



# ICRID INSIGHTS

Advocating for best practices in interpreting by fostering relationships with the Deaf community and interpreting practitioners; to provide support, the development of equality, professionalism, and excellence within the profession of sign language interpreting throughout Indiana.

## **From the President's Desk - Colleen Geier, Ed.D., CI/CT, ICRID President**

For those of you who were involved with ASR this year, thank you! We used a travel theme and built off the previous theme of "Oh The Places You'll Go" with "We're Going Places: Come With Us!!" Over 60 people attended ASR this year, most of them were HS and college students. We were so excited to have a group of students come from the Purdue campus in Michigan City area. Friday night was a lot of fun, we had our own "ASR's Got Talent" show and quite a few participants had prepared something to perform! They also ate a lot of great snacks and continued the evening's activities by playing games. Saturday we divided into more experienced and less experienced groups and each group participated in two different workshops. Again, many thanks to everyone, the volunteers, Goshen College ASL/Interpreting program for hosting ASR, and especially to everyone who participated.

Speaking of going places, please think about attending the Region 3 conference this summer, we'd love to have a big group of Indiana interpreters there! Our vice president, Becca, and I are both going and we will have a specific meeting time for ICRID while we're there. We'd love to meet with you and get your ideas to help ICRID keep evolving and better serve your needs. Check out the conference website at <https://sites.google.com/wisrid.org/region3conference/home> - if you click on Conference Schedule you can see all of the workshops being presented. There is a lot of variety, including workshops about: educational interpreting, medical, DeafBlind, mental health, 12 step programs, self assessment, managing those "voices in my head", even yoga and self care for interpreters. There is a little something for everyone, I hope to see you there.

*Colleen*

"Learn everything you can, anytime you can, from anyone you can. There will always come a time when you are grateful that you did." Sarah Caldwell (American opera conductor)

### **From the Editor:**

Dear Reader,

Thanks to the generous contributions of your peers, I am able to present a great collection of articles for your perusal. April was an important month for ICRID as attendees converged in Goshen, IN for the Annual Spring Retreat (ASR). The ASR continues to be a valuable service to up-and-coming interpreters, ASL students, and experienced interpreters to polish their ASL Skills in an immersive environment. Our next major event is the annual conference and business meeting. This year it will be held at the Indiana School for the Deaf. See the last page for information about that.

Zach Evans, Editor of INSights  
 editor@icrid.org

## **ICRID RAPS - A Monthly Multi-Site Discussion Group**

Some of us love getting together to discuss current articles and webinars and we do it all over the state at ICRID RAPS meetings. We would love to see more of you involved and wonder what we can do to expand RAPS? Here are some things that have been suggested, we'd love to know what you think. You can respond to these ideas or suggest other things at [raps@icrid.org](mailto:raps@icrid.org)

- set up more online dates for RAPS
- alternate traditional RAPS with an Ethics discussion - have a topic each time and interpreters can bring their own ethical dilemmas and questions to discuss with the group
- include articles on specific topics - what do you want to learn about?
- change the format completely to some other kind of discussion group
- change the times/days or even locations when the RAPS groups meet

If you have ideas for RAPS or other discussion groups please let us know at [RAPS@icrid.org](mailto:RAPS@icrid.org)



Colleen Geier  
ICRID RAPS coordinator

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## **Working With Students With Minimal Language Skills**

By Sunny Pfifferling-Irons, BS, BEI

In my twenty-plus years working as an educational interpreter, there has never been a year when I did not work with a student who has minimal language skills (MLS). There is not one category to describe these students, they can be any or a combination of the following: Limited ASL Level · Limited English Level · Limited ASL and English Levels · Limited Language Levels · Limited Language Proficiency. These students may have high intelligence, or deal with other cognitive, physical, emotional and/or mental health issues. Therefore, I have found it is important to have a multitude of strategies to provide these students with the best interpretation to allow them to learn and understand.

Here are some suggestions to help these students succeed:

### **Teamwork**

Make sure that you are part of the team; that you are on the same page as the mainstream teacher and the Deaf Education teacher(TOD). It requires communication and advocacy among all three professionals to give the student the best chance to succeed.

