarching meaning of the text? Interpret the text and discuss your observations with a peer or mentor.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0xyGdvhsJ8&t=7s>

Content Summary:

Topics Addressed	Main Points
Experiences of trilingual interpreters working primarily with immigrant populations	Setting the stage for a successful interpreted interaction involves engaging with all consumers—both deaf and hearing—in a collaborative and unified manner.
Contributions of interpreter education and real-world experience to the preparation of practitioners	A key to team interpreting is engaging in pre-assignment, during and post-assignment briefing and de-briefing. These periods of team communication set the stage for effective collaboration, plus help to build the discretion (through reflective practice) necessary to work with unique populations within the Deaf Community and within specialized settings.
Connecting with all consumers before the interpretation actually begins— both deaf and hearing	As discretion matures through reflective practice, decision-making changes and improves.
Importance of hearing consumers in	

the overall collaboration process	When working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical use of sign language, be prepared to need more time than has been indicated to ensure clear and accurate communication.
Interpreter as a unifying force in a collaborative communication process	
Team interpreting considerations—Deaf/hearing teams or two hearing interpreters	When interpreters fail to take the time to interpret clearly and accurately, the ensuing mistakes or misunderstandings can have significant implications for the system and Deaf consumers.
Language assessment and communication access—utilizing the experiences of the Deaf Consumer with their family members as a source of insight and information	The nature of the activity that is occurring impacts whether the interpretation can be done in a consecutive (preferred) or simultaneous manner. For example, in group therapy, simultaneous will be expected. Consecutive allows for more time and greater accuracy, and also the use of notetaking.
Cultural identities/backgrounds and their contribution to perceptions of authority, systems, status differentials, etc.	Deaf interpreters bring the unique experience of knowing what it feels like to go through various systems without effective language access. They have those instances within the system that are often more challenging or frustrating for a deaf individual. It is useful for Deaf interpreters to take the lead in navigating the systems in which team interpreter work.
Time as a barrier or asset to the interpreting process	Confirmation of understanding is essential when working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. Confirmation of understanding with all involved in the interpreted event helps to pace the interpretation, reduce assumptions, ensure greater reliability and accuracy of the information being exchanged. Confirmation should be done in a variety of ways through different elicitation techniques.
Explicit versus implicit meaning and the impact for implication of the message	Interpreters need to be able to discuss their observations about the effectiveness of the communication process in professional ways. This requires interpreters to be able to describe both typical language behaviors and those that are atypical so that all individuals involved in the communication process can make informed decisions.
Unique considerations for different settings—such as mental health and in-patient treatment	Interpreters need to focus not only on what is being said, but what is meant by what is said—what is being stated both explicitly and implicitly. Often what is implied carries the implication of the information and this is information that needs to be transmitted explicitly when transferring meaning from one language to another.
Self-monitoring as interpreters and avoiding some pitfalls associated with taking on the role of care-taker/protector/savior	Interpreters benefit from monitoring their temptation to ‘fix’ the deaf consumer’s language when it is incomplete or unclear. What is the consequence to the consumer and the system trying to serve them when this occurs? Consider what motivates the interpreter’s desire to protect/defend the deaf consumer. How does that

	motivation fit with being an ally versus benefactor? How does it fit with what is expected regarding the role of the interpreter?
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Conversation 5: Jennifer Harvey & Trenton Marsh – 35:31 Minutes

Link: <https://youtu.be/UvG0nBboPUw>

Description:

In this video, two certified interpreters—one Deaf and one Coda interpreter—discuss their experiences working with deaf consumers who exhibit atypical language use. The interpreters, Trenton Marsh and Jennifer Harvey, discuss the challenges of preparing interpreters to work with a diverse and complex community of language users and the need for more Deaf individuals to be recruited and prepared as interpreters.



Historically, interpreter education programs (IEPs) don't provide enough exposure to certain portions of the Deaf Community—such as deaf youth, deaf immigrants, and others with significant language variation. The result is a workforce that is at times ill-equipped to meet the demands of interpreting for deaf individuals with unique and challenging communication and access needs. Deaf interpreters can bring a level of life experience and exposure to diverse signers needed to assist with the language needs of the underserved portions of the Deaf Community. Their experiences in Schools for the Deaf, Deaf families, Deaf social systems, etc., provides them with a foundation they can draw on when interpreting. During their discussion, the interpreters focus on how to build strong relationships within Deaf-hearing interpreting teams, how to empower deaf consumers during the interpreting process and the importance of interpreters making the commitment to continuing professional development and growth.

Discussion Prompts:

- What is your experience in working with Deaf interpreters? Who has a responsibility to recruit and training more Deaf interpreters? What is the role of hearing interpreters in requesting and relying on Deaf interpreters more often? What are the barriers to them doing so? How can those barriers be eliminated?
- Role play requesting and justifying the need for a Deaf interpreter. Practice making the request to an interpreting agency at the time they request you for an assignment; at a court assignment after meeting with the deaf consumer and determining a deaf interpreter is needed; during an IEP meeting when discussing the access needs of a young deaf child from a deaf family, and at a mental health appointment after struggling through a difficult assignment and preparing to schedule future appointments. Conduct the role play with two other peers so that you can rotate roles (interpreter making the request, the hearing decision-maker, and a person who observes and provides feedback) and provide feedback to one another. When providing feedback, the focus should be on the clarity of the request and explanation/justification (easy to understand by someone unfamiliar with deaf people and their experiences), is efficient in terms of the time it takes, is respectful and professional. You can all rotate roles until you all feel more comfortable making and justifying the request for a Deaf interpreter.
- What thoughts do you have about the strategies the interpreters identified as effective for working

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with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use? Which of the strategies do you use already and/or you see other practitioners using? Which strategies were new for you? What strategies can you see yourself applying right away? In what situations? Provide one or two examples.

- Do you have a clear understanding of how the strategies work, what they look like in application, and how to go about implementing the strategies? Which of the strategies is the most challenging for you and why? What do you see will be required for you to become comfortable in applying the strategy? What resources exist to help you in your process?
- Describe the factors most frequently identified as contributing to atypical language use by some individuals in the Deaf Community. What has been your own experience in working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language? How did these interactions go? What did you find that worked and what didn't work in establishing and maintaining communication? Provide one or two examples of both.
- As you think about ethical decision-making, how do you approach it as a process? Which of the tenets associated with the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct⁶ do you find the most challenging and why? Discuss an example of a situation where you were confronted with circumstances that required compliance with this tenet and explore what about the situation made compliance challenging.
- Much of ethical decision-making is based on an interpreter's discretion. How would you define discretion? How does discretion differ from personal choice or preference? How is discretion forged? How does an interpreter advance their discretion—help it to mature and become more reliable? What is the consequence of not having a reliable or mature base of discretion—for the consumers of the interpreter's services? For the interpreter?
- What are some of the ways the interpreters discussed empowering deaf consumers? How do these fit with your own experience? In what ways do you use your role as an interpreter to empower deaf individuals? How does empowerment fit into the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct? What does empowerment look like in application?

Content Summary:

Topics Addressed	Main Points
Settings in which interpreters work CDI as staff member Considerations when working with Deaf youth Training and IEP considerations Working with a CDI	There is a need to recruit more deaf individuals to serve as interpreters and to provide training that prepares them to be qualified. ITPs don't provide enough exposure to certain portions of the Deaf Community—such as deaf youth, deaf immigrants, and others with significant language variation. Deaf interpreters are concerned with how to empower deaf

⁶ A copy of the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct can be downloaded in either English or Spanish from the following RID website.
<https://rid.org/ethics/code-of-professional-conduct/>.

Checking in with consumer and elicitation techniques	consumers with sufficient access to communication so they can act autonomously/with self-determination to the greatest degree possible. This can be challenging in terms of the gaps in knowledge and experience that may exist for the deaf consumer (ex: telephone etiquette or courtroom protocol).
System thinking and system protocol	
Strategies and techniques	
Factors contributing to atypical language use by deaf individuals	Hearing interpreters have much to learn about effective teaming with Deaf colleagues. The demands of interpreting for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use provide evidence of the demand for more qualified Deaf interpreters. Hearing interpreters need to make the investment of time and commitment to become competent in working with Deaf interpreters in a range of situations.
Team interpreting: Considerations for	
Hearing interpreters	
Boundaries and the CPC; developing discretion and DO NO HARM	

Conversation 6: Samond Bishara & Michelle Draper – 29:04 minutes

Link: <https://youtu.be/hDD2ohZCZxA>

Description:

Samond and Michelle, two certified interpreters, discuss their experiences working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use with a specific focus on deaf children and deaf children who are part of immigrant families.

Samond, who is a Deaf interpreter who comes from an immigrant family himself, discusses some of the challenges associated with serving the needs of deaf children who are still in the process of language acquisition and development of personal/cultural identity.

One of the consistent challenges is that of working with hearing interpreters who are either not accustomed to working with a Deaf interpreter or who have insufficient experience in working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. The limitations of the hearing interpreter result in a greater burden to the Deaf interpreter in some situations. Samond talks about how he has worked with hiring entities to better assess the risks involved in sending novice interpreters to such appointments and determining when novice interpreter involvement is appropriate and when it is not. As well, both Samond and Michelle discuss topics related to interpreter role and responsibilities, misconceptions that exist regarding the role of a CDI, strategies for negotiating meaning, challenges associated with ethical decision-making, team interpreting dynamics, and other related topics.



Discussion Prompts:

- A common dilemma in the interpreting industry is how novice interpreters gain experience in handling more complex and diverse assignments if they are not assigned to them. Part of the dilemma is the reality that high risk situations are not an appropriate place for novice interpreters, but sometimes what seems like a routine, low risk situation can quickly change to a complex

situation with high risk. What were some of the suggestions offered by Samond in addressing the inclusion of novice interpreters in more high-risk settings? How do his suggestions fit with your own experience? What additional considerations can you and your peers identify for addressing the challenge of inducting novice practitioners to the practice of interpreting while protecting the interests of consumers? Who ultimately should decide whether a novice interpreter is involved or not involved in an assignment? Why?

