Designing a Curriculum for American Sign Language/English Interpreting Educators

Elizabeth A. Winston

What do competent interpreting educators need to know how to do in order to foster the development of competent interpreters? To answer this, it is important to address two underlying issues. First, what do competent interpreters need to know how to do? And from the answer to that, what do competent educators need to know how to do to develop that competence in interpreting students? Interpreters and educators have a body of knowledge and skills that define the content interpreters need to master. However, explicit information about how to lead interpreters to mastery of the knowledge and skills required is not part of that body of knowledge. Underlying all the knowledge and skills is an essential core—the need to develop critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment in each domain. Educators contributing to the studies reported in this chapter implicitly acknowledge that these processes are crucial. Interpreting educators need to learn how to structure, implement, and assess active learning approaches that will lead to active learning by their students, and, therefore, to competent interpreting.

Sign language interpreting as a profession is a fairly recent development. Until the early 1960s, most interpreters came from families with deaf parents where at least one child became the “default” interpreter, learning American Sign Language (ASL) from birth as a first or second language (see Cokely, this volume). In the 1960s and 1970s, laws such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and PL-94-142 (later IDEA) were established requiring access to various settings via interpreters (Synthesis, 2004). Public schools were suddenly required to
educate deaf children, using, when needed, sign language interpreters. Adequate numbers of qualified interpreters were not available, and the federal government established funding to set up training programs to train interpreters. However, there were few experienced and qualified academic instructors of interpreting to staff these programs.

Most such programs were established in community colleges. The great majority of faculty were, and continue to be, hired as part-time adjuncts because they are competent practitioners of interpreting. Their expertise as educators and as interpreting educators was not an essential qualification for hiring; word of mouth was often enough to secure an adjunct teaching position in many programs. Only the relatively few full-time faculty were required to demonstrate any expertise as educators. Most have learned to teach through experience, taking courses occasionally. Many earned degrees beyond high school and college, but few entered teaching as a profession to be mastered. Cokeley (this volume), Monikowski and Peterson (this volume), and Monikowski and Winston (2003) raise important questions about the impact of establishing interpreting education in academia.

The shift of interpreting education from the Deaf community and culture in which it had been intricately intertwined into the objective rigors and expectations of academia has led to both positive and negative implications for interpreting education. These implications cannot be ignored. While the shift has resulted in more warm bodies sitting in the interpreter’s seat, and has perhaps demystified the process of interpreting to some extent, the negative effects have been an ongoing concern. There is consensus that many of the "warm bodies" leaving these programs are generally not prepared to function independently in many settings (Patrie, 1994). And, as interpreting education has shifted into academia, it has, albeit unintentionally, lost much of the experience and expertise of the Deaf community. Although this loss is not the central focus of this chapter, it is an essential issue that must be addressed by every interpreting educator. This chapter should be read within the context of this issue, with an understanding that any improvement in the education of interpreters must infuse the knowledge and experience of the Deaf community into every aspect of every activity.

Meanwhile, the national interpreting organization, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), is moving toward requiring interpreters to have Bachelor's degrees as a requirement for certification. This means that interpreting faculty must have qualifications sufficient to satisfy the stricter hiring requirements at 4-year institutions. In addition, the national interpreting educators’ organization, the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT), has established standards for interpreting education programs, including a section addressing faculty qualifications (Conference, 1995). Unfortunately, these standards do not include
a set of guidelines or expectations for independent educators who offer mentoring or workshops around the country. And the standards have not been disseminated widely in order for educators and institutions to access them. There is a need for educators who are skilled and competent not only as practitioners, but also as teachers. This is true regardless of the teaching environment, be it pre-service in academia, or post-service in workshops, mentoring, and training.

