

Skill Development Activity: INTERPRETING CULTURALLY BOUND CONCEPTS

Culturally bound concepts are those words, concepts, or phrases that cannot be understood by persons outside of a culture without the addition of contextual information. For example, non-deaf people who are unfamiliar with Deaf people and their language use will not understand the importance of a deaf identity, the role of ASL in the Deaf Community, the value for schools for the deaf and other related concepts. Likewise, Deaf people may find it difficult to understand the value of sound. Some examples are the radio, Top 40 Countdowns, the differences in Jazz, Rock and Roll, the Blues, and other types of music, as well as other cultural identifiers such as Baby Boomers, The Flower Children, The X Generation, and other cultural identifiers. These activities are designed to increase your awareness of these concepts and to practice more effective ways of interpreting them so they will be understood to “outsiders.”

Activities:

- Analyze texts of ASL signers and stop the recording every time you identify a concept that is specific to the Deaf Experience. These would be experiences that “outsiders” would not understand or appreciate without additional insight. Make a list of all the culturally bound concepts that arise in each text you view. Review the list and practice creating English statements, which would accurately convey the meaning and context surrounding the concepts (i.e., TTY might be interpreted as a piece of equipment that allows deaf people to use the telephone). Then review the recording again, and each time one of the concepts comes up, stop the recording, practice an interpretation of the concept, and then continue. Repeat this process until the end. Next, go through the text and interpret only the culturally bound concepts without stopping. Then go through the recording one more time, integrating the rest of the content with the culturally bound concepts. Record your interpretation during the last go through of the text. Listen to your interpretation and evaluate your effectiveness in terms of clarity. Ask someone unfamiliar with the text to listen to your interpretation and to advise you of places where concepts are not understood. Repeat the interpretation until you produce a sample that accurately expresses the culturally bound information in a clear, concise, and accurate manner.

- You can do this same activity with English texts. Go through the text and isolate all the places where you would need to adjust your interpretation to accommodate a culturally bound concept. Then go through the text again, and interpret only the culturally bound information into ASL. Then go through the text one more time and integrate the culturally bound concepts with the rest of the information in the text.

These steps enhance your recognition of culturally bound concepts, allow you to interpret them in isolation, and then integrate them with the rest of the message.

Resources

Free Online Materials

ASL Storytime from the Department of Sign Language and Interpretation at Gallaudet University

- This series includes three volumes, each containing stories with a broad variety of ASL features.
- Available on YouTube.
 - Volume 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLxddLdxbOw>

- Volume 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAGx5CXgmTU>
- Volume 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqx4wCZoCMU>

NOTE: These stories are good for practice of many ASL features so use them with other instructional sheets in addition to this one!

TerpTalks from the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC)

- This series includes diverse ASL and English texts available for practice interpreting.
- There is no charge for accessing these materials, although you may be required to register to access.
- Available on NCIEC's website: <http://www.interpretereducation.org/tim/terptalks/browse/>

Purchasable Materials

The following resources may be available for use from your local interpreter education program or through your public library. If the library does not have them, request that they purchase them for community use.

Interpreter Practice Materials from Sign Media (www.signmedia.com)

- Set of 33 DVDs includes 12 simultaneous texts, 12 consecutive texts, 7 one-to-one situations, 2 small groups, 6 ASL texts and 6 English texts.
- Excellent for individual, study group, or classroom skill development exercises.