- How does working with Deaf children differ from working with adults? How does working in an elementary school setting with a Deaf child differ from interpreting in a community setting with an adult? How does it differ in terms of role and process? Discuss with peers and develop a chart that compares and contrasts the similarities and differences between interpreting for deaf children in elementary school settings and interpreting for deaf adults in community settings.
- Michelle discusses how much of ethical decision-making is based on an interpreter's discretion. How would you define discretion? How does discretion differ from personal choice or preference? How is discretion forged? What are some of the ways Michelle references? How does an interpreter advance their discretion—help it to mature and become more reliable? What is the consequence of not having a reliable or mature base of discretion—for the consumers of the interpreter's services? For the interpreter?
- Reflecting on how interpreters are scheduled for community or contract assignments, what do you see as the information that needs to be shared with an interpreter as part of accepting an assignment? When the information that is needed is not available to the interpreter, what should the interpreter do? What is the consequence of accepting assignments without sufficient information? What is the consequence for the consumers? For the interpreter? For the agency that does the scheduling? What can interpreters do to improve the quality and thoroughness of information they receive related to assignments they accept?
- Identify what constitutes a risk for interpreters. What kinds of risks are common and/or unique to interpreting? What factors contribute to risk during interpreting (EX: complexity of the content being expressed, length of time available for the assignment, mental state of the consumer, etc.). What are examples of risks that exist or could arise while interpreting? Create a list. Compare your list with peers. What commonalities exist? What differences exist?
- Assess your readiness to interpret for deaf individuals with atypical language. On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate yourself—1 = not yet ready and 5 = experienced and well versed. What are the things you need to do to become better prepared to work with this portion of the Deaf Community? What is the plan of action you can follow to become better prepared? What resources do you need to help you become better prepared? Do you have ready access to these resources? If not, how can you secure access? How much time will it require to gain greater readiness? What are the motivations for doing so?
- What questions remain for you regarding interpreting for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use? How can you get answers to your questions that remain?

Content Summary:

Topics Addressed	Main Points
Variations in atypical use of ASL Team Interpreting concerns	Ethical decision-making involves discretion and knowledge of the range of appropriate and acceptable options from which an interpreter can choose. This requires significant work

Lack of training with this population Training considerations Strategies for negotiating meaning Deaf immigrants Role of CDI and misconceptions Novice interpreters and Deaf interpreters: concerns and considerations Ethical considerations Informing hearing consumers when the goal of the interaction cannot be achieved (ex: gaining informed consent) Gaps in the NAD-RID CPC	experience as an interpreter in a broad range of settings and with a diverse range of consumers. As a result, novice interpreters are not yet ready to interpret for deaf individuals who use sign language in an atypical manner. They need a strong foundation in communication engagement in more natural and authentic settings with deaf people in general and this portion of the deaf population specifically, before accepting assignments. Assignments with deaf individuals who use sign language in an atypical manner often involve higher risk due to language limitations. Deaf interpreters are disadvantaged if novice interpreters are sent to assignments as the team interpreter for assignments involving consumers who exhibit atypical language. This makes the work of the Deaf interpreter more complex and challenging and this in turn impacts the deaf consumer. Interpreters working with consumers who exhibit atypical language need to have a high degree of adaptation skills to accommodate variations among consumers. “One size doesn’t fit all.” Interpreters need a myriad of techniques and strategies when working with this portion of the deaf population.
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- MFD Solutions, Videographer Services
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Appendix

Conversation Series: Interpreters on interpreting with people who use atypical language

Webinar Transcript*

Hello, I am Dr. MJ Bienvenu, a consultant working with Northeastern University Center for Atypical Language Interpreting (CALI). CALI is a federally funded interpreter education project with sponsorship from the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. It is a project funded from January 2017 – December 2021 to prepare Deaf and hearing sign language interpreters to serve the needs of deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language.

The phrase ‘atypical language use’ refers to the use of sign language that does not conform to the recognized norms of a language community due to deviations in the form, content or function of the language. Atypical language use involves a variety of idiosyncratic and dysfluent characteristics, as well as gaps in application of various language features. These deviations are the result of many factors—early life language, social and educational deprivation, physical and cognitive or intellectual disability, trauma, among other related factors.

Interpreting for deaf individuals who use atypical language requires superior interpreting competency. The need for more specialized knowledge and competence within the interpreting workforce is the reason CALI was established. CALI has created several pathways to prepare interpreters to address these special needs within the deaf population including:

Online modules that can be completed through a structured cohort approach or as a self-paced option.

For those individuals accepted into a cohort, in addition to the online modules, participants will engage in:

- On-site classroom interactions
- Practical Experience Placement
- Supervised field work/induction
- Communities of Practice

Online resources—such as a *series* of 12 videos of unfolding scenarios to assist interpreters in improving their ethical decision-making, 8 sample interpreter responses to the unfolding scenarios and discussions between team interpreters, and an annotated bibliography linked to articles, books, presentations on a range of related topics.

Webinars on topics related to a range of topics available online for viewing at any time.

These resources are available on the CALI website in both ASL and English at <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/cali/>. All resources are available for study that can earn interpreters continuing education units (CEUs) with RID.

*Note: This translation was not created by the original presenter(s). It was created after the presentation was finalized and is intended to provide an additional way to access the information.

This video, and the 6 others that accompany it, have also been developed by CALI as an additional resource for interpreters and Deaf community members seeking to improve their knowledge and skills for working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use.

Specifically what these 7 videos offer is access to conversations between Deaf Community members and Deaf and hearing interpreters about their experiences working with this portion of the Deaf population—the challenges they face, the strategies they have found effective, the type of skills and abilities they possess that facilitate their working relationships, the importance of linguistic and cultural competence, the importance of respect for consumers, the challenges associated with decision making by interpreters and finding common ways to discuss our values and frameworks with which we approach our work.

These seven videos will provide you with access to conversations that include diverse perspectives—Deaf perspectives, CODA perspectives, BIPOC perspectives. Several of the Deaf and/or interpreters participating in these 7 videos are immigrants, or first generation Americans born of immigrants. Because they are talking with one another, you have access to rich insights you might not be exposed to if these individuals were talking with you directly. It is their relationships with one another and the communities in which they live that allow them to speak openly and frankly with one another—always with mutual respect and regard.

The first of these conversations is with a group of five Deaf community members—April Jackson, Rosemary Wanis, Thomas Horejes, Keven Poore, and me, MJ Bienvenu. We represent different regions of the United States—east and west coasts, the southeast and midwest.

Several of us are Deaf of Deaf, several of us teach or have taught Deaf Studies and Interpreting, several of us work as advocates within the Deaf Community, several of us come from social work or counseling backgrounds. Two of the panelists work with CALI as online facilitators for modules and as field-study supervisors related to interpreting for deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use—Rosemary Wanis and Keven Poore. All of us are Deaf interpreters and have long histories working in the Deaf-World and as professionals and navigating life as Deaf individuals.

The discussion between the 5 of us is timely in that CALI is approaching its final year of funding and the impact of its resources and activities is becoming evident in the conversations happening within the Deaf and interpreting communities. In particular, conversations about how to discuss language use within the Deaf Community and its variations and deviations are increasing. Questions are arising about how we should discuss differences in language use among the deaf population—who decides the terminology that is used, what does it mean and for what purpose is it used, what is the impact of the terminology on stigmatizing or further stereotyping deaf individuals? A significant portion of the conversation between the 5 of us focuses on the role of terminology among professionals serving specific populations and the danger of terminology as a form of labeling, judging, or further marginalizing individuals. It is hoped that our discussion will provide insight in support of the conversations happening in our broader communities and will contribute to the important conversations that are taking place by offering a range of perspectives from within the communities.

In addition to discussing terminology and labels, the panel will discuss other topics relating to communication and interpreting with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical use of sign language. The discussion is about 1.5 hours in length. After the group discussion, I will be back to offer some key points from the discussion. Thank you and enjoy.

Panel Presentation: Conversation with the Deaf Community about Atypical Language Transcript*

Facilitator: MJ Bienvenu

Panelists: Thomas Horejes, April Jackson, Keven Poore, Rosemary Wanis

MJ: Hello! I am happy that the four of you could join this discussion of atypical language use by deaf people. First, please briefly introduce yourselves: give your name, your position and any connection you have to the field of interpreting. Please keep this short; about 30 seconds.

Looking at your order on my screen, I would like to start with Tommy.

TH: I am honored to be here. My name is Tommy Horejes. I am an advocate at heart. I have worked with many different people, using a range of sign styles. I was also the Executive Director of DEAF, Inc., a nonprofit advocacy organization in St. Louis, MO. We dealt with a lot of people who were labeled as having atypical language. It is an honor to be here.

MJ: Next is Keven.

KP: Hello, I am Keven Poore, currently working as the Director of a substance addiction treatment service for deaf people at NTID (the National Technical Institute for the Deaf). I have also for a long time been a CDI (Certified Deaf Interpreter). My background is in mental health and substance abuse, and I work with people who have a range of signing abilities. I have been involved with CALI for some time, teaching modules and facilitating cohort supervisors. Really, that's what led to my involvement in tonight's event.

MJ: Thank you. Next is Rosemary.

RW: Hi, I am Rosemary Wanis. I am a Certified Deaf Interpreter and a National Deaf Interpreter Trainer. My background is in social work; I identify as an immigrant. I came here from Egypt as an infant and was raised in California. I am now a full-time teacher of Deaf Studies and Interpreting. Thank you for this opportunity. I am honored to be here.

MJ: That brings us to April.

AJ: Hello, everyone! My name is April Jackson. I am Deaf. I work full time for the government and am a Deaf interpreter. I have done many different types of interpreting. I grew up in a Deaf family, with a different background in Sign, using BASL (Black ASL), conventional ASL or Old ASL, code-switching through a range of signing types while interpreting as I grew up.

MJ: Thank you.

