Video Relay Services
Interpreting Task Analysis Report

Leilani Johnson, Ed.D.
Marty M. Taylor, Ph.D.
Anna Witter-Merithew, M.Ed.
RID 2007
San Francisco, CA

University of Northern Colorado
Distance Opportunities for Interpreter Training (DO IT) Center
Project Background

- Related to the DO IT Center
  - RSA Grant of National Significance (#H160A00019)
  - Forging collaborative partnerships
    - Sorenson Communications
    - Communication Services for the Deaf

- Related to field of ASL-English Interpretation
  - VRS emerging at unprecedented rate
  - Important questions to answer
    - VRS Vendors
    - Interpreters
    - Interpreter Educators
    - Consumers
Purpose and Goal of Project
Oct 2004 - Feb 2005

Gather & analyze empirical evidence to determine what interpreters require to effectively work in VRS call centers:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Personal attributes
VRS: What it is not

VRI

Interpreter is at a different location than consumers.

Doctor and patient

Interpreter
VRS: What it is

VRS

All three parties are at a different physical location.
Rapid Growth: Caller Minutes

June 2003

October 2004

211,529

1,198,322
## Interpreting Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>VRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face communication</td>
<td>No in-person contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-dimensional perspective</td>
<td>Two-dimensional perspective dependent on high speed compression...times quality decays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No physical limitation on space</td>
<td>Technology restricted signing space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses contextual/environmental cues for meaning</td>
<td>Lacking contextual/environmental cues for meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between callers commonly known</td>
<td>Relationships between callers often unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociolinguistic factors more overt</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic factors not always known</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Interpreting Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>VRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments made in</td>
<td>Assignments made in advance</td>
<td>“Immediate” assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept/decline</td>
<td>Accept/decline assignments</td>
<td>Must accept all calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally works alone</td>
<td>Generally works alone</td>
<td>Team environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often self-employed</td>
<td>Often self-employed</td>
<td>Works for a corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential to prepare</td>
<td>Potential to prepare</td>
<td>Must rely on prior experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation the</td>
<td>Interpretation the only role</td>
<td>Multiple roles simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One locale with</td>
<td>One locale with relatively limited &amp; predictable number of deaf/HH callers</td>
<td>Wide variety of callers and content from different locales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relatively limited &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predictable number of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deaf/HH callers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of “jobs”/day</td>
<td>Number of “jobs”/day = 1-5</td>
<td>Number of calls/day = 100+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= 1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Interpreting Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>VRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often regional signs known</td>
<td>Often regional signs unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers see each other and are able to monitor reactions visually and auditorily</td>
<td>Callers are not able to see or hear each other or monitor reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No special need for technology competence</td>
<td>Technology competence a necessary skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-tasking at linguistic, physical, and cognitive levels</td>
<td>Multi-tasking at linguistic, physical, cognitive and mechanical levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Interpreting Consideration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>VRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater demand for English to ASL interpretation</td>
<td>Greater demand for ASL to English interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most consumers experienced using interpreters</td>
<td>Many inexperienced callers placing phone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little use of intimate register</td>
<td>High numbers of calls use intimate register</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Purpose and Goal of Project

Gather, analyze, and report empirical data regarding skills, knowledge and personal attributes required to effectively work as an interpreter in VRS call centers.
Methodology

- Visited 2 call centers
  - 2 different vendors
    - Sorenson Media Inc
    - Communication Services for the Deaf
  - 2 different states

- Observed calls & interpreters in action

- Interviewed interpreters, managers, directors, and deaf consumers

- Facilitated focus group for deaf and hard of hearing consumers
Focus Group: Deaf Consumers

- Primarily call from home
- Choosing VRS vendor
  - Waiting time
  - Quality and reliability of service
  - Opportunity to reserve interpreters at pre-determined times
Interview: Interpreters

- N=55
- All certified
- 38 held degrees (9 held more than one)
- Experience non-VRS
  - 2-45 years (ave = 18 years)
- Experience in VRS
  - 1 day to 4 years
- VRS work experience
  - Worked with different VRS vendors
  - Worked with same VRS vendor in different locations
Findings: Call Patterns

Daytime calls
Goal driven, business calls

Night calls
Social, order food

Children called family and friends, not business
Findings: Competencies

Skills  Knowledge  Personal Attributes
Finding: Competencies

Skills
- Experience
- Adaptability
- Linguistic
- Telephone Protocol and Voice Control
- Customer Service
- Decision Making
- Impartiality
- Technology

Knowledge

Personal Attributes
Findings: Competencies

Skills

Knowledge

- World Knowledge
- World Knowledge – deaf related
- VRS Knowledge

Personal Attributes
Findings: Competencies

Skills

Knowledge

Personal Attributes

- Physical
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Conduct
  - Professional
  - Ethical
Recommendations

- Increase pool of non-certified interpreters
- Increase pool of certified interpreters
- Design, develop, and implement model curriculum
  - Scope and Sequence
  - Materials
  - Assessment
Implications for Programs

- IPP ‘product’ not in sync with current growth segment of the market
  - Similar to what happened with K-12 demands

- The gap still exists
  - Lack of empirical data demonstrating field of interpreter education can successfully teach linkages between theory and practice
Implications for Programs

- Demand exceeds supply
  - pressure to produce ‘more graduates’

- Limited resource capacity
  - no reserves on hand
  - what incentives exist?

- Fast Track’ approaches unproven
  - counter to our collective experience
  - perception of increased risk
  - potential increase to the ‘gap’
Implications for Instruction

- Competencies generalized to other settings?

- Competencies currently addressed in curricula?
  - Where?
  - Immediate expansion?
  - Long-term attention?
Implications for Instruction

- Curricula infused with critical-thinking & decision-making skills?

- Competencies to be addressed where in scope & sequence?

- Resources to develop
  - Vignettes formatted for student learning
  - Model interpretations
  - Customer Service modules
Continue Research into…

- Best practices in VRS interpreting
- Industry standards & expectations
- Interview greater number of deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers
- Interview non-deaf consumers
- Analyze VRS interpretations for “patterns”
Questions?

Leilani  Leilani.Johnson@unco.edu
Marty  MTaylor@connect.ab.ca
Anna  Anna.Witter-Merithew@unco.edu

Products and Resources  www.unco.edu/DOIT/