

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

WHILE THERE IS RESEARCH related to the presence of deaf students and educational interpreters in the classroom, what remains unexplored is the role of educational interpreters from the lens of administrators and teachers. Nor is there a shared understanding of whether these different lenses set the stage for a role conflict for educational interpreters.

In the United States, the implementation of Public Law 94-142, namely, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, mandated that children with disabilities ought to be educated with nondisabled students whenever possible. Later renamed the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, this process often entails, for children who are deaf, placement in a public-school setting. As a result, according to the Office of Special Education Programs (2016), >91% of deaf children attend regular public schools for all, or part, of the school day. Many of those students depend on educational interpreters for access to communication, curriculum, and social interactions in the school system.

At a most fundamental level, educational interpreters provide access to the discourse features of the school environment (Antia & Kreimeyer, 2001; Pöchhacker, 2004; Schick et al., 2006; Seal, 2004; Stuckless et al., 1989; Winston, 1990, 2004, 2015) for students who are deaf. In the United States, educational interpreters generally work within a large, multilevel education system. The smallest

units of this system are the individual classrooms within each school, which together form an individual school system or district. State departments of education cover various school districts, and each state department of education is arranged under the federal Department of Education.

Within each school district are stakeholder populations such as administrators, teachers, and students. The literature indicates one essential area still requiring adequate description: different administrators' and teachers' responses to the work of educational interpreters in public schools every day. This book is aimed at administrators, teachers, educational interpreters, programs preparing educational interpreters, and deaf education programs. And it addresses the need to clarify the role of educational interpreters from a role-theory lens. Before we delve into that aspect, we should probably talk about roles and role metaphors first.

Living "in a vacuum of knowledge and experience, with little existing information, data or understanding of the impact of interpreted education on deaf students."

(Winston, 2015, p. 2)

ROLE AND ROLE METAPHORS

The term *role* has "its roots in theatrical usage and refers to a part one plays" (Conway, 1988a, p. 63) in a drama and has grown to include a set of behaviors and expectations that an individual should follow in a given social situation. Goffman (1990) asserts that when an individual interacts with another individual, each person enacts a specific performance or presentation of self. The presentation of self, then, changes depending on with whom the individual is interacting and in what context.

Therefore, role is not a singular perception but rather a dynamic series of choices that are enacted based on who is involved, what is involved, as well as where, when, and why an interaction happens. Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2013) have reconceptualized the concept of role toward one that is more dynamic. Their model requires interpreters to make active choices about managing the myriad factors that foster successful interactions. They suggest that interpreters

adopt a model that presents *role space* as the continuous shifting along the following three dimensional axes: the axis of presentation of self, the axis of interaction management, and the axis of alignment with participants to frame their work.

Since role refers to behavior rather than position, a role is enacted—not occupied. Certainly, interpreters working in a public-school setting may enact different dimensional positions along the three axes within different interactions while they are actively interpreting. Movement along the three axes depends on the context and the characteristics of the interaction. With this multidimensional sense of role space, this book, however, does not address Llewellyn-Jones and Lee and the role-space theory. I would strongly encourage everyone to look at their amazing work.

To be clear, for the purposes of this book, I use the term *role* as separate from the research of Llewellyn-Jones and Lee on the role space of interpreters while interpreting. I use the term *role* as not reflective of a static representation but rather encompassing the wide range of dimensions to take into consideration in the educational interpreter's overall role while interpreting or not.

In addition, we should probably define several common philosophical role metaphors that interpreters have enacted since the early days of American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreting. The first is a *helper metaphor*, which can be marked with interpreters becoming overtly involved with deaf consumers and beginning to advise, direct, or teach. The underpinnings of this metaphor are attitudes that “deaf individuals are not able to take care of their own business, be it personal, social or professional without the intervention of the helper” (Roy, 1993, p. 139).

The helper metaphor remains enacted in the education system. For example, educational interpreters who become friends with deaf students, help deaf students with homework or taking notes, eat lunch with deaf students, and take care of deaf students' needs. Being helpful as part of the school community through activities, such as supervising bus or recess duty, coaching students, helping hearing students and teachers while not interpreting, and practicing speech therapy with deaf students, can also be attributed to the helper metaphor.

Due in part to changing expectations of deaf consumers and the profession, the helper metaphor was replaced with the *conduit metaphor*. This metaphor supported the idea that interpreters would become invisible machines that render a verbatim transmission. Enacting the conduit metaphor, interpreters adopt a robot-like approach to the communication process and assume no responsibility for the interaction or communication dynamics taking place between parties. In other words, interpreters are passive reflections of the speaker, and this aspect allows interpreters to decline responsibility for, or face the consequences of, an interpreted transaction (Roy, 1993). Although the conduit metaphor fell out of favor as being too rigid, it is often referenced by those not knowledgeable about the work of interpreters. For example, a conduit metaphor of interpreting includes acting as a conduit of information and meaning, interpreting all auditory information, and neutrally interpreting verbatim everything that happens.

