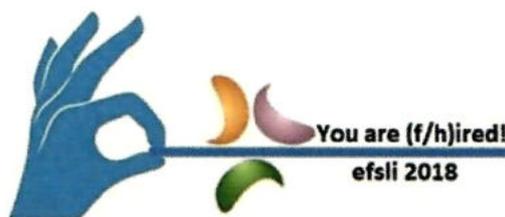




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***Designated Interpreting in an Austrian Pharmacy:
The Views of the parties concerned***

Patricia Brück, Elke Schaumberger

Abstract:

This paper presents the results of a research study on the views of staff and customers of the only Austrian pharmacy employing a Deaf pharmacist who has regular contact with hearing customers via a designated interpreter. This piece of qualitative research was conducted by practice researchers via 16 semi-structured interviews with the Deaf pharmacist, his principal, eight of his colleagues and six customers. These are the research questions tackled:

1. What does the Deaf professional expect of the designated interpreter?
2. In which situations does the Deaf professional use an interpreter in the internal communication with his co-workers who are semi-literate sign language users?
3. How do co-workers of a Deaf professional view the designated interpreter?
4. How do hearing customers react to the presence of an interpreter in a communication/consultation with a Deaf health expert?
5. How do hearing customers view the role of the designated interpreter?
6. How does the owner of the pharmacy feel about the Deaf professional's contribution and the presence of a free-lance interpreter in her pharmacy?

The results are discussed and linked to some of the available literature on the topic. In summary, the practice researchers provide recommendations on favourable conditions for designated interpreting to succeed.

Keywords:

Designated interpreting, regular team of interpreters, pharmacy,

1. Introduction

This contribution presents the results of a piece of practice research on designated interpreting in an Austrian pharmacy conducted in 2018 by the two regular interpreters.

Their Deaf customer is a pharmacist who has been working at the same pharmacy for several years and was provided with a designated interpreter one year after having started his job. He needs interpreters for serving hearing customers and communicating with his hearing colleagues and project partners. We, his interpreters, wanted to look into our work as designated interpreters and find out more about the interpreting situation.

These are the questions we were interested to find answers for:

1. What does the Deaf professional expect of the designated interpreter?
2. When communicating with semi-literate signing co-workers, does the Deaf professional always use sign language interpreters?
3. How do co-workers of a Deaf professional view the designated interpreter?
4. How do hearing customers react to the presence of an interpreter in a communication/consultation with a Deaf health expert?
5. How do hearing customers view the role of the designated interpreter?
6. How does the owner of the pharmacy feel about the Deaf professional's contribution and the presence of a free-lance interpreter in her pharmacy?

2. St. Mary's pharmacy

The pharmacy is specialized in HIV/AIDS patients and Deaf customers. The principal wanted to give Deaf people access to the Austrian Healthcare System and employed a Deaf pharmacist to ensure access for Deaf customers. After one year of his training on the job only using interpreters occasionally for team meetings, the principal decided to look for a designated interpreter to make sure that communication with customers and colleagues was no longer a barrier to the Deaf professional's development. He also received special training in Austrian Pharmacy Law (having done his studies in Slovenia) and started to work for hearing and deaf customers.

Many of his hearing colleagues have learned the basics of sign language and are more or less proficient signers who communicate directly with him (not using interpreters) three days a week. The designated interpreter has a regular schedule of two days of four hours each for sales activities and team meetings. If needed, for project meetings, extra team meetings, social events in the team or further education, extra hours of interpretation are

provided. The interpreters are paid by the Social Ministry covering all costs needed to enable the Deaf pharmacist to do his job.

The Deaf pharmacist has a very diverse and multifaceted job: his main tasks include, producing medicines in the laboratory, managing the stock of pharmaceutical ingredients, selling medicines to deaf and hearing customers, producing sign language videos on seasonal health topics, conducting projects on health topics, representing the pharmacy at conferences or social events and giving lectures on health care.

3.The study

3.1 Goals and Methodology

The main goal of this study was to enable the participating practitioners to reflect on the experience of designated sign language interpreters in the healthcare system and identify situations that they experience as beneficial.

The qualitative study looked into the interpreting work at the pharmacy by taking into consideration the views of all the interested parties. In 16 semi-structured interviews the Deaf professional himself, his principal, eight of his hearing colleagues and six hearing customers were asked for their opinions. The results section provides an analysis of their responses.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Deaf professional

The Deaf pharmacist experienced a big change in his professional life when the designated interpreter started to work for him. By the professional voice-over, he feels well represented in his interaction with his colleagues and his customers. The presence of the designated interpreter has given him a chance to socialize with his co-workers. Furthermore, he feels that he is able to perform better in his role and is on an equal footing with his hearing colleagues which has resulted in more professional recognition from fellow workers and the principal. This fact is also reported by Kushalnagar and Khadijat:

“How the ideas of deaf individuals in professional situations are conveyed through sign-to-voice translation to colleagues plays a large role in the external validation of their intellectual capabilities. The quality of sign-to-voice translation greatly affects the sense of self-worth that the deaf professionals experience because they rely in large part on this validation for professional success.”

(Kushalnagar and Khadijat 2008, p. 54)

As he has had a regular team of two interpreters, they could learn the trade. They could develop a relationship of trust and determine how to work together more effectively. The deaf pharmacist believes that trust and background knowledge is critical to the success of designated interpreting (cf. Seal 1998, p. 185; Sheng and Tian 2010, p.1298).