When referring to the student, always frame it as “the student I’m working with/interpreting for”, “the Deaf student in your class”, etc; and absolutely never “my student”.

That being said, make sure you look, speak and act as a professional member of the team. You are a professional!

### **Seating**

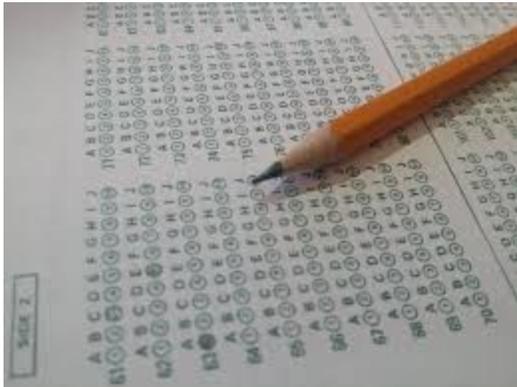
Ask the teacher if the Deaf student can be placed next to someone who would be a good ally. This student should be willing to help them find their place in the text, follow along on a worksheet, and partner with them in activities. The more our Deaf students can work with their peers as an equal, and rely less



on the interpreter, the better! This student may also act as a note taker.

## **Testing**

Are tests and materials modified for other special education students? If the Deaf student's IEP permits, they should take the modified test. If the teacher does not have a modified version of the test, ask if you can modify it. Often that's as easy as eliminating one multiple choice answer, limiting options for matching, or adding a word bank for fill in the blank questions. Sometimes you can change the wording to ASL for clarity. Always run this past the TOD and mainstream teacher before finalizing any modifications.



If the student's IEP allows, give them the option to take the test one-on-one with you away from the class. Some students are embarrassed to have the test interpreted to them in front of their peers, and your interpretation may be a distraction to others. This will also give you time and comfort to expand your interpretation of the questions.

## **Notes**

Try to get a copy of the test early in the lesson. It will help your interpretation to know what is on the test! From the test, you can get Google images for flash cards or notes. In our program, we make flash cards for the students early on, with the expectation that they can make their own later on in the semester. You can make notes with pictures that the student can use to make their own flash cards. (Making flash cards could be an IEP goal.) Again, working closely with your TOD is your responsibility within the team when it comes to study skills.

If the mainstream teacher's notes are on a Powerpoint, have them send to you, so you can print them out. Once printed, we often hand-write clarifications on the slides, highlighting and breaking down the language if necessary. Some students benefit from color coding, and often the Powerpoint slides can be transformed into flash cards. An advocacy goal for the student would be for them to ask the teacher to send any notes, slides or visuals directly to him/her.

Make a list of the vocabulary items from the subject that's being taught, and share it with your TOD, as well as the SLP, so they can incorporate the vocabulary into their lessons.



## **Your Interpretation**

In my experience, interpreting for the MLS student is the most difficult work I do. I have to really analyze each spoken message and ask myself:

1. What is the point of the message?
- \* Using Topic/Comment structure in your interpretation will help you get the point!
2. How does this relate to the goal of the lesson?
- \* You should know the goal of each day's lesson before each class.
3. What's the "meat" that is crucial for the student to understand from this?
- \* You may need to restructure the message to eliminate some of the "fluff".
4. What words and concepts need expansion?
- \* Transliteration is rarely beneficial to MLS students!

5. What words need to be fingerspelled, explained and emphasized?
- \* Just fingerspelling alone will not allow the student to learn what that word means.
6. How can I connect this new information to something the student already knows?
- \* This can be anything from what they learned last year, to something in their personal life, to the Kardashians!