I think I forgot to introduce myself. I am MJ Bienvenu, a retired professor from Gallaudet University. However, I have been involved with interpreting for a long time, since the 1980s. As a Deaf Interpreter, I have worked with different Deaf people as I grew up in the Deaf World. I am a contractor with Northeastern University and have been involved with CALI from the beginning. That brought me to moderate this panel discussion this afternoon, today.

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It's hard not to mention dates, but because this is recorded, meaning it can be any date, and this recording is in a sense dateless. So, today I have to remember not to use dates, but you can.

MJ: Okay, we will start with the first question. This first question is for all of you to answer. When you see the term "atypical language user" applied to a Deaf person, what is your first thought? What is your reaction to the term? Next, what characteristics have you noticed that seem to identify atypical signing? What factors do you think cause that atypical language use?

Who would like to start? Who is first? Anyone?

KP: "Atypical" is a problematic term for many people who are not technically members of disability or medical groups, and in the Deaf community some people are uncomfortable with the label. From my own perspective, "atypical" is something that we grew up seeing; interpreters trained in ITP seem to have been taught a generally used form of sign language and have trouble when they encounter "different" signing. I think that is the difficulty; there is actually a range of sign language use and some of us, encountering usage at the outer end of the range, term "atypical." Sometimes we need to reframe our lens on this, to ask "atypical to whom?" Does the "atypical" label belong to the signing person or to the interpreter? I think this could be discussed further. I would start with that.

MJ: Okay, next? April.

AJ: My first reaction was that I've never seen that word before, because the term is not used in the community. Then I realized that the phenomenon is known, and the word describes the language used by some people, based on their backgrounds, their birth and upbringing. The term is used by linguists, but social workers and therapists are familiar with the word in a different context: labeling of social and case classifications. Interpreters like us will encounter the term, learn its meaning, and be able to apply it to interpreting assignments. This knowledge would help us prepare for assignments, to make sure that the client's background is known. Knowing the type of language used by the person, client, or patient will help us best interpret for that person. That would be nice; that information should be included in assignments. Instead of flat statements like "no language" it would be helpful to be told specifically what a given person needs. What are the gaps in the client's language skills? How much knowledge does the client possess? What content do we need to provide this person? Really, "atypical" makes me wonder why the community doesn't generally use it. Or have I just overlooked its use? It seems more like a technical term for describing language and communication.

MJ: Okay, Rosemary.

RW: I also, seeing the word for the first time, was puzzled and a bit perturbed. Are we calling Deaf people "atypical"? In the course of learning and working with CALI, developing content, teaching, facilitating cohorts, I have come to understand the term. I think that some resistance is because the word is applied to Deaf people by outsiders, often hearing professionals, and imported into the Deaf world, where it meets resistance. If the word had originated among Deaf people, maybe the feeling would be different. We have not really found a word that fits our experience of language and communication across the range we know. This indicates that the equity behind this naming is important; that it is critical that the term does not imply superiority, which we of course do not accept. Having grown up among people who use varied communication styles and readily code-switch to harmonize with each other, we do not think of these people as being "different" from one another, nor that one style is better than another. Is that the type of judgement behind terms like "atypical"? That idea causes unease. That is not the point;

instead, the point is that this term can help define interpreting assignments. Knowing in advance what to expect, we can appropriately prepare for effective communication.

MJ: Tommy?

TH: First, when I saw that word, it seemed to be about power, deciding how to label people. Who decides this? Let's start with "what is typical?" What does the word mean? If one imagines that ASL is typical, that is already a privileged concept. Who created ASL? It was constructed from a white-centric perspective. Does that mean that BASL (Black ASL) or other variants are "atypical"? That makes me wonder. I think we need to be careful about such labels. Who decides what label to apply, and when? I am also very mindful that our identity is of two types: I have a personal identity - who I am - and a socially ascribed identity, which is how I am perceived, whether I wish it or not. This is a different thing, coming from a power relationship. Do people who are labeled "atypical signers" agree with the designation? And who are the people who accept the "atypical" label? Who are those who reject it? I recognize also that your place on a biological to cultural spectrum depends on where you are in our world and that this determines whether you are viewed as "atypical." I know that Dr. Dennis Cokely mentioned different ways that can lead to a person's language being described as "atypical" from birth or adventitiously. The term is medical; I believe April mentioned medical terminology. But suppose that someone from Egypt, for example, immigrated to the US and signed differently or looked different, would that person be considered atypical? For example, Japanese Deaf culture minimizes facial expression to conform to Japanese national cultural expectation, a conformity that applies particularly to females. The need to use facial expression may fit their female or Deaf identity but, again, who decides what is atypical? For me, the word is very powerful, very political. We need to be very careful how we use and define it. We need to be sure that the person who is labeled "atypical" agrees to it and that the label is applied in the spirit of supporting communication access.

MJ: Excellent. That leads perfectly to our next question. It is really interesting that the word "atypical" is resisted by some people, who prefer terms such as "unique" or "dysfluent." Languages have patterns, as we all know, which we use to communicate easily. People with atypical language, who have probably been denied education, who may not have learned ASL, who may have mental challenges, are hard to communicate with. Looking up the prefix "a-" tells us that it means "not" typical. The five of us have different backgrounds, but we can understand each other. We can converse, we can have clear discussions. People with atypical language often cannot. But is "atypical" the right word? That is the second question for discussion.

I think Tommy said that we need to be sure that people with atypical language accept the label "atypical," but maybe those people are not able to answer that question. How can we make sure we are not belittling those persons? This ties in with the second question: if "atypical" is not the best word, what other word do you think would be better?

AJ: I think this is a really tough question. I'm thinking about it. The word we're talking about, as I said, I had never seen before. Thomas said there is a question about how labels are assigned. Okay, fine. Is it the community? Or don't we know? Who came up with the word? A hearing person? I don't know. Is it best for us in the Deaf community to create a name? I can't think of one now, but we should vote on it. Who specializes in medicine? Who is a specialist in ASL? Who had studied this in depth? Those people might decide on terms that the community could accept. I am not very involved with questions at this level, where words and their suitability for use are decided. I am not a specialist in this area. I respect those who study it. Again, this is a word I have not seen before; I don't know who or what it's from. Is it a new term, or one that has changed meaning? This is a tough question. Maybe others should chime in.

MJ: Keven, I saw you raise your hand.

KP: Yes. I recently spoke with some people on social media who objected to that word. They asked who had decided on its use. Had the labeled deaf person been asked whether s/he accepted the word? Someone suggested using the word "unique" but another person pointed out that the sign for "unique" resembles the sign for "special," which has negative connotations: the yellow bus that every morning took kids to the "special" program. In this context, the word is not necessarily positive. I think that for our discussion, in our work, atypical interpreting works in this setting. For example, if I am told that an assignment that I have been given will be with someone whose language use is atypical, I would not take this to mean that the person himself was atypical, but the information would shape my internal dialogue and help me prepare to work with him. I don't think this label is intended for general conversation, but for it to be understood and accepted by the community would help people to understand what CALI does. I am not sure how this acceptance would come about.

I saw a new term today - well, not new, but new to me - "diverse communication." I shared this with Rosemary today, and I believe it will be discussed in CALI soon. Someone will make a presentation on "diverse communication." Might "diverse" work better than "atypical"? I don't know, but I can't really think of one term to suggest. Because "atypical" in our discussion seems to cover a wide range of communication issues. A person with cerebral palsy may have limited physical functionality but have no language barriers other than struggling to express themselves. But for the word to also apply to people who lack the cognitive capability, who may need to point to things rather than sign. Does "atypical" fit all of these? Is there one word to cover all of these issues? That is a challenge.

MJ: Thank you. Tommy?

TH: Keven signed something that I want to capture: (RANGE). That, I think, is where we need to focus; on "atypical", meaning of lesser status. That's wrong. April, I think, mentioned equality issues, so atypical signers are people some consider to be inferior. This, I think, is wrong; it is more a language variation issue. It's like the five registers, ranging from formal to informal. I think that fits "atypical" language, so another term for this could be "language variation" or "language range." That term is less about power systems and showing relative status. We don't want to do that. Is someone born with cerebral palsy relegated to a lesser status? No. The systems perspective may say "yes" but the person herself will not see herself as being of lower status. So I think we need to recognize this range of language use when we consider what words might fit that.

MJ: If you don't mind, I'm going to interpose something. I think it's clear that we have numerous varieties of sign language, for instance Black ASL and so forth. That is not a problem. But people who are language-deprived, who have been deprived of an education, and others like them, have a very hard time communicating. Those are the atypical language users. People with other disabilities, I think you are right, we should not refer to as having language issues when they just have physical challenges. That's okay, but we're speaking of people who are cognitively deprived, language deprived. You know that there are many deaf people whose language skills are not good. The problem may have been no schooling, erroneous school placement, or actual cognitive challenges. I think we need to keep that in mind. Speaking of language variation, differing backgrounds, different schools, college educated or not college educated, those are not a problem. I think we are speaking more of a different category, who ought not be called "atypical people" but people who are "atypical language users." We need to keep the two categories separate. It is tempting to label the person; there is a tendency in American society to label people. Rather, we are speaking of a group of people who have specific patterns - and there are many - of language usage that make it very hard to communicate. Some of us have had experience dealing with such people, with whom we struggle to communicate. Strategies for successful communication with one such

person do not transfer to another. Each is a challenge; each needs a new strategy. Those are the cases of atypical language use. I think that is a clear definition.

We will discuss this more in the next question. Anyway, this will all come together for you as we continue. I do not mean to suggest that your views are wrong. I think that the word "atypical" is new and people find it awkward to use.

I think Rosemary wanted to say something. Yes, I wanted to make sure I didn't overlook you. Thank you!

RW: Thank you, MJ, for emphasizing CALI's viewpoint, that it is the language, not the person. It is sometimes tough to disentangle the two and focus on the language and how people go through their daily lives with this language access, language use. This range of issues, for example, struggling to identify pronouns, struggling with concepts of time, past, present and future.

MJ [Interjection] Right.

RW: Struggling with identification, the names of family members, their addresses, being able to spell the name of their street, and other matters, and different mental health challenges. They may have been in prison for many years; they may have been able to sign when they entered prison, but years of isolation have changed their ability to use language; it has atrophied. Many different things can impact and change the way people sign, or they may have been like this from birth. We don't know. So yes, let's focus on language use, not on the person.