Dispelling this notion, however, are many studies indicating that interpreters are not translation machines but participants in interpreted interactions. To name a few, Roy (2000), Wadensjö (1998), Metzger (1995), Marks (2012), and Marszalenko (2016) are excellent sets of research that directly counteract the conduit metaphor.

The next role metaphor that gained popularity is the *communication facilitator metaphor*, which is very similar to the conduit metaphor; however, it describes an interpreter as a channel that transfers messages from sender to receiver as a communication expert. The term facilitator, however, is ubiquitous and commonly used in the educational system. The idea of a facilitator in the education system seems to digress greatly from the communication facilitator metaphor. For example, definitions of educational interpreters often include phrases such as those who *facilitate* communication in a K–12 educational setting, or facilitators who make communication easier. The facilitator metaphor in education also promotes an educational interpreter as a flexible person who can be fully engaged in the classroom by being very helpful with hearing students as needed. The caveat stands that if the need arises for both interpreting and some other task, interpreting should take

priority. In addition to interpreting, a facilitator metaphor can include meeting with teachers to discuss student progress, informing teachers what gaps the deaf student may encounter, tutoring students, changing the content so that deaf students can understand it, and advocating for deaf students.

The *bilingual/bicultural metaphor* was introduced to the interpreting field in an effort to describe the work of interpreters as communicating across cultures as well as across languages. Using the bilingual/bicultural metaphor, interpreters are sensitive to accomplishing a speaker's goal, maintaining dynamic equivalence, and managing linguistic and cultural mediation. This role metaphor is not commonly seen in a K–12 educational setting.

Naturally, a single interpreter can move between enacting the general principles of several role metaphors, sometimes in the same transaction. However, all interpreters are “active, third participant[s] with the potential to influence both the direction and outcome of the event, and that the event itself is intercultural and interpersonal rather than simply mechanical and technical” (Roy, 1993, p. 151). Particularly, if an interpreter works in a public-school environment, where “many of the standards of practice that are established for interpreting for adults are problematic in a K–12 setting, . . . some adult interpreting practices do not seem to be in the best interest of a developing child” (Schick, 2008, p. 373).

Specific to educational interpreting, there is a metaphor conceptualization noted by Lawson (2012b), in that some educational interpreters enact a role that includes direct instruction, pre-teaching vocabulary, assisting with lesson planning, reteaching content material, promoting the recall for concepts previously covered, helping the deaf student with seat work, providing feedback to the teachers about their teaching, and often stopping interpreting and directly teaching the material firsthand (Fitzmaurice, 2017).

Some research suggests educational interpreters often spend less time interpreting and significantly more time on direct instruction, without teachers' or administrators' knowledge (Fitzmaurice, 2017; Lawson, 2012a), in other words, direct instruction with unregulated autonomy—whether they are trained or have knowledge of the

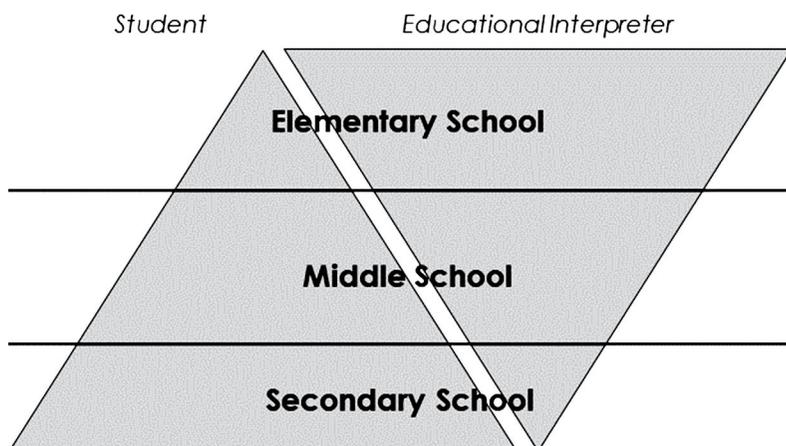


Figure 1. Inverted triangles of responsibility (Davino, 1985).

content material or pedagogy or not. Due to the lack of a common understanding of this role metaphor, I call this a *quasi-teaching metaphor*. It should raise some eyebrows in that educational interpreters, when adopting the role of the quasi-teaching metaphor (as they often need to), are often found to lack training in teaching and learning.