### Tips of the Trade

- This work will kick your butt and fry your brain. It can be exhausting. You have to really bring your processing time game. Keeping pace with the teacher's lecture will inhibit your ability to do all the suggestions listed above, and will likely result in your interpretation looking like word salad. When that happens, one or two of these things will result: The student is overwhelmed with information and will tune you out; and/or have a limited –if any- understanding of the material.
- If you're doing it right, you'll find yourself expanding on a concept while the teacher has moved on. Don't worry – you will catch up eventually!
- Check the student often for understanding. This does not mean asking if they understand, for we all know the reply! Ask them to explain something back to you. Ask them what a newly introduced word/concept means.
- Movies and videos: To terp or not to terp? Do not assume the student will understand the captioning. Sometimes it's as easy as asking them if they want it interpreted or not. Just because it's captioned doesn't mean the MLS student has full understanding of the content.
- We've all been in the class with that teacher who makes the bad puns – that are barely funny in English. Or the one who constantly references a pop song or celebrity from the 70's. With the MLS student, I often have to decide to "edit/delete" these comments. It's just an opportunity for the student to tune me out because they have no frame of reference to understand the comment. Then it's often a struggle to get them back on board with the lesson.
- On the other hand, realize how important incidental learning is. So be ready to interpret random student comments, questions from left field, and weird wrong answers. This is how all students learn, and often Deaf students to not have access to this vital form of learning.

I have learned so much from Minimal Language Skills students. They have made me a better interpreter. Celebrate what they have to offer to you, your school, and the world!

## **Cultural Mediation and How It Can Go Wrong - By Zach Evans**

Cultural mediation is an important part of our job as interpreters. It is necessary to phrase things correctly so that the intent and meaning of the message being conveyed from the source language to the target language is portrayed accurately and appropriately. This becomes very important in instances where there is a certain protocol that needs to be followed. The interpreter needs to be diplomatically aware and able to tailor the message phrasing so that nobody walks away offended, solely due to the phrasing of a response.

To illustrate this, I thought of an excellent example of cultural mediation that was not done well. As anyone who knows me is aware, I am a huge Star Wars fan. So in honor of May the Fourth, (*Star Wars* day) I feel it is appropriate (and might be fun) to analyze C-3PO's performance interpreting the interaction between Jabba the Hutt and Boushh, a bounty hunter who brings Chewbacca to Jabba's palace on Tatooine to collect the bounty that was placed on him. The Expanded Universe (Legends) material explains that Jabba can speak and understand multiple languages, but out of a sense of ego and smug superiority, he only speaks Huttese. Boushh speaks a language called Ubese. If you remember the scene in *Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*, Boushh brings in Chewbacca, who is in handcuffs. Jabba is delighted to have Chewbacca in his clutches at last.



**Jabba:** [In Huttese] Droid! Where are you?

**C-3PO:** Oh, uh, yes, uh, I am here, Your Worshipfulness. Uh... yes?

**Jabba:** [Speaks Huttese]

**C-3PO:** Oh. The illustrious Jabba bids you welcome and will gladly pay you the reward of twenty-five thousand.

**Boushh:** [Speaks Ubese]

**C-3PO:** Fifty-Thousand. No Less.

At this, Jabba immediately flies into a rage, striking C-3PO and knocking him off of the dais. I mean, who wouldn't get mad if someone doubled the price of something unexpectedly? C-3PO's phrasing and tone is partly to blame for this moment of rage. Knowing the temperament of your client is important, and tailoring the message to soothe Jabba's massive ego might not have been amiss here. Even though Boushh's demand for more money might have been as direct and blunt as C-3PO presented it, phrasing it differently might have been prudent. Perhaps: "Oh mighty Jabba, Boushh wishes to renegotiate the price. He suggests the sum of fifty thousand." Now, this is still a doubling of the price, but Jabba's wrath may have been tempered by this change of tone and his wrath directed at Boushh instead of at C-3PO. But, there's no way to know, since this happened a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. Let's get back to the interaction. C-3PO picks himself up and attempts to continue his duties as interpreter.



**C-3PO:** Uh, oh... but what, what did I say?

Really C-3PO? You don't know what you said to tick off a Hutt gangster? I suppose I would ask what I did wrong as well, but it's kind of incredible that C-3PO doesn't take the temperament of Jabba into account and his probable response when he lays out a blunt statement like that.