MJ: Does anyone want to add to this before we move on? Ah, Tommy and then April. Tommy?

TH: I still would try to challenge MJ's recent comments, because we haven't done enough research yet to make a definite claim that we can prove that atypical language usage is separate from language variation. I think that if we have enough resources, enough expert people who have been trained to understand people like those with cerebral palsy or schizophrenia. Having built that body of knowledge and identified the signing patterns, that could become a way to recognize variations that are not in fact unique, atypical, separate from most signers. But I think we're not there yet. I think that CALI is attempting to learn, to collect data, to interview different atypical people, to see enough patterns that lead to the point where they can recognize new language groups that may not fit into the traditional definition of language variation but that offers an additional sub-category. I'm not sure what the frame would be, but I think we have not yet arrived at the point to make some decisions. So I want to be careful.

MJ: Thank you. April?

AJ: Tommy said just what I was going to; he stole my words. It's fine! MJ, thanks for the clarification! You know, sometimes we find words offensive, obviously because we're so American. We just object to certain terms. Now, I've reflected on this and changed my thinking. The term has already been used by CALI, based on research - and thanks for all you do. But one thing I wonder about is how the discussions took place within CALI; the point is that there was no effort to spread awareness of the term. If that had been done, including discussions and workshops, maybe we would be comfortable with the word. It seemed an odd term, unfamiliar to me, a strange label. If, for example, a person was told "you are atypical," the response would be denial of the label, but I don't think it actually changes anything, to answer question number 2.

MJ: Okay. That helps lead to the next one, too. I am curious: you have met many different Deaf people who sign, and you have met people who are atypical users of the language. Sorry, but we're back to that label. But communicating with those people - whether in social settings, through professional work or

advocacy, when dealing with them, what was your experience? How did you identify and navigate the challenges? What strategies did you use for successful communication? How did you arrange what you had that helped you succeed in communicating with those people who struggled with language use? Do any of you want to talk about this?

MJ: Tommy?

TH: So, I myself grew up strongly oral and used SimCom until I was in my early 20s, until I entered college. Before college, I thought that my signing - SimCom - was ASL. I used SimCom and speech and thought that was ASL. I didn't know what ASL looked like until, when I entered college, I met two CODA interpreters. When they interpreted for me, I told them I wanted them to sign my way, using my ASL. They were using signs that seemed like gestures to me, not my "ASL." They told me that what they were using was ASL, and I told them they were wrong: I was using ASL and, as a deaf person, I knew what ASL was. They then told me they were CODAs, a term I did not know. I had never realized that hearing, no, Deaf parents, had hearing children. I thought that was impossible, and never realized, until my 20s, that Deaf parents could produce hearing children. That was when I realized that the signs I had been using were not ASL, which meant that I was atypical. I examined myself then and found my identity unsettled. Then they taught me. I learned ASL through interpreters. Now my dominant signing hand is my left, even though I write, throw, do everything else with my right hand. But I sign mainly with my left, because I learned from interpreters. Does this make me atypical? I have used myself as a case study for this. I have many oral friends in St. Louis, MO, in the strong deaf oral community there. They use SimCom; I could view them as atypical signers, from the viewpoint of the ASL Deaf community. I was also an advocate for GLAD (Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness) and saw many different people, a range of consumers. My experience fit, in my mind, it was important for me to discard any possible stigma. Instead, I focused on the consumers' access needs. What did they want? Some consumers were very visual learners; these days I have an iPad for visual reference, but back then, going to a doctor's office when I was a DIA worker, I used paint samples as props when the doctor discussed urine color; I would use gestures and those props to accommodate the consumers' needs.

MJ: Thank you. April?

AJ: I have interacted a lot with people like these we call "atypical." A lot. They have been young and old. That was most inspiring. The most important thing was making sure that they were involved and understood things like "why are we meeting?" "Why are we here?" "Why?" I would explain these things. And an example of involvement would be telling a consumer to stop being silly. I would be there as an interpreter, but this slight shift of stance let me connect, form a relationship with the person, you know? It opened direct communication between us. "You're being silly." "Are you tired?" "Are you sleepy?" "Get off it!" Now we'd be fine; the connection meant that when I was interpreting, we'd have a back-and-forth flow, hopefully with response from the consumer. Then, if someone asks the consumer a question and it's not clear whether the consumer understands, I can come up with a different, unrelated question and learn from the consumer's response how to determine his or her understanding. This is a kind of playing around with words. Now, as for the actual question, I could act it out, use gesture to illustrate the question's meaning, use my own name sign in place of the consumer's, and ask the consumer for confirmation. I "become" the consumer, acting things out. I may ask where I am, where the consumer is, and watch the response. I may tell a story or *series* of stories to fill in apparent gaps in the communication chain. I would do this in the consumer's language mode, seeking their understanding. The challenges here would be based on the consumer's linguistic level, the language level of the question, and the situation under consideration. I may bring in visual cues: pictures and the like. I may use objects that belong to my children; I would find out the content to be discussed and then look for suitable materials. I may write or

draw; I would try to use a variety of materials and tools to interact with the consumer, to make sure that s/he understands. That is key. That's what I have done.

MJ: Thank you. Keven, Rosemary, do you want to answer this?

KP: Well, I often find that I don't know what I'll be facing until I arrive. I'll be faced with a blank slate. Good to have information beforehand, but sometimes I have none. I may sit in a waiting room with the consumer and discover how I'll need to adjust my communication style and learn the strategies I'll need to use in the current situation. And, again, a person with an intellectual disability may not have a way to tell me specific information, making it important to have other people present - a case manager, social worker, friend or family member. I use the resources who support the consumer. Traditional interpreting doesn't work in these situations; it needs to be discarded, replaced by a changed approach that may need to be explained to the people involved in the encounter, who will want to know why a different procedure is being used. The process may become disjointed or may proceed smoothly; both are possible. Again, it's important to be creative and flexible, and prepared to invest extra time on communication, even scheduling an additional session if necessary. Again, in these situations, we wear different hats, use different approaches.

MJ: Next is Rosemary.

RW: April's examples were a beautiful example of dialogic interpreting, the back-and-forth interaction between interpreter and consumer that allows the drawing-out of information from the consumer. Keven's examples showed the open process, including everyone in the room to pool language resources and be sure of successful communication by getting everyone in the meeting involved in the message transmission. It often happens that a Deaf interpreter will use props, personal skills, objects in the room or brought in, creating drawings, or using her/his own person as a prop, demonstrating an action, role playing, describing, depicting, using role shift, and being incredibly creative with the language used to communicate successfully. S/he will try different strategies until arriving at one that works and brings things together and people connect, which is the important thing. Yes, this is how real success is possible.

MJ: Those responses from you perfectly lead into a current area of concern: the CPC, the Code of Professional Conduct. I see your expressions changing. I also make faces at the CPC, which provides limited guidance on how to work with deaf people who are atypical language users and have limitations. The CPC appears to have been designed based on the needs of white Deaf people who are in professional fields, who know how to advocate for themselves, who know how to negotiate their interactions with interpreters, but not for working with this other population, a much larger group than the small number of professionals. So how can interpreters increase the guidance and redirect it to fit this larger group of clients or consumers? The CPC is not sufficient. I think many of us have discussed adapting our approaches, sometimes perhaps making decisions that conflict with the CPC but are best for the deaf person. Worse, this is not possible in relation to medical decisions; it cannot be done in legal situations. An example from my own experience involved a situation where I was told that the person that I was interpreting for used "pure ASL" and I accepted, thinking this would work out fine. After a three-hour drive, I arrived to find that the man actually had no language; he only understood "arrest." That was all he understood. I could not connect with him before we entered the courtroom; I discussed the situation with my feed interpreter and the social worker, and found that the social worker, realizing that the consumer understood no English, assumed that meant that he was a "pure ASL" user. Now, I'm in a courtroom, in a situation that conflicts with the CPC, so I appeal to the judge: "Excuse me, Your Honor, may I step out of my role as an interpreter and act as a Deaf advocate?" The judge was nonplussed but agreed. I then explained the situation, how I had just spent an hour with the consumer and established that he was not able to tell time, that he was unable to use a mobile phone, that he was unable to do any of the other

things I tried with him. The judge then said "Okay, fine" and turned and excoriated the woman and the lawyer. I felt that I had "done wrong" but at the same time I had made a correct decision. Many interpreters do not have the intuitive sense that we do. How can the CPC be improved to incorporate and recognize the training that would fit these people? Have you got any ideas or suggestions?

Yes, this is a tough one. I know it's tough. Rosemary?

RW: I have been thinking of that issue. I have felt frustrated and disappointed because RID, not the CPC, but the SPP - the Standard Practice Paper relating to Deaf interpreting is old.

1997?! That's ...

MJ: 23 years.

RW: That's right. That's the only place you can see any mention of language diversity. Just one section of that paper, that's all. And 1997? That's old! And of course the CPC and the SPPs interact with one another. They both need to be addressed. I agree, this needs to be improved.

MJ: Any thoughts?

AJ: The CPC is based on the white people who wrote it, made the rules. Now, when BLM is hot, many things are being changed. The CPC is one that needs to change. More BIPOC interpreters are appearing now, and when told to take the test, demur. Because the test is seen as white- based, they refuse to take it. Some have other reasons, yes. And yes, I agree that the CPC needs to change, including diverse people whose knowledge is based on their experience and what they have seen in the community, in the process, not just the same group who have done this all along.

MJ: Kevin - Keven - do you want to add anything more related to that question?

KP: It occurs to me that, I think, a critical point is the directive to "do no harm." If I have to transform the way I interpret to deal with a person - as when you stepped out of your role - so long as I do no harm, I can justify my actions on that basis. There is no specific language covering this, but we are led by our intuition, our sense of what must be done to deal with the situation. "Do no harm."

MJ: I think - no, I'll let Tommy speak first.