Common thinking is that the role of an educational interpreter also changes depending on the age of the student. As the students grow older, their independence grows, and the educational interpreters' expectations and behaviors also shift. The thinking is that as students mature, they are better able to care for their own personal possessions, materials, and supplies; advocate for themselves; take responsibility for their own learning; and manage their own interpreting services. Davino (1985) proposed inverted triangles of responsibility (Figure 1), in that younger children need more support from educational interpreters, while older students need to have more independence.

This model has become de facto practice despite the lack of empirical evidence to support its efficacy. As an example, "while in high school, the deaf students should begin the process of working with interpreters in a more professional manner. As the deaf student is closer to transitioning out of high school, the behavior of the K–12

interpreter should be more professionally distant” (McCray, 2013, p. 144) and less like parents. The idea is that this will assist deaf students in their perceptions of community-based interpreter behavior based on accurate standards. When, at what age, or how this transition happens is vague.

Although the distribution of responsibility *may* change as students mature, often, it does not. Davino’s model pays no regard to the individual needs of students, and the manner in which the educational interpreter’s role changes is simply an arbitrary suggestion. The role of the educational interpreter needs to be clearly articulated and well understood. However, there has been no systemic agreement on what that role should be or on how, or even whether, that role should change as students age.

WHY THIS TOPIC?

It is from my own background that issues regarding a confusing role for educational interpreters emerged. I began learning ASL at the age of 12 so that I could better communicate with my neighbor who was deaf. Eventually, I became an interpreter, and 4 years after entry into the field, I worked as an educational interpreter for 11 years, interpreting for a range of grades from Grade 3 to Grade 11 in a rural school district. In that work, I found that there always seemed to be a myriad of competing factors tugging at my attention at every turn. District and school administrators told me that I must adhere to a Code of Ethics and a job description that stated that I shall “just interpret all the conversations happening in the classroom”—a functional transcription machine.

I also vividly remember having to beg for lesson plans from teachers for the next day and interpreting many last-minute videos as students were unable to read the captions as quickly as they flashed on screen (recall the time of video home system [VHS] tapes). I seemed to be constantly reminding the physical education teacher to put up his hand when he blew his whistle. I scrambled to get scripts for a field trip to see *Phantom of the Opera* and tried to negotiate how to best situate the interpreting in a strange environment.

However, there was more to my job than interpreting. The principal told me that I must also do bus and recess duty. I did computer laboratory supervision. In addition, I remember classroom teachers telling me to hang bulletin boards, collect field trip money, supervise all kinds of groups of students, and tutor children who were not deaf. Although these were neither my assigned duties nor the “actual role” of an educational interpreter, I sensed I was simply a guest in the teacher’s classroom and did all I could to be a good employee.

The teachers of the deaf also had different ideas regarding my role, which they assumed involved such duties as autonomously tutoring deaf students, making photocopies, and even having to detail everything that was covered in the general education classroom. I had very little contact with any district administrator beyond the annual meeting with educational interpreters or on the rare occasion that the district administrator would briefly visit the school. Ultimately, I did the best work I could, juggling the conflicting demands of interpreting for students who had language delays while meeting the expectations from other individuals in the school system. For the most part, I operated with unregulated autonomy.

Many years later, I served on a state department of education task force to help craft guidelines for educational interpreters. I vividly remember the teachers of the deaf, the state administrators, and I disagreeing on the responsibilities of educational interpreters. Administrators and general education teachers seemed to think educational interpreters are expensive machine-like helpers who simply interpreted everything we heard. Others thought that the role of the educational interpreter was a hybrid of interpreting and being active participants in the classroom.

As administrators and teachers have little experience with deaf students, what became glaringly obvious was the systemic confusion on the role of educational interpreters. Both rhetorical and empirical evidence suggest that my professional experiences are not unique but part of the multiple realities of many educational interpreters. My school district job description was laughable given how principals

and special education administrators portrayed my presence as a translation machine—without actually setting foot in any of the classrooms I worked in.

This was in stark contrast with the classroom teachers who asked and expected me to serve as a resource for all students and act as coteacher. Certainly, the teachers of the deaf I worked with wanted me to take a more active role in tutoring the deaf students and keeping the teacher apprised of what is happening across all classes. The realities of this role confusion conflicted with the professional community-based interpreter view. I was to interpret in a classroom just as I would for an adult in the community.

Indeed, administrators directed me to interpret everything that was spoken or signed. That was it. But the teachers within the school system had very different perceptions of my role, and I was left to figure it all out on my own.