**Jabba:** [Yells in Huttese]

**C-3PO:** Uh, the mighty Jabba asks why he must pay fifty thousand.

At this point, Boushh pulls out a small silver ball and switches it on. Several lights on the ball start blinking ominously.

**Boushh:** [Speaks in Ubese]

**C-3PO:** (Alarmed) Because he's holding a thermal detonator!

Chaos erupts in the room at this point- weapons are drawn and pointed at Boushh, and Jabba begins to laugh. In the subtitles, we find out that this amuses Jabba and he likes the sheer nerve of the bounty hunter approaching negotiations this way, "My kind of scum" as Jabba says.

**Jabba:** [Speaks Huttese]

**C-3PO:** Jabba offers the sum of thirty-five. And do I suggest you take it.

Here, I have a bone to pick with C-3PO. He inserted his own thought into the conversation. No interpreter worth his/her salt would put their own opinion into an interpretation. Especially in a situation like this. The outcome of this conversation, barring the explosion of the thermal detonator, isn't C-3PO's problem. He's a droid and can be reassembled if it goes off. Plus, Boushh stands as much chance of injury as any other being in the room. He wasn't serious about blowing them all up. There's nothing to gain there.

**Boushh:** [Speaks Ubese and turns the detonator off]

**C-3PO:** [Relieved] He agrees!



I fully understand C-3PO's emotions in this exchange. Nobody wants to be blown up or knocked down. He clearly just wants to go back to working for Luke Skywalker and company. While "he agrees" isn't wrong or inappropriate, perhaps a better phrasing would be "Boushh accepts your counter-offer." One could endlessly argue the right way of saying it.

From a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, to right now in a city right underneath your feet, as ASL/English interpreters, our job is not really so different from what C-3PO faced. Well, minus imminent the threat of violence, obviously. Some time ago, one of my mentors stated that our job is to make a hearing person "look Deaf" through our interpretation and make a Deaf person "sound hearing." This requires phrasing things in a way that will accomplish the goals of source language of the speaker/signer and be readily understood and relatable to the target language listener/viewer.

I hope that this fun little diversion into cultural mediation was entertaining as well as instructive. This is something we all have to do on a daily basis to make sure that everyone gets along and understands one other in the situations we find ourselves in. Sometimes, these situations can be high stakes, as certainly was true in the example I have examined here. We would all benefit from learning from C-3PO's mistakes in handling cultural mediation, though if he had handled it properly, it wouldn't be nearly as entertaining.

May the Force be with you always.

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## Dear Interpreter.... A new column for ethical questions!

Being an interpreter is rife with complications, intricacies and conundrums. Every interpreter, at some point in their career, will ask themselves "Did I do the right thing?" We're here to help! If you have a question about a situation that really stumped you, or might be instructive to others in future situations, send it to us! We'll get our best ethical minds on the job and do our best to figure out if what happened is a win/win, a win/lose, or a lose/lose situation, and what possible outcomes could result. All situations or questions will be framed within the [RID/NAD Code of Professional Conduct](#).

Also, it doesn't have to be an ethical situation. If you have a general advice question that is relevant to our profession, send it our way! We'll do our best to help. There are a lot of seasoned professionals who read this publication. If the editing staff is stumped, we'll send it to the hive-mind! Several heads are better than one.

Send any submissions to [editor@icrid.org](mailto:editor@icrid.org).

### **A few guidelines for submitting:**

1. Please **omit all identifying information**. Confidentiality is a big deal in our profession, and we want to make sure everyone's privacy is protected. Obfuscate any and all details that might give away who was involved.
2. Keep it brief. Extraneous information only clouds the mind and confuses the story. Give us a clear problem that can be analyzed.
3. If there was a conclusion to the situation, include that. Rarely is there only one right or wrong answer in ethical decision making. We can take the decision that was made into account.

### **Today's questions:**

*"I was Interpreting a play that wasn't publicized, but open to the public. My team invited their spouse and when they were off went to sit with them instead of teaming with me."*

Rapport with one's coworkers is an important aspect of our profession. What the team for this interpreter did was damage that rapport. (Applicable RID/NAD CPC tenets: 3.0, 4.0, 5.0.)