TH: I want to add to that "Do no harm" and I would caution interpreters that if you are placed in a situation you don't understand, and decide to do your best, that could lead to more harm than deciding that you need to withdraw from the assignment, acknowledging that you are not the right person for this. I think this is tough for interpreters to admit, but I want interpreters to be mindful that sometimes withdrawing from an assignment is better than proceeding on the basis of "it's better than nothing" and causing severe damage, legal or medical, a life-altering decision that impacts the Deaf consumer.

MJ: Thank you, Tommy. You addressed what I was going to say in response to the question: what would you suggest doing? Withdrawal would be the right thing to do. If I cannot do the job, I should leave. Some people would say, "well, I'm the only person here in this town, at this time," but that does not matter. Withdrawal would do less harm. April?

AJ: When people ask me for advice, what I do is tell them to trust their gut and work with integrity, and that's all. Without integrity, you can mess things up. That will reflect on you as interpreters. And affect the Deaf person too. And the community. Be honest in your work. Follow your gut. As a Deaf person - both Deaf and Hearing have intuition - but as a team it's important to communicate, to decide what to do.

MJ: Very good. And that leads us to the next item. CALI, at Northeastern University, has a 5- year grant to train Deaf and hearing interpreters on methods for providing service to Deaf people with atypical language. This includes online training, face-to-face practicum, supervised work, working with interpreting agencies; many different approaches are included in this. I understand that Rosemary and Keven have already facilitated a few online courses. What was your experience of how to prepare interpreters to work with that group? What was the greatest challenge students had in learning how to improve their work with these people? And interpreter training programs monitoring the range of language skills - ASL skills - that their students have, what can we suggest? What challenges do these students and interpreting programs face? What kind of challenges are these?

Keven?

KP: When developing Module 3, which I taught, (Rosemary and I both worked on developing content for Module 3), "Interpreting" and also from my own experience as a CDI, I see how my feeder interpreters work or see how other feeders work. Hearing interpreters in particular, entering ITPs have very little sign language skill to begin with - this is true of most, though not all; some have grown up signing, some are Codas, but these are few. This means that they have a long way to go. I think the challenge is to recognize this, when they come to parity with the fluency of Deaf people. I would say they never reach that point. But accept that. It's okay. Be okay with it, and you can be more honest, more humble. You will then ask for help, will work better with your team, will ask for a team, etc. I think that is key for ITPs, humility. From the beginning, from the first day of class. But, again, I am not an ITP professor. I'm thinking about what I would do if I were.

That's one thing I have noticed. Rosemary, do you have any others?

MJ: Rosemary?

RW: Yes, thank you. I teach interpreters and one huge challenge, a negative influence on ITPs all over America, is that what we use, the materials we are given for training, have a strong white, idealized influence. Beautiful backgrounds and impeccably formed, edited signing, and then students go out into the Deaf community - and is that what they find? No, there is an enormous variety there. Speaking of "atypical," it really fits those hearing interpreters who are learning to become interpreters. Once they get out into the Deaf community, everything is atypical, because of their classroom experience. It's more about the interpreter - hearing or Deaf, new interpreters need to examine their own exposure, experience, interactions, community interaction, and ability to code-switch to adapt to different people. The new interpreter needs to realize that it's himself who is atypical, not the people he's dealing with. Do you understand? This is how it seems through my own lens. The point is true: ITPs do need to improve. In what we show, what we teach, we need to gather a very broad assortment of experiences for our students, so that interpreters stop being atypical themselves. Doing that, we would see improvement. CALI is really filling a huge gap in training programs out there. It's offering something we do not do enough. If we had been doing enough, CALI would not be needed. It's trying to fill a gap by offering specialized training. I am thankful to CALI for offering this. Interpreters who have been through this program are more confident, have more tools and resources available. We collect what is needed to build their ability to cope, to meet and accommodate to match their jobs. From the beginning to the end of the program we see an enormous benefit for interpreters, and the Deaf community benefits also. I find this wonderful and touching.

MJ: Tommy.

TH: ITPs - I'd like to emphasize also that ITPs often run only 2 years. And then that's it. Just two years? And much of the focus is on ASL. Where is the culture? And those who teach often teach academic ASL, using a very white curriculum with a very limited perspective. You're right, two years and you're out and into the world of work and you find your training is not relevant. So that's where I feel that community involvement is important. I've noticed that Deaf clubs have dwindled in number, that Deaf community mingling events are different places than they were 30 years ago. So, I recognize that interpreters 30 years ago had more opportunity to interact with the Deaf community than now. But that does not mean just giving up. No, I think that interpreters and interpreting students who are in ITPs need to roll up their sleeves and really involve themselves in the Deaf community, become members of state associations for the deaf that have conferences, events for mingling. Now, with COVID, it's a bit of a challenge, but do some research on your own and really look at culture out there. So, when we're talking about atypical signers, they are also connected to atypical cultures. Language and culture can't be separated. People who are atypical language users come from cultures. Whether those cultures are atypical or not is a different discussion. I think it is important for interpreters to be mindful that there is a culture behind that person too. So that not only are you trying for communication access for that person but access to their culture as well. That will be a long road to really build that communication access and trust in the Deaf community.

MJ: Okay, April?

AJ: Those are great remarks. Thank you. I grew up in a Deaf family and noticed that the majority of interpreters were white. I'm from Missouri and grew up with a majority of white interpreters, who approached us as colonizers, making it clear that they thought it was commonplace for Deaf people to be wrong. Our parents were always fighting for our rights as Deaf Black persons. They told these people to stop oppressing us, that they were the ones who were wrong. If change was needed, I would help them to change or whatever. Their response was that they had gone to school to learn their jobs. When my mother asked who their teachers had been, when she was told "hearing" she said no, it's best to have Deaf teachers who understand their culture. For many years, hearing people have appropriated what should have been Deaf jobs. ASL belongs to the Deaf. It's their culture, their language; our language. That was the way for many years until finally Deaf teachers began to appear. When good interpreters were asked who had taught them and replied "Deaf teachers" we rejoiced. That's what we needed: Deaf teachers. Not just Deaf but BIPOC teachers, too, you know. Students who were BIPOC, the majority of Black students, were in classes with no peers, with white teachers, and that caused them enough disquiet to leave, to drop out. All those we're seeing out there were white. Times are changing, getting better. I myself now teach at two different colleges, so I get it. Before classes begin, students are asked whose class they will register for - mine or the other teacher's - a hearing Black teacher or a Deaf Black teacher and they overwhelmingly chose me. They tell me that it's because I'm Deaf, they finally have a Deaf Black teacher. We needed to move some students out into the other class to balance the numbers. I saw for myself what I had seen talked about in the community. I got to see the impact of my being a Deaf professor for an ITP program.

MJ: You've made me think, to see the challenge that ITPs have in hiring teachers. Who is hired - white, hearing, the same as always - that at this time, 2021, there are changes needed. We have a lot more diversity - more awareness of diverse communities within the Deaf world. We know of variations within ASL - White ASL, Black ASL. My understanding of Black ASL is that it's more tied to the community, not shared with the rest of the world, except as information needs to be shared with researchers, as is proper. Other than that, it is exclusive to that community.

Now when white people intrude on this, it is not right. But where are the Black interpreters, as you said, not finding teachers like themselves, they have left the field. This means that community based Black

interpreters are needed, which is controversial. But does that mean their use is wrong? No; they know their people. And that is a challenge for interpreter programs.

AJ: True, yes.

MJ: One of their challenges. From what you've all said today, it looks like interpreter programs need to examine who we hire to teach and what students are allowed to enter the program. This is interesting. Okay, wow.

MJ: Now, applying this to "atypical," the same small coterie of interpreters cannot succeed with people who use atypical language. CALI is trying to fill in the gap, which is not easy; there is a small number of people available for this work anyway. Okay, Rosemary?

RW: Also, this leads to the as yet undiscussed topic of bias. If interpreters do not have enough exposure to different groups in the Deaf community, it is easy to develop bias. How do we unpack bias? Where are our opportunities to analyze what assumptions we make about people because of their language use? How does this affect the decisions I make as an interpreter? CALI does a great job at the beginning of the program, with its focus on unpacking our own self, our own bias, which improves us as interpreters. I think this is very important.

MJ: I think you make a good point, because the more qualified you are, the more aware you are of what you can or not can do. That was awkwardly worded; I meant to say can or cannot. Interesting how that came out. That connects us with the question of what advice you would give - if you were already a working interpreter, what advice would you give to an interpreter who was stymied in communicating with atypical language users? How would you suggest they improve their communication abilities? What communication strategies would you suggest? What do you feel would be most successful? What would you do? Have you any suggestions to make? Any ideas?

AJ: MJ, do you mean suggestions to make as a teammate?

MJ: As an interpreter. You have already told me about the intuitive sense; that's fine. But if you encounter an interpreter who seems not to have developed that sense yet - if they ever will - what communication access ideas or strategies would you offer? Let's suppose this is an interpreter working alone, improbably, I know, but the point is, what strategies? We would say bring in a Deaf teammate. That's one strategy. What other strategies can you think of? What are your ideas?

MJ: Tommy.

TH: I'm often reminded of the Gish model. Gish emphasized the objective, what you hope to accomplish, what your desired outcome is. That is the focus. So, as an interpreter, if communication becomes difficult, prioritize what you hope to accomplish in this interaction, and that end goal helps to screen out some of the distractions arising from the encounter. Determine the goal. Often, in my experience of interpreting field work, atypical signers are not sure what the end goal is either. That's where we can work together, to mediate that goal. Bring in the doctor; what is her goal as a doctor? Is it the same as the consumer's or do they differ? Also, atypical sign language users will meander in their discourse, so we have to clear away the dross. Am I to go on and interpret every utterance? Is that necessary? I would often put in 20 to 30 minutes of work with the consumer before I was ready to interpret; I would ask the communication to be delayed until I had built a communication link that would let me proceed. I think that the Gish model could be used as a strategy if someone was in a position where they had to work alone, with no one else available, no CDI to work with, just the interpreter alone with the client. That is very tough.

MJ: April.

