

Facilitating the Education of Persons with Hearing Impairment in Inclusive Contexts: The Role of Interpreters.

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Introduction

Individuals with hearing impairment are those with partial or limited abilities to hear the spoken words, which may sometimes be expressed as total loss of the ability to use the hearing system, since most of them have limited residual hearings which cannot be utilised to process Linguistic codes.

Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1990) observed that hearing impairment adversely affects a child's educational performance. Alade (1993) suggested that the area of difficulty for the deaf and hard of hearing is communication because of the inability to hear generally and as a result they have difficulty in developing language. Communication can only take place when the decoder understands and responds to what he hears (Feedback) either by verbal or non-verbal modes. Ross (1982) observed that the greatest deprivation of hearing disability is loss of language, specifically the spoken language. Aloba (1992) on the other hand noted that language is assumed to be the primary means whereby experience is internalized, crystalised and structured; hence a lack of or limitation of it will lead to a reciprocal restriction in the ability to integrate experiences.

Mba (1981) summed it up when he pointed out that defective hearing creates barrier to developments and brings about the disorganisation of the individuals. The fact then remains that language is involved in the cognitive processes of thinking, memory, reasoning, planning and problem solving while it is used in directing different activities. To this end, a transliterator or interpreter will surely facilitate the acquisition and use of language and improve the educational development of persons with hearing impairment in our inclusive schools.

Issues Involved in Inclusive Education

Stainback and Stainback (1992) defined an inclusive school as a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school

community in the course of having his or her educational needs met.

Inclusion is a concept which views children with disabilities as true full-time participants and members of their neighbourhood schools and communities. The idea behind inclusion is that all students should be educated with their peers in the same physical location (Knight, 1999). The inclusionists believe that inclusive schools are based on the belief that the world is an inclusive community, with people who vary not only in terms of disabilities but in race, gender and religious background (Mercer, 1997). With inclusion, students come to the regular classroom with all the specialised services they required. UNESCO (1994), in its *New Thinking in special Needs Education (Salamanca Report)* emphasises that the fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible regardless of difficulties and differences they may have, and that inclusive school must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students. The report further maintained that:

Inclusive education implies starting with children and young people as they are, in all their diversity, and then designing a system which is flexible enough to respond to individual differences.

Inclusions involves modifying the entire school system in order for it to be able to respond to the different needs of all learners. This can be achieved through curriculum flexibility, curriculum adaptation, curriculum differentiation, and appropriate teaching strategies and the use of interpreting services in inclusive settings for the deaf and hard-of-hearing alike.

Advocates of full inclusion believe that schools should have two essential and related goals for children with special needs:

- (a) to improve their social competence and acceptance and
- (b) to change the attitudes of teachers, public and students, without disabilities. These can only happen when all students or learners are in the mainstreamed settings.

In essence, this implies that the teachers should work collaboratively by sharing responsibilities and expertise, and the development of productive links with outside agencies and services, while teachers should select, adapt and sequence learning to suit the individual students, as well as use a wide range of teaching approaches and placements to suit the individual learners, while supportive services should be given to teachers at large.

However, collaboration essentially implies that two or more individuals with useful skills, knowledge and classroom experience, will work together to devise appropriate strategies for school level and classroom level interventions. They should also share experience and expertise. Givener and Heager (1995) noted that inclusion of students with special needs will be facilitated if only special education teachers, and regular class teachers plus interpreters increased their level of communication, interaction and even learn from one another. Quality interpreters are an integral part in the life of persons with hearing impairment.

Children with hearing impairment are part of the larger community, they also need total integration, emotional and psychological stability as Nigerian citizens, which interpreting services will offer to them easily. The practicability and implementation of inclusion in the classroom and community level will be problematic for the hearing impaired, except the services of interpreters are sustained since they collaborate with special educators, regular teachers, parents, volunteers, teacher aid and other professionals, who are a team of experts in our inclusive settings. *Interpreting and Purpose of Interpreters.* Interpreting is signing the speech of a teacher or other speakers for a person who is deaf. It began with the establishment of a professional organisation called the "Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf" (RID).

In short, the role of educational interpreter (transliterator) has made it possible for many students with hearing impairment to enroll in and successfully complete even post secondary and university programmes in Nigerian schools; while there has also been the greater use of educational interpreters in elementary and secondary school classrooms observed Gustason, (1985). In essence

the duties of interpreters vary across schools according to Salend and Longo (1994) Zawolkow and Defier (1986). They are likely to perform such tasks as tutoring, assisting regular and special education teachers, keeping records and supervising students with hearing impairment. The purpose of interpreter is to extend communication between individuals who may not share a common communication mode. Dika (1984) defined an interpreter as one who listens to spoken English and communicates it via American sign language (ASL or AMSLAN), and a transliterator as one who listens to spoken English and communicates it in a form of manually coded English (or cues).

An interpreter in an educational settings does either of these functions. He can use oral English, cued speech, signed exact English 1 or 2, signed Manual English or Pidgin English; he has to link adults and children, who do not sign proficiently to the hearing impaired persons or students.

The interpreter conveys the messages to the individuals but he does not enter the dialogue as a contributing member of the communication at times. In short, the interpreter has become an important member of the educational team for hearing impaired students in both elementary, secondary and post-secondary programmes during the past decades.