**WHAT WE KNOW**

**What We Know from Literature in Education**

The field of adult education has made major shifts in recent years, from the behavioral approach of teaching at students who passively sit through lectures, toward a learning-oriented, student-as-active-learner philosophy, where students are held responsible for their own construction of knowledge. Academics are looking beyond behaviorist theory and the static measurement of products and behaviors. They are incorporating cognitive and constructivist theories of learning—approaches such as problem-based learning, cooperative learning, and writing across the curriculum. These approaches are being used to develop critical thinking, analysis, and active cognitive skills. Attempts to provide tangible models for educators to achieve these goals have been developed over the years; the most well known being Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). Although educators in recent years (and Bloom himself) have provided revisions and expansions on Bloom’s basic taxonomy, it is still widely familiar to many educators who are concerned with designing clear educational objectives for leading students from the basic knowledge of facts to the more complex processes of critical thinking (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom et al., 1956; Marzano, 2001).

Bloom’s six original categories are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. They are intended to represent a hierarchical organization of cognitive processes that lead to complex learning. The first or least difficult level in the hierarchy is knowledge, the ability to recall information that has been learned. Verbs that reflect this level in the hierarchy include “name,” “list,” and “label.” Interpreting competencies at this level might include being able to name the four component parts of a sign or listing the tenets of the RID Code of Ethics. Competencies of interpreting educators at this level might include naming types of interpreting to be taught and listing the types of assessment approaches used in interpreting. The second level is comprehension, where learners are expected to understand meaning, explain or restate ideas, or describe a process. An interpreter might be expected to understand the meaning of a sign location to mean
An interpreter educator might be expected to comprehend the different applications of various assessments. The third level of Bloom’s taxonomy is application, the ability to use newly learned information effectively. For example, an interpreter would be expected to use the appropriate language register when told the environment and setting. An educator would be expected to apply appropriate assessment approaches when a specific instructional objective is identified.

Bloom’s fourth level is analysis, where the learner demonstrates an ability to categorize newly learned information, compare or contrast, or make a decision based on the available facts. At this level, an interpreter would need to determine which factors of a setting might affect the choice of language register. An educator would need to determine which factors would have significant impact on the choice of assessment approaches. Fifth, synthesis is the ability to use newly learned information to create new ideas or discover relationships. An example of an interpreter demonstrating synthesis might be the ability to enter an unknown setting, assess essential factors, and determine new ways to approach the needs of the new situation. An educator, likewise, would need to be able to develop a new assessment approach that fits an individual set of needs, assess a novel interpretation, and prepare an evaluation and justification of its overall effectiveness. Bloom’s sixth and final level is evaluation, when learners are able to judge the importance or value of information based on specific criteria. Interpreters, for example, would be able to judge the effectiveness of their own interpretations; educators would be able to judge whether an assessment approach has been effective.

Bloom’s taxonomy has been used extensively since it was first disseminated more than 45 years ago, when it was a seminal publication about learning domains and levels of abstraction. More recently, researchers such as Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) and Marzano (2001) have revisited Bloom’s taxonomy, providing more depth and understanding of learning processes as research has progressed. Marzano (2001), for example, expands Bloom’s one-dimensional hierarchy of learning to a two-dimensional one, in which he separates the realm of knowledge from the processes learners apply as they learn about the uses and relevance of those pieces of knowledge. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) have refined and expanded the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy by adding more explicit explanations of each level. Regardless of the particular perspective on learning, however, it is essential that these be part of any educator’s repertoire of teaching expertise.

Vygotsky (1978) also provides interpreting educators with insight about the learning processes experienced by students (see also Daniels, 2000). His writings about student learning, the need for scaffolding new learning on prior or existing learning, and guiding the learner from dependence to independence in learning all relate to interpreting
education. As educators work with interpreting students to build interpreting skills from language skills, to expand discourse analysis skills from intra- to interlingual applications, and to develop effective self-monitoring skills, they need to have a broad understanding of how learners, and especially adult learners, actively internalize and synthesize new information and concepts as they construct their own knowledge.