AJ: I want to add a comment to what Thomas said. From my experience, I would say that when a consumer's dialogue rambles, I would convey exactly what they said. The other party needs to know the consumer's language capabilities. The consumer's discourse may wander, but they are telling a story, even though it doesn't make sense. I would interpret that stream. The other party may understand and respond to it. They may know more than me. They may have worked together - a consultant or social worker - and know each other very well. So, I have to interpret. It's not my place to decide what isn't important. How do you know what's important? How do you know?

No, this seems unreasonable to me. I would let the other party know that what I was receiving did not seem to make sense, that it wandered. And the other party might tell me that they know, saying something like the consumer is tired, something that lets me know that they know the consumer very well. Some people don't think straight, but ramble all over the place, or it may indicate that they are sick. The point is, I interpret everything they say, every utterance, no matter how convoluted. I may remember something the consumer said from a previous meeting, something that happened before, and suddenly understand a statement. I would check with the consumer, saying, "oh, you mean...?" and might get confirmation that would unlock the current discourse and let me interpret it.

MJ: April, in other words, you feel it would be okay to say you need to back up and clarify a miscue? You feel that would be more appropriate than dismissing it and proceeding? It would be more correct to disclose an error - of understanding, of omission or another type - that you made as an interpreter?

AJ: Yes. That's fine.

MJ: Ok, Rosemary?

RW: Again, trainers teach interpreters to start speaking as soon as they see a person's hand raised. Or as soon as someone starts speaking, to start signing. Pause a moment; in this program I have noticed that many interpreters who came through programs come to realize that they can take control of the process, to be allowed to do their job, expanding, implicature, using metaphors, role-playing, and other tools because we want effective communication - to meet our speaker goal, as Gish would say. Effectively controlling the pace of information exchange until things fall into place and you feel released from constraint. The interpreter's role space becomes broad and the procedure becomes more calm. It's a beautiful process.

MJ: Yes, it's fascinating because it really comes together. You know, our government is like a football team, tending to label everything, giving each a different name - that's the American system, the tendency to give everyone a different label: Department of Education; OSERS; VR services... there's an array of them. VR services gave money to CALI, generally identifying their disbursements. Deaf people and interpreters frequently confront programs where the labels don't fit. We have just said that "atypical" could apply to a range of people; how could you make it clear to those in power that people have differing barriers? Some may be language deprived, some may be communication deprived, differing from, for lack of a better word, "typical" deaf people who have full access to language? How can you tell someone that these groups are different without seeming to belittle one in comparison with another? We don't want that - it's clear from our discussion that you don't want that. How can we communicate the fact that these people are part of a multifaceted Deaf community? Government tends to apply labels arbitrarily, grouping disparate people together. How can you make the distinctions clear? How can you communicate that?

MJ: April.

AJ: Thomas mentioned that he was raised oral and used SimCom. To me, if you happened to think you were atypical; but before, you weren't, I know, but would you have thought yourself defective? I use the term "numbskull." Is that how you would have seen yourself? When you were told that SimCom was "wrong" although you had thought it was standard? Now, for people called "atypical" from my perspective and experience, that's different. You were definitely not atypical. It's how... give me a moment... what kind of term would you use, Thomas? Levels? I hate the term "level," but you were operating from a higher level, obviously. You know your stuff. Atypical people could maybe know their stuff, too. They might be bright, but we don't know. Think about it. The issue is how they respond, with their own vocabulary, their facial expression, body posture. Once they answer, they are identified as atypical. The identification is easily made. They are not typical. Okay, fine. Shift the type of language you use to deal with that person, interact, draw them out, engage them. They will love that. I tell you; they love it. If not for us coming on as "intelligent" and "dumb," whoa, the interaction is different. When we're connecting, I am here, I am here with you and you're here with us. Not a frozen-faced approach; these people aren't stupid. Not stupid, no.

TH: Yes, I think that atypical people do not think of themselves as odd or divergent. Just their expression of intelligence; they are smart in their own way, but how they present it causes them to be seen as different. MJ?

MJ: To clarify, it's not "atypical people," it's "atypical use of language." Keep the terms separate; we're not labeling people but referring to a group of people who struggle with language use. Be clear.

TH: But people who use atypical language are viewed as atypical people.

MJ: Okay, I'll accept that.

TH: They are categorized as such. So, if I was using SimCom, I would be perceived by Coda as divergent by default, even though my signing was atypical, it could be argued that the label applied to my identity was as well. And that brings me to my caution for people who view those using atypical language as a personal or political level; it's the same with Deaf identity and is often connected with disability. Am I disabled? No, but on the political level I concede that, I am disabled because that gets me the protection of ADA, my rights to interpreters, and all of the rest. On a political level, I'm disabled, but on a personal level, no, I'm not. I'm wondering, for the purpose of gaining access for people who are atypical signers, whether they on a personal level recognize that their sign is not typical but on a political level, what does that mean for them? On a personal level, I don't think they consider themselves atypical users of sign, but for protection of their rights, access to federal research grants, fine, give up that personal identity, to accept standard diagnoses. And I trust that CALI would use that label temporarily, to arrive at a point where the term atypical is not so negative. Right now, as things stand, it is a very negative view of language, atypical use of gesture, ASL. I'm trying to wrestle with that. My main point is that I am a person; I can decide what my personal identity is. It is not disabled. My signing is not strange, but on a political level I need access to information and will go along with the label of disability under ADA because that's how they understand it, because if I say that I am not disabled, then I don't have equal protection from being discriminated against.

MJ: I think it's interesting how...

AJ: Good...

MJ: April, I'm sorry, did you say something?

AJ: I just said thank you.

MJ: Oh, okay. I think it's interesting because for interpreter services, I will notify them that the person is oral deaf and they will send a person who articulates clearly. For a mainstreamed student, they have interpreters who sign in English. Cued speech? We've got that. And others, too. But atypical language users are so diverse, so challenging or can be so language deprived that interpreter services are not helpful. That is enormously important. Oral background, we have interpreters for that.

TH: Not yet.

MJ: Not yet, right. But we know the oral, the mainstreamed, the SEE, the Cued Speech people. But the atypical? That's where CALI comes in. Rosemary said that CALI fills the gap. That's how we can feed and support interpreters to improve their services to people with atypical use of language. That's where the complexity is.

Okay, next question. I thought we discussed this before, but people with atypical use of language are growing in number, but the support system for them is not keeping up. Often a case manager or an advocate is assigned and then a consumer is asked to sign an authorization for this. Some states with commissions for the deaf that provide social services often cannot help with that. So how can we improve and expand their role in supporting deaf people with atypical language use? I hope I have been clear with the question.

Rosemary?

RW: The word "atypical" gives us a baseline, a foundation frame that we can expand for discussion. When we use the word, we define a person's use of language. Examples include not using pronouns, struggling with time, etc. Now we can open a discussion to bring together hearing and Deaf perspectives to understand that this is about this use of language, and not to the persons who use atypical language. That will lead to an inquiry into what is lacking in the interpreting collaboration; what are the gaps, who has what, what is or is not needed, so that the community can take more responsibility to meet the needs of all, not just the Deaf who attended Deaf schools and are from Deaf families or use ASL every day. Service becomes increasingly broad and inclusive. Deaf interpreters can be brought in, and other experts, whatever will lead to equity and provide more in-depth service. That's our goal, our hope, our dream, right?

TH: To add to Rosemary...

MJ: Tommy?

TH: This conversation is becoming a human rights discussion. This is about civil rights for all. This talk about atypical signing is not to apply it to the individual. It's about how to strengthen the community, as she mentioned, and strengthening the support system itself, not so much adapting to the individual as making it easier for individuals to fit in equitably. That reminds me of an article from a while back, by Robert E Johnson, a linguist who went to a small town in Mexico, in Yucatan. The area was predominantly hearing, but there was a Deaf community there as well, and members of the hearing community viewed their deaf neighbors as equals. They realized that they themselves needed to learn sign to communicate as equals, and not force the Deaf to adapt to the speech-based hearing system. They decided that "we" will adapt to them. I think that's where because it's a human right, I think that if we frame it as a human rights dialogue, that's where it becomes apparent why support systems must change their current policies to be more inclusive for all.

AJ: You both said it all. I have no comment.

MJ: Keven.

KP: Also, I wonder... there seem to be more and more atypical language users. Maybe not so much an increase in numbers, as an increase in identified instances, these things being noticed more. Now, given this situation, how do we meet their needs? In the past, such people were sheltered, tucked away by their parents, kept out of sight. Now they're popping out of the woodwork, becoming visible. I see it that way. But for hearing interpreters, and Deaf interpreters too, facing this issue, the question is how can we bring these people up, so they can participate in the community, in society, and make decisions regardless. This means working to equitably include them, to provide access rather than saying, well, they don't understand, and providing only the most superficial semblance of access and then leaving.

That's the old model, which left things unresolved because we interpreters had limited skill and knowledge. Now, it's a question of how to bring these people up, acknowledging that they have rights, bringing them to equality, being allies. Pressing the opportunity to advance, and if told that there are limited resources, determining the type of resource needed, bringing those in, assembling teams or props or using other strategies. Filling in the gaps. This is a small group, a 4 or 5-year cohort that can be deployed to multiple locations. Because there is such a widespread need, I hope this approach will proliferate, disseminating the knowledge.

MJ: Oh, this may be a little off-topic, but do you think that anyone who enters an interpreter training program can handle that group? Anyone, if trained, or are there some people who cannot? Which? Can just anyone do this? I wonder. This is complex, not easy, a sensitive question maybe.

KP: I think it needs a unique population, with the skills, the intuition, the heart, having the ability to engage this group. Some people will find themselves unable to reach this level, that they've hit their limits. And that's okay; they need to know that it's fine to let others take care of this. They need to be okay with it. That's what I'd say.

MJ: That answer is a challenge to interpreter training programs. Not everyone has "it."

AJ: Yes. I always use the famous quote "a doctor - a medical doctor - can't do everything." We have heart doctors, brain doctors, eye doctors, dentists, skin doctors, and all the rest. And that's fine. You can't do all at once, while picking one or two specializations is fine. With interpreters, it's the same. You'll have expertise in different areas. You can't do it all; I mean, do all interpreters have "it?" Not always.

