



Improving Rural Interpreter Skills

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Module 4: Working with Diverse Deaf Populations



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[ASL lecture](#) by Joe Toledo & Naomi Sheneman

Module Overview & Objectives

Overview: This module will explore identity and linguistic diversity among deaf people.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon Completion of this module participants will be able to:

1. Explore the application of diversity definitions to deaf populations
2. Explain how ableism among deaf people and sign language interpreters influence biases and attitudes about deaf people's languages.
3. Identify possible resources for working with a specific marginalized group within the deaf community.

Pre-Test

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this pre-test

Answer the following questions:

1. What does diversity mean?
2. Briefly explain how deaf people are diverse to you.
1. Summarize what crip linguistics is and how it is related to deaf people's language use.



Introduction

We will explore diverse deaf populations in this module. As we learned in the previous module, many of us were taught one history of deaf people and that is the white deaf people's history. There are numerous deaf histories that have not been sufficiently discussed in sign language and interpreter education programs. This has had a significant impact on how interpreters work with diverse deaf individuals.

It is important to acknowledge that one module on diverse deaf populations *is not enough*. This will give you a taste of some of the more recent discussions on diversity. Additionally, a specific part of this module will challenge you to think differently about how deaf people use language. There is a lot of information contained in this module and we do not expect you to remember everything. The aim is to promote increased awareness about diverse deaf populations.

At the end of this module, each of you will research resources in working with a particular marginalized group within deaf communities to share with others. Your facilitator(s) will make sure there are no duplicates. When you know which marginalized group you want to focus on, please notify your facilitator(s) immediately. Please wait for confirmation from your facilitator before commencing your research.

GoReact Discussion: What does diversity mean to you?



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Review [What diversity really means, and why it's crucial in the workplace](#) and post addressing the following questions:

- Now that you have read about diversity in that blog, what does diversity mean to you?
- How can this blog spot be applied to deaf people that you work with in your rural communities?

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

GoReact Discussion: Diverse deaf people, Part I



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Review at least *two* of the following resources:

- [Jessica's Story: "Deaf is a spectrum"](#)
- National Deaf Center's materials on diversity in deaf people's [educational attainment](#) and [work](#)
- Diversity among deaf communities (watch three videos on this [website](#))

Based on these resources, what had the greatest impact on you? Share that in your original post along with any questions or comments you may have.

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

GoReact Discussion: Diverse deaf people, Part II



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Review the following resources:

1. [Dear White Interpreters](#)
2. [Working with foreign-born individuals](#)

Based on these resources, what had the greatest impact on you? Share that in your original post along with any questions or comments you may have.

Response post directions:

React to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Are deaf people disabled?

Framing the narrative:

Deaf exceptionalism is when a deaf white person aligns themselves with whiteness by denying they are disabled. This leads to ableist rhetoric in the deaf community and has become a subject of much contention. Watch this lecture video by Dr. Octavian Robinson, a historian and disabilities studies scholar, explaining more about deaf exceptionalism/ableist rhetoric.

[This lecture video](#) is required for you to watch. His main paper, [We Are of a Different Class: Ableist Rhetoric in Deaf America, 1880-1920](#), is available for you to read.

GoReact Discussion: Are deaf people disabled?



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

After watching Dr. Octavian Robinson's lecture video on deaf exceptionalism and ableist rhetoric, post your response addressing the following prompts:

- Based on these resources, what had the greatest impact on you? Share that in your original post along with any questions or comments you may have.
- After viewing these materials, has your perception as to whether or not deaf people are disabled changed in any way? Why or why not?

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of at least two of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Crip Linguistics

Going further:

Crip Linguistics is a new framework in linguistics that discusses disability and language use. Watch this [required lecture video](#) by Dr. Octavian Robinson outlining crip linguistics.

Additional optional resources:

- [Crip Linguistics Goes to School](#), Henner and Robinson (2023)
- Crip Linguistics Goes to School [Video Presentation](#), Henner (n.d.)
- [Unsettling Languages, Unruly Bodyminds: Imaging a Crip Linguistics](#), Henner and Robinson (2021)
- [Unsettling Languages, Unruly Bodyminds: A Crip Linguistics Manifesto](#), Henner and Robinson (2023)
- [Crippling the “Delay”: Multilingualism-Related Consequences of Re-Labeling Language Deprivation Systems](#), Koulidobrova, E. & Chen Pichler, D. (2021)

Synchronous Session: Crip Linguistics



This module **requires your attendance** at a synchronous session. Your facilitator will share the exact details of the date and time of this session.

After watching Dr. Octavian Robinson's lecture video on crip linguistics, come prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Share the most profound things you learned from the lecture video and any questions/thoughts you may have.
- What are the implications of describing/labeling deaf people's languages?
- Interpreters often use this [sign](#) when describing deaf people's language. If you could offer feedback on this sign to propose a new frame of thought, what would you say?
- What language attitudes and biases did you hold before about deaf people's language? How did learning about Crip Linguistics help you?

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whynayo. (2015, November 29). *National adoption awareness month (ASL)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/d8NsgisBM_M

Additional resources

- The Speaking Tongues Podcast in conversation with multilinguals Episode 106 [*Speaking Black American Sign Language*](#). In this episode, Dr. Joseph C. Hill tell us about the evolution of Black ASL (BASL) and how it developed to be a distinct language from standard American Sign Language. This episode touches upon how integral code switching is to BASL and how social media not only keeps BASL alive but also how it is used to maintain a connection among signers and creates community. Further, Dr. Hill shares his research and findings about BASL signers. You can see more about Dr. Hill at his website www.josephchill.com
- “Deaf And . . . ” Features a multitude of Deaf professionals sharing their perspectives as scholars, artists, leaders, researchers, advocates, and more. This episode [*“Deaf Identity”*](#) showcases some of the many ways of being Deaf and how embracing our different journeys makes us stronger as a community in a world that often misunderstands and devalues the Deaf experience.

Post-Test

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this post-test

Answer the following questions:

1. What does diversity mean?
2. Briefly explain how deaf people are diverse to you.
1. Summarize what crip linguistics is and how it is related to deaf people's language use.

Correct responses: For all questions, various answers can apply.





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