According to Witter, Merithew and Dirst (1982) the general responsibilities of interpreters include:

- (i) Interpreting in educational settings as assigned.
- (ii) Interpreting for other activities, conferences, telephone calls, workshops as assigned.
- (iii) Completing paper work as it relates to the interpreting tasks.
- (iv) Preparing for interpreting assignments by studying content area, Lesson plans outlines, etcetera.
- (v) Establishing a physical setting in conjunction with the classroom teacher to epitomise communication interaction.
- (vi) Meeting with the classroom teacher on a regular basis as regards the communication needs of the students.
- (vii) Providing information to the classroom teacher, students, (particularly students with hearing impairment) and other staff on how to maximise benefit from interpreting services.
- (viii) Serving as a member of the individual educational programme teams (IEP) as they relate to the communication needs of the

- hearing impaired students.
- (ix) Acting as a resource person for others about interpreting.
 - (x) Participating in professional improvement activities.
 - (xi) Interpreting for extra-curricular activities when hired to do so, such as in churches, parties, engagement, court services, ceremonies, Hospitals, Schools and TV programmes.

The interpreters' works is to facilitate communication. Mores (1996) stated that most interpreters in mainstream programmes are expected to function also as aids or tutors. On the other hand Hurwitz and Witten (1973) observed earlier that unless the professional is hired as a teacher-interpreter, they are not responsible to teach, counsel, reprimand or supervise students.

In essence the degree to which the interpreters should assist with self help skills, prepare materials, and so forth, should be negotiated during the employment interview. However, Interpreters should be hired with the skills needed, to be effective communicators in academic contexts, since, they can tutor other students who have interest in signing to the public or hearing impaired. Moores (1996) stressed the fact that it is necessary to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of interpreter especially when students are demonstrating problems in mainstream settings, since the problems may be due to the inadequacies of the interpreter, because they serve as the link between the teacher and the students. Therefore, interpreters in our schools need to be evaluated regularly and goals set with them, as to improve their performances as required. Teachers and interpreter should work together in an inclusive setting. They should orientate one another, show to one another the lesson plan, and explain among themselves the key concepts and vocabulary involved, before the real lesson, so as to minimise inadequacies.

Competency, Problems and Factors Affecting interpreting services in Nigeria

As in other professions, interpreters require good training, good working conditions and a code of ethics opined Gbegbin (1995). They would required specialised training as well as experience, which must involve frequent exposure to deaf people, so that the manual communication becomes second nature to the Interpreter. Those interested in legal interpreting would need to train in legal terminologies and proceedings, where a

deaf persons's life, liberty, property or pursuit may be in jeopardy. The service of a competent interpreter allows a deaf person to present himself as plaintiff, defendant or witness in law suit, since deafness will not excuse his failure to testify. It is necessary in courts to make use of legal interpreting services, in order not to toy with the right to equal justice and fairplay of the hearing impaired lots.

In his contribution, Mutusky (1992) considered skill such as linguistic knowledge, information processing, memorization, communication, interpersonal relations and communication as a critical part of an interpreter's professional growth. According to Frishberg (1986), interpreting involves competence in at least two languages and the understanding of dynamics of human interactions in two quite different modalities such as a language and a signed code. It is seen as appreciation of social and cultural differences, the ability to concentrate and maintains one's attention, a good deal of fast judgement, stamina and above all sense of humour are the competencies required of an interpreter.

Interpreting is however quite demanding especially physical work. A survey had found out that 87% of interpreters experienced symptoms of repetitive, Stress injury or carpal tunnel syndrome in their wrists (Stedt, 1992). There is no work without its hazard. The most prevalent health hazards associated with interpreting job are arthritis, tendinitis and sprains. These may be common with active interpreters with repetitive wrist movements, hence there is a need for better condition of services for the interpreters such as insurance policy, compensations and health care when necessary.

Nigeria with a philosophy of integration (UBE) or inclusive education requires the services of an interpreters in the schools and public fora. Qualified interpreters are an integral part of the life of deaf people. Provisions for these services are grossly inadequate to meet the unique needs, of students with hearing impairment.

Conclusion

Among other factors affecting interpreting services are clothing of the interpreter, which should be dark but of contrary colour to the skin colour, moderate dressing, while personal appearance of the signer further matters. Lighting and seating arrangements affect interpreting services; just as size, rhythm, and flow of signs affect (viewers) the listeners also. Clarity, height and pace of the signs further affect signing; while facial

expression, speed, motion, vocalization enhanced the reading of signing by the hearing impaired. A good interpreter should take good cognizance of all the enumerated points above, for better communication interaction with the hearing impaired lots. The interpreters motor alertness, motor coordination and hand-eye coordination is essential for good interpreting services to the hearing impaired.

To interpret efficiently too, finger dexterity matters, but the finger can be stiff initially, while the signers may experience pain and rigidity of the fingers. Wrist and muscle fatigue, may further sets in, due to their over use and repetition. The Eyes fixation is another requirement that must be sharp since the receiver needs to concentrate his eyes perfectly to read other messages and impression on the signers face. The individual may experience eyes blinking and discharge of water when they are over used. The muscles of the eyes may be over used too. The signers need to concentrate with 95% attention given to the deaf since it is a common belief that in the deaf culture it is an insult to stop conversations with the deaf abruptly.

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