When asked about the skills needed to be an effective designated interpreter, the Deaf professional listed the following: excellent interpreting skills, highly developed emotional and social skills and an ability to adapt to the changing requirements of various communicative situations (cf. Hauser & Hauser 2008, p. 4). He wants his interpreters to be 'his ears' and relay any information that might be important to him, even if it is acquired incidentally. Hauser and Hauser (2008, p. 7) mention that "a lot of incidental learning is not available to deaf professionals but is available to their hearing peers. The designated interpreter is the holder of this information for the deaf professional and needs to share what information (s/he) judges to be important to the deaf professional (Cook 2004)". Of course, confidentiality is key in a sensitive area like health care.

Furthermore, he mentioned a very astonishing fact. Some Deaf customers would consider him to be less competent because he needs an interpreter to communicate with his hearing peers and customers. For them, he is not self-sufficient in his job which is felt to equate to a lack of competence. We believe that it would be worthwhile to investigate the status of interpreted communication versus communication without interpreters in the Deaf community.

3.2.2. Principal pharmacist

Asked about her motivation to employ a Deaf pharmacist and to bring designated interpreters into her pharmacy, the principal pharmacist answered that she has wanted to give Deaf people better access to the Austrian Healthcare System and enable her Deaf employee to work in his profession on equal footing with his hearing colleagues. The principal has accepted the interpreters as full members of her team and expects them to be part of her sales team, to interact with customers if needed (e.g. when the Deaf pharmacist has left the customer to fetch a medicine from the stock) and to be responsible for customer satisfaction. Therefore, she had the Deaf professional and his team of interpreters undergo a sales training, as she wanted them to forge a well attuned relationship complying with the goals of her pharmacy. Aptly put by Cook "The Deaf professional's goals become the Interpreter's goals (2004, p. 64)".

In addition to the goals mentioned above, the principal pharmacist insists on a regular team of interpreters (working with the Deaf pharmacist) to encourage consistency of practice and build a good knowledge base for supporting deaf customers. She also wants a regular team to collect background knowledge and get to know the regular (hearing) customers. She also expects her Deaf pharmacist and his interpreters to create the technical sign vocabulary needed for the trade and to maintain confidentiality.

She clearly stated that the unqualified (in terms of interpretation) CODA staff members should not be used as interpreters.

4. Conclusions

Using designated interpreters contributes to Deaf professionals' equal access to professional life and results in

- Recognition by her/his colleagues//her/his manager,
- Equal chances in a career,
- Social integration in her/his working team.

Designated interpreters and Deaf professionals need to build a strong rapport to work well together. The designated interpreter has to represent the Deaf professional by a well framed voice-over using technical language and should act as 'the ears' of the Deaf Professional (cf. Morgan 2008, p. 73).

To make sure that the Deaf professional can fulfil her/his tasks, the designated interpreter has to integrate into the staff team and identify with the goals of the business. As Hauser and Hauser (2008, p. 6) put it "The deaf professional and designated interpreter work together as a micro team within the larger macro team of the deaf professional's work environment."

Clues for communication and signs for the technical vocabulary need to be developed. To have the advantage of developing with the task, the interpreters should be a small team of regulars who can learn the trade on the job and get to know the regular customers.

Most customers and colleagues have adapted well to the situation and have accepted the Deaf professional and his interpreter as an equally qualified peer or service deliverer.

Colleagues and customers mention the positive effect of an example of inclusion into mainstream society.

5. Recommendations

For a designated interpreting team to be a success, the practice researchers have identified the following conditions:

- ✧ Introduce designated interpreters from day 1
- ✧ Raise awareness of the issues to be considered amongst the hearing team members
- ✧ Find out where to position the interpreter (the best place to be seen by the Deaf professional, and not in the line of sight of the hearing customer)
- ✧ Have the Deaf professional undergo sales training with her/his interpreters

- ◇ Conduct customer surveys on the interpreting situation
- ◇ Allot enough time for feedback and debriefing (Deaf professional, interpreters and colleagues)
- ◇ BE AWARE OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!

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The Views of the parties concerned

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Patricia Brück earned an M.A. Degree in Sign Language Interpreting (EUMASLI) after having completed her interpreting studies for spoken languages in the 1980s (Master of Philosophy). After having worked in different areas, she completed her education as a sign language interpreter. She has been working as a professional sign language interpreter for more than 17 years. Her area of expertise is educational interpreting from secondary level through vocational training to university lectures, conference interpreting, and political settings. She has been working as a designated interpreter since 2014. Her academic interest lies in team interpreting, gender issues in interpreting, health care interpreting, designated interpreting and the ethics of the profession.

Conference presentations and publications:

Efsli conference Toulouse 2017: "Diagnosing Healthcare Assignments: Experiences in European Medical Interpreting".

Conference Sign Language as a Means to Eliminate Discrimination - Deaf Education in Limassol, Cyprus 2014: "Sign Language Interpreting in Academia in Austria"

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Elke Schaumberger graduated with a M.A. in Sign Language Interpreting and Educational Sciences at the University of Graz (1998-2003). In 2002 Elke received her diploma as a Sign Language Interpreter (Austrian Sign Language / German) and became a member of the Austrian Association, ÖGSDV. After finishing her thesis in Leiden, the Netherlands, she worked at the department for Sign Language Interpreting at the Humboldt-University in Berlin for two years. Back in Austria, Elke set up her own business in Interpreting Services based in Vienna, Austria. She is working as a freelance sign language interpreter and trainer in Austria and abroad. She has gained expertise in different specialities over the last 15 years, including (inter)national conferences and events, academic and higher education, political and cultural events designated interpreting and working with Deaf and hearing interpreters in a team. From 2007 till 2010 Elke was board member of the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli).

2014 - Co-author of the article "Deaf interpreters in Europe: A glimpse into the cradle of an emerging profession" (together with Patricia Brück) In: The Interpreter's Newsletter: Sign Language Interpreting, n. 19/2014

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