Much later, I did some research to detail the multiple realities of three educational interpreters working in rural high schools. This ethnographic research study (Fitzmaurice, 2017) found that educational interpreters' work revolved around four broad areas: preparation, interpretation, interaction, and direct instruction. Preparation includes adjusting the physical environment, informing teachers about how to work with students who are deaf, preparing content materials for interpretation, and meeting members of the educational team. All the educational interpreters were involved in both simple and more creative solutions to prepare the environment and content material for interpreting. Yet, the high school interpreters did not have preparation time built into their daily schedules and were largely left out of team decisions about the learning goals and objectives of students.

Aside from the actual interpreting work, I also found educational interpreters keeping tabs on what information was being conveyed by the hearing parties and actively tracking the deaf student's comprehension of the interpretation. Simultaneously, educational interpreters were also directing students' attention, timing interruptions, and interpreting and constantly assessing a wide constellation of factors involved in the interpreting process. Each of the educational

interpreters was constantly “on call” to interpret a wide variety of interactions from peers, and they were diligent at tracking when it was needed. None of the interpreting was a machine-like interpretation of everything that was going on.

It became readily obvious that educational interpreters exist within an ecosystem of deaf students, general education teachers, teachers of the deaf, school administrators and other staff, and hearing students. Each of the educational interpreters spent considerable time interacting with each of these subpopulations. These interactions, in turn, influenced the perception of role of the educational interpreter. For example, seeing educational interpreters socially chatting with hearing students altered the teachers’ perception of the role of educational interpreters.

The last area involved the educational interpreters providing direct instruction to students, for example, explaining class content during self-contained classroom time. As this was *not* under the direction of a teacher, this was not tutoring. Most often, however, direct instruction happened during general education classroom teaching—when interpreting should be occurring. In these instances, one-on-one instruction happened between the student and the interpreter despite the lesson the teacher was providing. This direct instruction relied heavily on the interpreters’ specific perception of what the deaf student knows in terms of background knowledge. In addition, none of the general education teachers were aware that direct instruction was occurring. They assumed that their lessons were being interpreted. In other words, the educational interpreters adopted the role of a teacher without the knowledge of teachers or administrators.

In all, I found that the experiences of the educational interpreters were indicative of unregulated autonomy (Fitzmaurice, 2017). The teachers framed themselves as the professionals, and the educational interpreters seemed to be experiencing confusion about their role. The educational interpreters were left on their own with little support, and so, feeling overwhelmed (role overload), they developed ways of interpreting as best they could while trying to meet these varying perceptions of their role.

LET US ADDRESS THIS DIRE NEED

Defining the role of an interpreter in any educational situation must consider the expectations of administrators, teachers, and parents . . . Ultimately, it must be done collaboratively.

(Lawson, 2012a, p. 33)

Monikowski and Winston (2003) rightly note that within the interpreting field, general practice is often influenced by “papers often taken as documented fact rather than as proposed approaches and methodologies” (p. 350). These practices are so addictive that administrators, teachers, educational interpreters, and researchers assume that such practices are supported by empirical evidence. The result is that educational interpreters are assigned all kinds of duties with significant variety in standards of work. While administrators and teachers want educational interpreters who are flexible, the discrepancies in their different expectations set the stage for much confusion. Put simply, there is no clear, informed consensus on what an educational interpreter should be doing.

The consequence is that educational interpreters are often lost in the moment: ill-equipped to do the work that is expected of them and operating from moment to moment, juggling different roles without teachers’ or administrators’ knowledge and with no accountability. In other words, educational interpreters are working with unregulated autonomy to meet the needs of deaf students.

Despite 40 years of inclusion and several descriptions of the work of educational interpreters, we still do not have a clear understanding of how the education system perceives the role of educational interpreters. There remains no clear, in-depth account of exactly how other individuals in the school system perceive the role of educational interpreters. This is reflective of a general lack of investigation regarding the views or perspectives of the participants in interpreted events. By examining the underlying perceptions of administrators and teachers about the role of educational interpreters, we can begin to understand how to make educational interpreting more effective.

This book uses role theory to identify the perceptions of administrators and teachers on the role of educational interpreters as the first step to collaboratively work toward improving an interpreted education. With this aim, the next few chapters address the perceptions of the role of educational interpreters held by administrators and teachers and analyze whether these perceptions set the stage for a role conflict and/or role overload for educational interpreters. It bears reminding that there are many people holding particular roles in the education system, and as they are individuals within each role, roles are not in and of themselves homogeneous. No two interpreters, no two deaf students, no two Grade 1 teachers, or two vice principals are similar. However, broadly speaking, many individuals holding similar roles have similar perceptions or belief systems. To better understand this scope, let us briefly look at the social theory lens.