#### **So what should be done?**

- **Options to consider**
  - At the earliest possible opportunity, ask them if they would mind being "present" and available if you need them during the assignment.
  - Afterwards, debrief with them and share any concerns you have about how the assignment went.
  - If they don't see the error of their ways, share your concerns with the agency.
  - Make a mental note and learn from this experience and take steps to avoid having to do this again.
- **Options to avoid**
  - Say nothing and all and hold a grudge.
  - Gossip about what happened to other interpreters.
  - Talk about your team to the Deaf audience members.
  - Vaguely complain on social media about this experience.

*"Interpreting for an adult patient who has been in hospital for a long time. Main Dr, who will determine discharge day, speaks ONLY to a family member not at all to the patient. Patient is passive, shrugs shoulders "oh well". Interpreter does interpret everything and voices something for any little nod of patient. Could/should interpreter do more as advocate or to educate? What could the interpreter ethically do in that situation?"*

This is definitely a difficult situation. Certainly it is troubling when medical staff seems to treat a Deaf patient as if they are in a coma and incapable of speaking for themselves. It's even more troubling when the patient simply accepts this treatment and takes no action to correct it. Applicable RID/NAD CPC tenets: 2.5)

#### **So what should be done?**

- **Options to consider**
  - Simply act as a conduit of information.
  - Ask clarifications of the medical staff in a way that lets you repeat the information to the patient so he/she has a second chance to enter the conversation.
  - Advise the agency that a CDI might be needed.

- Suggest to the agency that the medical staff might need reminders of how to interact with the Deaf community.
- **Options to avoid**
  - Leave the situation feeling responsible for the health of the patient. You are there for communication access.
  - Say something about “stupid hearing people”.
  - Complain to the medical staff about the situation.

## ASL Interpreting and Social Media As Seen Through Communication Theory Lenses - By Rebecca Buchan, MA, CI, CT, IIC

American Sign Language interpreters are bicultural, bilingual technicians that spend much of their time building professional and personal relationships with clients. In fact, relationship building is a necessary and very much expected component of interpreter training. It is often taught that in order for an interpreter-in-training to acquire native-like signing skills, time in the Deaf community at social and personal events must be a regular sacrifice. The conflict emerges, however, because ASL interpreters are collectively striving to catapult the vocation of interpreting into a profession, with a Code of Professional Conduct that governs interpreters' behaviors, relationships and professional communications. Much of the interpreters' professional decision making is based on the best course of action in navigating the convergence of professional and personal relationship, behavior and communication.



In this age of technology, participation in social media has become, for many, a preferred way of interaction and the interpreting community is no different. Due to the expectation of blurred professional and personal boundaries, many interpreters incorporate and infuse their professional and social lives in the social media realm. While this is a relatively new phenomenon, concerns within the interpreting community are surfacing. Interpreters are “friending” or being asked to “friend” Deaf clients and other interpreters. Being that social media is a public domain and that the Deaf community is a closely interwoven, high context culture, expectations and peer pressure prevail in the decision making process of how to behave on the internet. However, the violation of the interpreters' recognized Code of Professional Conduct is now commonplace as it relates to the specific tenets on confidentiality, respect for the consumer and discretion. By using theoretical frameworks offered by four widely accepted communication theories, it is my goal to analyze the consequences of the engagement in social media has on the interpreting community.

### Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory proposes that the major force in interpersonal relationships is analogous to that of an economic calculation that takes into account both sides of the equation (or relationship) and the desired outcomes of that equation. A give and take ratio is evaluated and finding a balance is tantamount. Expectations of and satisfaction in the relationship are also considered in the pursuit of the desired affiliation. The concept of reciprocity is a popular expectation in the relationship between the Deaf and interpreting communities. The Deaf community gives interpreters a language that is used as way of livelihood for



the interpreters and in exchange, an expectation of friendship and social engagement is ever present. In the social media world this is often manifested by personal inquiry and contact between community members and interpreters, often resulting in role confusion and disappearing boundaries.

### Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The relationship between attitude and behavior is the primary focus of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Humans seek a homeostatic relationship between their values and their behaviors and when this relationship is threatened a feeling of discord and dissention emerges. In an attempt to find balance, either attitudes or behaviors are altered. The field of interpreting is service oriented and most interpreters are introduced to the profession by way of relationship building. In the social media context, interpreters find themselves often teetering between the roles of friend and professional. Interpreters respond to personal status updates on Facebook one day, but then may be thrown into the interpreting role the next day for an employee disciplinary action taken against the very same person whose comments the interpreter just “liked”. Interpreters are constantly seeking coping mechanisms and strategies needed to face these inconsistencies, particularly as they seek to discriminate between social and professional communication interactions.

### Relational Dialectic Theory

While many communication theories attempt to put a fine point on the dynamics of a relationship, the Relational Dialectic Theory takes the opposite approach. The theory states that relationships are not neat and tidy, but rather are made up of ongoing contradictions (relational distance versus intimacy, for example) and those opposing desires are what define the relationship and even make the relationship desirable. For the alliance to be successful, continual negotiation of these opposing values is required. The interpreting profession is a study of relational dialectics in almost every aspect, but particularly as boundaries are needed, wanted or enforced. Since the onset of the profession’s Code of Professional Conduct in the 1960’s, interpreters have learned to hone ethical decision making as it pertains to confidentiality and professional behavior in a face-to-face encounter. The growing popularity and use of social media, however, has added a new dimension to the interactions that interpreters have with the Deaf community. Ethics are being pushed and challenged as interpreters’ personal and professional lives are becoming more and more enmeshed. Interpreters’ whereabouts, employment status, and specific assignment information are now being thrust into the public domain via pictures, event advertisements, agency recruitment and cyber conversations. Interpreters as well as the Deaf community value both professional status as well as personal relationships with their clients.



### Communication Privacy Management Theory

This particular theory investigates the owner of communication and the decisions that are made to either reveal or to conceal private information. In regard to this particular theory, both personal and collective boundaries are analyzed when faced with information sharing. Through a macro lens, the Communication Privacy Management Theory could be applied to all of social media and therefore has a direct bearing on the current issues facing interpreters and their acknowledgement and participation in Facebook, Snap Chat, blogs, vlogs (video blogs), etc. The question of who owns the information being shared regarding interpreting assignments has long been up for debate and is once again being challenged in this new electronic forum.

By taking a critical look at how interpreters and members of the Deaf community engage one another on social media, we can begin the dialogue needed to set and follow necessary communication boundaries. The above communication theories each have their own lens in which to view the issues that we are facing with social media and our profession. Which theory do you think best sheds light on the issues, explains the potential problems and gives possible tools to navigate the murky waters of merging professional and personal relationships?

Discuss!

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## ICRID's Annual Conference and Business Meeting



### 10-6-2018 ICRID ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Come join us on October 6<sup>th</sup> for ICRID's Annual Conference. This year the theme of our workshops will be, "The Unmentionables: What we don't like to talk about". More information to come this summer.

Three Workshop  
Tracks

Annual Board  
Meeting

One hour  
decompressing  
activity afterwards

Lunch provided to  
those who pre-  
register

Indiana School for  
the Deaf, Raney Hall

1200 E 42nd St,  
Indianapolis, IN 46205

## Upcoming Local and Regional Workshops

### Indiana:

June 18-19: [Indiana Deaf Educator's Conference](#)

June 21: [Putting it all together](#)

July 26-28: [Trix Bruce Presents!](#)

### Ohio:

June 2: [OCRID Conference](#)

June 16: [Mental Health Interpreting: Oh My!](#)

June 21: [Intepreting Profanity for Spanish Interpreters](#)

### Illinois:

None Scheduled for June or July

### Kentucky:

June 23: [Biblical Basis of the CPC](#)

June 23: [Technology, Social Media and Interpreter Impact](#)

### Michigan:

Various Dates/times/locations: [Ethical Discussion group](#)

June 21: [ASL to English Interpreting and Key Vocabulary](#)

# Thanks for reading!