MJ: Okay, now often as an interpreter - whether Deaf or hearing, it doesn't matter - you will work with hearing people who have wrong ideas, wrong concepts relating to Deaf people, incorrect knowledge about ASL or language use, or about what Deaf people can or cannot do. And when you see that, it will unsettle you. It sometimes makes my head ache. What should you do? How would you recommend a person respond to that? How would you respond to it? Can you suggest any ideas how to respond, how to fix their misconceptions?

AJ: Educate them! Explain things, tell them the facts and be done with it.

MJ: Wait a minute, though. The CPC says we may not step out of the interpreter's role. But if these misconceptions are blatant...

AJ: Ask for permission.

MJ: ... my role – what did you say?

AJ: Ask for permission.

MJ: Ask for permission. Rosemary wants to say something.

RW: I do strongly believe in role space. We have opportunities to broaden our interactions, to provide short bits of information, to inform interpreting agencies that there is a need for someone to educate people, to provide workshops and to connect people with community resources. One of my worst experiences related to that kind of thinking was with a lawyer. I was in a hallway outside the courtroom where a Deaf defendant was. My hearing teammate and I were trying to explain to this lawyer why language was a challenge in explaining rights and the lawyer kept asking "does he have a brain?" He repeatedly asked that: "does he have a brain?" Repeating this over and over while physically looming over me. And when I said yes, of course, the person had a brain, the lawyer said, "that means he can communicate!" And I was extremely disturbed. Then we had to go back into the courtroom and the judge got involved and excoriated the lawyer, telling him that he was inappropriate, that if he believed that, he needed to be fired and the defendant needed a different lawyer. This was a great relief to me. We can always try to educate, and I think we should always try and sometimes, most of the time it works, but sometimes it just doesn't. Sometimes they just don't have it. They do more harm than good. I think we should always try, yes. MJ: Tommy.

TH: I think it's important that interpreters understand that we have trauma. Deaf people have trauma. And for Deaf people themselves to be assertive, to explain, prompts fear of inviting attack, fear that they're exposing themselves to criticism, because of that past trauma. It's important for interpreters to realize that often when I make a comment, a suggestion, it's not personal but intended to improve communication access. It's not about you, it's about our interaction. It's important that interpreters have some trauma-informed education to build trust. I can't imagine a person, knowing he is viewed as atypical, how could they express their perspective, expose the trauma that they have? What strategies do we have to uncover this trauma, to help convert that trauma to information that could tell us how to build a safe space for them? Because right now, I have noticed in videos from CALI, interviews with atypical signers are in artificial space, not in spaces where they are safe to express themselves in their own way. I would recommend that we recognize that the environment may not help them to feel safe to reveal themselves. That's where we create an opportunity for dialogue to be sure that they feel safe and brave enough to divulge their trauma. And very able from a bodily perspective for me to say this, too: I can only assume what I think I know about what they want. I can't really - I offered to bring someone who has been labeled an atypical language user into this conversation, to have this conversation with us. I look forward to the day when we have interaction with a panel of all atypical people to see what their answers would be to the questions. I wonder.

MJ: It's interesting how we ... Tommy, I disagree with you, but I feel uncomfortable with calling people atypical. They're typical people in that they think, eat, sleep and everything else like us; it's just they have been deprived of language. For example, suppose the next question deals with something and a person responds by telling a story at great length that does not answer the question, but looks like a response. Or you ask a specific question and elicit a story that goes back 20 years; you listen patiently, waiting for one nugget of information and admiring the person's detailed recollection, but in the end may not get your question answered. How do interpreters handle that? How do WE handle that? Do we tell the other party that the question has not been answered but neither the Deaf person nor the interpreter should be blamed? There are many people who are language deprived, education deprived, traumatized, among many other issues. The Deaf person may have moved - been moved - here from a country where interpreters are not provided or may have been incarcerated or wrongly placed in a mental institution and been trapped there a long time. Of course, we are going to have trouble finding ways to connect with these people. It's important that we protect them and not blame them. But in this situation let's not blame us either.

April, you raised your hand.

AJ: When it looks like being off the point, or on the same timeline but too far back from now, or whatever time is in question, I try asking Yes or No questions. You have to, to draw the person back to the point of the question, whatever it was. Yes-or-No questions let you pinpoint specific events or times, and a Yes answer lets you follow up by asking what happened just then. A No answer can lead you to modify your next question. Try different wordings and Yes-or-No questions can get you answers.

MJ: April, that's a good point. At the same time, I've seen videos where Yes-or-No questions were asked, but still elicited lengthy narrative responses. I needed to become trained to watch closely and be very careful to not allow my own mental filters to lead me to assume that a "yes" means yes, or a "no" means no. I've seen some people who could talk at length, telling fascinating stories in beautiful sign, but the thinking process, the person's ability to answer the questions, to process, were complex and baffling. It seemed obvious that person was language deprived or long isolated and so delighted to encounter another Deaf person that everything came pouring out - but can't answer the question.

AJ: Just chatting. Yes, that's true.

MJ: How do I handle that without inculcating someone who may after all be a victim of the system? I don't like using the word "victim," but the system has victims. Or the person may be mentally challenged. How do we handle that?

RW: It often takes a lot of cultural mediation, especially the kind that looks far back. Dealing with, assessing and discussing, sometimes I will pause if I see that a process is perturbing or causing digression in a person. I will ask the other party if they want their question asked verbatim or if I may rephrase it and tell that person what response I received. Assembling all of these remarks for a mental health professional, a lawyer, a teacher or a manager lets them see the process used by this person. They retain leadership of the interaction; I am here to support the success of their goals, but it is theirs to lead. If I don't understand an utterance, conveying it intact to the other party lets them make decisions based on that information. That's important.

MJ: Yes, Keven.

KP: I think also - again, situations vary but if it's my first time meeting the consumer, or my fifth or sixth, then what kind of a relationship do I have with the person? I may be able to casually encourage him to come to the point, or it may be necessary to be very cautious. Also, who else is involved in this encounter? What is the setting? Multiple factors affect the way I will proceed. Yes-or-No questions can work, depending on my relationship with the consumer, who may take offence, leading to a breakdown of communication. That can cause misunderstanding and embarrassment and make me look incompetent; the other people see that the consumer is mad at me now. Many things are possible; I need to monitor the ambience of the meeting. My hearing teammate can help me by keeping the hearing people up to date with my exchanges with the consumer, in a way that lets them jump in and redirect the dialogue or give me something else to work with. Otherwise, I proceed, trying to keep the consumer on point, whether with Yes-or-No questions or offering examples to choose from, such as "house," "car" or something else, seeking a recognition response. It all depends on the situation.

MJ: Okay, I guess we move on now to the last question. Last but not least. Now, for people who are already working as interpreters or people who seek to become interpreters with people who display atypical language usage, what advice would you give? I expect an answer from each of you, so you don't have to reply immediately but can take time to think about the question.

AJ: Your question, to repeat, is what advice...?

MJ: For people who want to work as interpreters working with atypical language users - or people who already interpret for them - what advice would you give them for interacting with Deaf people with atypical use of language? What would your advice be?

AJ: Well, be patient. Be patient in dealing with them. It will be a lot of work. Conveying information requires a heavy cognitive load; we need to try our best to give the right message, accurately. Be patient and carry on. If you have no patience, this work is not for you.

MJ: Thank you. Rosemary.

RW: I would add, be flexible. Patience plus flexibility. Interpreting is not limited to signs on the hands; we use a kit of tools, props, actions and facial expressions; we bring in other people in the room, getting everyone involved. Keep trying until you succeed in conveying the message. Use an open process, role space; I think the important concept is to not feel limited to one way of interpreting. My feeling is you can really stretch the true meaning of the interpreter's role. It is quite broad; there is no need to be conventional. Strict interpreting order is not necessary. Flex and adapt to the needs of the situation. Be willing and ready to change; if you have tried something for, say, the first 20 minutes or so, try something else, and keep changing as needed until you're done. There's a large investment in the process.

MJ: Keven.

KP: For a new, a student interpreter, I think it depends on where they are, at the beginning, but don't focus on the "easy," the comfortable. When viewing videos, don't concentrate just on the clear, easy signers; skip forward to find subjects whose signing is difficult, challenging to follow. Watch a variety of signers. Take risks. Be curious, ask questions. Look beyond the usual, the "typical" situations; after doing this you become more smooth, more comfortable with atypical situations. Experiencing more challenging situations helps to change your perspective on others, can stretch your range of capability. At the same time, be honest. If you encounter a situation you don't know how to handle, say so. It's okay to get stuck sometimes. What you do is develop resources, transfer assignments, turn down work. All these things are okay. Move on, learn from the experience. It's okay, don't fixate on the situation, don't freak out. You'll be all right. Stay optimistic and take risks - in school, it's the environment where you can grab experience. You don't want to practice out in the world, on real Deaf people. That's not where you practice.

MJ: Thank you. Tommy?

TH: That question has made me think. First, be humble. This type of work is very humbling. And recognize the power dynamic in those conversations, because interpreters are often in a privileged position. They have to recognize and unpack that. Recognize that they play a very important role in the proceedings, and their role is to really empower the Deaf consumer. Make sure to be patient, to listen adaptively to make sure that information is conveyed accurately and in a way that will help support everyone involved in the process. Also, be mindful of interpreters who may come from a privileged position - white, female, and so forth - that could lead to bias. That's where bias training on implicit bias, recognizing what I'm missing or catching. Interpreters will naturally have bias. It's already present. It's important to recognize it, not deny or ignore it. Recognizing and unpacking it will allow them to draw out ...

AJ: True.

TH: ... information. Also, if as an interpreter I resist or mistrust, ask why I resist. Is it because I feel a shift in the power dynamic? Stop and check in. Unpack. That will allow you to identify with each other. Also, incorporate the idea that stigma is powerful. For atypical users - no, people who use atypical sign, the label is a stigma. And why I often connect the label to a person is that language is often linked to identity, and identity is linked to the person. In our US culture we view language as conflated with the person, and atypical signs will be associated with the person's identity, whether he wants it or not. We are quick to connect the culture and the language together. Be mindful that their way of expressing language may not fit conventional language but this does not mean they are inferior. They are not. That's why it is important that interpreters see that the term "atypical" is not used as a label denoting that a person is not typical but is used because our society does not possess the right term. For now, it's "atypical" not because the language itself is atypical but because our system has not yet arrived at a term that fits their identity and language use.

MJ: Okay, great discussion! I've learned a lot from these different views, and I think it is important that other people appreciate your views, your input, thinking, or your experience. And your candor, your willingness to share, to give advice. Thank you very much, and goodbye!

RW, TH, KP and AJ return thanks and farewells.

MJ: Nice conversation.

Now back to MJ Bienvenu with reflections on the panel discussion and an introduction to the Conversation Series Videos

What a rich discussion! So many important points were made. There are a few key points I want to reinforce. First, a bit more about the term ATYPICAL. When the interpreter training grants were announced in 2016 by the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services, the term used in the federal register was language DYSFLUENCY. This term is commonly used to refer to difficulties of a language user in the production or articulation of a language. Stuttering is an example. The production of signs by a Deaf individual with cerebral palsy is an example.

Although this term can apply to some instances of deviation in language use among the deaf population, it isn't a broad enough term to encompass all of the examples of deviations observed by interpreters and other service providers within the Deaf community. The administrative team of Northeastern University's American Sign Language Program conducted an informal survey within the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Interpreter communities to determine what might be a more appropriate and inclusive term than DYSFLUENT, allowing the project to prepare interpreters to work with a broader portion of the Deaf community representing some of the changing demographics within the Deaf community. There was greatest agreement around the term ATYPICAL, and thus it became the term adopted to describe the work of the Center.

The term ATYPICAL means that the language use being observed is not representative of native use of ASL. That it is not representative could be for a variety of reasons—including, but not limited to, dysfluency. However, what is essential to its meaning is that atypical use of sign language is NOT about a variation of sign language used by deaf people—such as a dialect, regional variations, Black Sign Language, etc. Atypical language use is not referring to a new or unique form of sign language. It refers to the expression of various types of linguistic dysfunction that may impact both the understanding and production of sign language. This is an important distinction in that atypical use of sign language requires significant accommodation to meet the individual's need for communication access and inclusion.

Accommodations are not only related to use of a broad and innovative range of communication strategies, but also the amount of time required to achieve understanding, the number of interpreters that may be needed to staff an assignment, the level of success that can be achieved, the other support services that may be needed to support the success of the deaf individual, among others.

Preparation for interpreting assignments that involve deaf individuals who use atypical language requires more planning time and consideration. Interpreters being notified in advance of the fact that the consumer they are being asked to interpret for is someone who exhibits atypical language use can help ensure that interpreters who are not qualified to take on such assignments decline them (rather than arriving to an assignment and learning of the reality after the fact). Knowing in advance also allows interpreters to advocate for the use of Deaf interpreters and additional time for language assessment and establishing effective strategies for communication. Knowing in advance allows interpreters to bring resources—such as props, pictures, and other materials—that can be relied upon during the interpreting process. Knowing in advance allows the participants of the communication event to discuss goals, expectations, and outcomes, and to form a collaborative approach to meeting the needs of the deaf consumer. Knowing in advance helps to ensure that the deaf consumer receives the greatest degree of access and inclusion possible.

Another important point that was discussed by the Deaf panelists was the importance of interpreters being self-aware and honest about their abilities and their limitations. The belief that “any interpreter is better than no interpreter” is potentially dangerous and harmful when attempting to provide access and inclusion to deaf people who exhibit atypical language use. Interpreters may feel vulnerable to the pressure to fill assignments for which they are not qualified or do not feel comfortable and need to develop the boundaries necessary to decline when it is appropriate and ethical to do so.

Part of ethical practice is relying on your discretion as an interpreter. As was discussed by the panel, discretion is the ability to make reliable, sound, and ethical decisions while interpreting. Discretion is something that evolves and matures over time through reflective practice.

Reflective practice is a process of analyzing your work on a consistent basis for the purpose of growth and improvement. It can be done on your own, but is most effective when done with colleagues and/or mentors who can assist in helping you to identify aspects of your work you may overlook or of which you are unaware. Reflective practice offers a form of peer review and accountability that interpreters often lack, but need. The great thing about engaging in peer review is that even if you live in a rural area, technology often affords the opportunity to connect with other colleagues. The maturing of your discretion through reflective practice is a critical part of becoming a respected and reliable practitioner. Deaf consumers deserve your very best!

One final point from the Deaf panel discussion relates to the importance of Deaf Community involvement in the training and vetting of interpreters. The panel members emphasized that more interpreter education programs need Deaf faculty members—including BIPOC Deaf individuals! The inclusion of more BIPOC Deaf individuals in running and/or teaching will help to ensure a greater number of BIPOC interpreters entering and completing training programs. The gaps that many IEP graduates experience in terms of language and culture could be reduced by earlier and more frequent exposure to a broad range of Deaf individuals. This applies to training materials as well. The diversity evident within the Deaf community needs to be represented in the training materials. As well, those materials need to more accurately reflect the real-world experiences of Deaf individuals and the range of language variation that exists. Deaf individuals of greater diversity in more diverse settings is needed in the training materials to better prepare interpreters for real-world interpreting.

Not only is there a need for more Deaf engagement in training, but also in the vetting of interpreters. Deaf people understand their needs much better than anyone else and should be more involved in deciding who interprets for them and in what settings. This is particularly true for BIPOC Deaf individuals. How do we achieve more engagement of Deaf people in the trainings and decision-making about interpreters? It needs to be intentional. The interpreting field and interpreting practitioners need to make a deliberate and intentional commitment to seeking the engagement of Deaf individuals in decision-making that impacts their daily lives. If each interpreter practitioner or educator, interpreter referral center or agency owner or staff person, committed to using their scope of influence to ensure the involvement of more Deaf people in the decision-making processes associated with interpreter education and the provision of interpreting services, greater engagement could be achieved. And as a result, the provision of interpreting services to Deaf consumers would be greatly advanced!

Before wrapping up, I want to take time to introduce you to the other 6 videos that are a part of the *series* of 7 new videos being released by CALI. The remaining 6 are focused on teams of interpreters discussing their experiences working with Deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. Five (5) of the 6 videos involve BIPOC interpreters—an important source of knowledge and experience that has too often been left out of conversations about interpreting. Several of the BIPOC interpreters are also CODAs or have deaf family members. In some instances, their Deaf parents are immigrants and these interpreters have unique life experiences to offer. Four of the six videos include a Deaf and hearing interpreter discussing their experiences working with individuals with atypical language use. The fifth includes two Deaf interpreters discussing their experiences. The sixth involves two BIPOC Coda interpreters sharing their experiences. The teams of interpreters involved are Su Kyong Isakson and Kristina Miranda, Carla Shird and Su Kyong Isakson, Monica Gallego and Rayni Plaster Torres, Mark Morales and Rayni Plaster Torres, Trenton Marsh and Jennifer Harvey, and Samond Bishara and Michelle Draper.

Topics addressed in the six videos vary, but include discussion of cultural and linguistic identity and the role it plays in the interpreting process and decision-making, team interpreting considerations and challenges, strategies used during the interpreting process, ethics, values and frameworks that support decision-making, gaps that exist in the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct, reflective practice, interpreter training, mentoring and professionalism, among others. This introductory video is the first in the *series*. After this, each video can stand alone and the six subsequent videos in the *series* can be watched in whatever order best suits your purposes.

There are several take-aways from the six videos of conversations between interpreting colleagues. First, interpreting is a complex and challenging process that requires a superior level of linguistic and cultural competence, self-awareness, and professional maturity. The complexities of interpreting increase as the linguistic limitations of the deaf consumer increase. The solution is even greater degrees of cultural and linguistic competence and collaboration with other interpreters—typically one of which is Deaf and/or a native signer. Second, consistent and reliable ethical decision-making is not based on the ability to follow a set of rules or guidelines. It is based on the ability to think critically and responsibly, to have a clear sense of purpose and intention, have a highly developed discretion to rely on, and being grounded in the values and beliefs of the profession of interpreting. Discretion is developed from several sources—the theories and ethical frameworks upon which the profession is built and relies, the engagement in reflective practice with colleagues, mentors and supervisors, experience over time, a commitment to moral and ethical development, and self-awareness and monitoring. Third, while the foundation of successful interpreting is linguistic and cultural competence, its cornerstone is relationships. The ability of interpreters to develop trust and rapport with consumers of interpreting services is essential to establishing and sustaining relationships. This requires that interpreters have well-developed interpersonal skills. Intrapersonal skills are also necessary—knowing yourself, your abilities and your limitations. Interpreters

need to have the ability to monitor their behavior and reactions. Interpreters need to have the ability to ask for help when needed and to admit/own mistakes when they occur. Reflect professionalism and maturity in your work and your commitment to a successful outcome. Interpreters need to be humble and transparent about their process, and what is transpiring during the interpreting process. When these qualities are balanced with demonstrated respect for consumers, our colleagues and ourselves, it sets the tone for collaboration with all those involved in the interpreted event. And finally, continued professional development is essential. The communities we serve are always changing, so no matter our years of experience and overall competence, there is always the need to learn more and to grow as the field and consumers advance.

There will likely be many other take-aways you gain from viewing and thinking about the 6 videos of conversations between interpreting colleagues. It is the hope of CALI that these materials contribute to your own decision-making skills and processes. To further assist with that process, there are curricular materials that are available. A Curriculum Guide for Teachers, Mentors and Supervisors and a Handbook for Interpreters are available to be downloaded.

These two documents include strategies and activities for using the 7 videos discussed for improving ethical decision-making in general and specifically when working with deaf individuals who exhibit atypical language use. The documents are located on the CALI website.

We wish you all continued success in your work as interpreters!

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