An important aspect of the previous approaches is the need for learners to be able to assess their own learning and abilities. Educators, therefore, need to be able to help them develop these essential self-assessment skills. Boud (1995), a proponent of self-assessment in all learning, writes that competent self-assessment reflects "what is important in teaching and learning in higher education. It stresses the importance of learners constructing rather than receiving knowledge, of promoting the taking of responsibility for learning, of communicating and expressing what learners know and understand and of taking a critical stance to received wisdom" (p. 9). Interpreting educators have long recognized the need to help students develop competence in self-assessment, yet frequently students graduate from programs unable to do this. The education of interpreters must focus on this if interpreters are to develop life-long learning skills; interpreting educators need to understand learning, structure activities based on learners' needs, and assess their own effectiveness as teachers.

Boud sums up the change that is happening in the wider arena of education, especially for adults. It is his claim that "[t]he greatest conceptual shift which has occurred in recent times in higher education has been from a perspective which focused on the teacher and what he or she does, to a perspective in which student learning is central. While much current practice has yet to fully reflect this shift, it is one which is not likely to be reversed" (p. 24).

What We Know from Interpreting Education

A review of interpreting literature indicates that there is a body of knowledge and information about what interpreters need to know and be able to do, and therefore, what educators need to include as content in the courses they teach. The CIT Standards (Baker-Shenk, 1990; Conference, 1995; Members, 1984a & b) the previous curriculum (Baker-Shenk, 1990), and Community wisdom all reflect the belief that these skills can be developed through active, hands-on learning. The expected effect of this active learning is that students will be able to respond critically, make decisions, and assess the effect of those decisions responsibly and professionally. In other words, we expect students to be able to deal with any situation that requires "It depends..." as an answer.
There is also an underlying assumption throughout the literature that interpreters must be aware of and comfortable in the Deaf Community. This belief is so intertwined throughout all the literature that it often remains implicit in discussions and explanations about interpreting education. During the early years when interpreters were apprenticed through Community interaction, accepted through the approval of the Deaf Community, and encouraged to interact within the Deaf Community, the implicit assumptions were implicitly assimilated. In the shift from Community grooming to academic education, the implicit expectations of Deaf Community interaction and acceptance have been paid “lip service.” However, realization of them is often weak or non-existent in practice. There are few deaf faculty in interpreting programs; those who are in interpreting programs are often assigned to teaching ASL exclusively. Anecdotal input in the field indicates that many educators, both deaf and hearing, believe that while there is tremendous input needed from deaf people to teach ASL, there is relatively little deaf educators can effectively contribute in teaching interpreting, since they cannot evaluate both the source and the target messages simultaneously.\(^1\) CIT statistics indicate that only 13% of its membership is deaf or hard of hearing (Directory, 2001–2002).

The implicit expectations and assumptions about the essential value of and need for Deaf Community, deaf faculty, and multicultural competencies exist in stark contrast to the reality reported by CIT membership and by the qualifications of interpreting program graduates. In recognizing the contrast, many interpreting educators are acting to insure that these expectations are moving from the background to the foreground, making them more explicit and expected. In addition to the chapters in this volume from Cokely, Turner, Monikowski, and Peterson that focus specifically on this emphasis, others raise similar concerns. Those chapters about language learning and use all stress the need for native signers and Deaf Community members as essential language and culture models for interpreting students (see Quinto-Pozos, Davis, and Lee, this volume). Public discussions emphasize the need for more deaf faculty who teach interpreting as well as ASL.\(^2\)

However, the ways and means of meeting that need are only beginning to be addressed. Although most interpreting programs incorporate some type of observation and practice requirements, often these requirements are accompanied by somewhat vague instructions, such as “Attend a Deaf event and write a journal about what you saw.” More recently, interpreting educators and researchers are investigating more structured and directed approaches to these observations and participations. These are approaches that provide students with the means to benefit more fully from their learning about both their own cultures and the Deaf Community and cultures. Monikowski and Peterson (2003; this volume), for example, offer a systematic approach to infusing Deaf
Community involvement for interpreting students. In addition, their use of service learning addresses something even more basic—the need of interpreters to gain an understanding of any culture, especially their own, as a foundation to understanding another. Dean and Pollard (2001; this volume) offer the systematic structure of demand-control schema for documenting observations that lead to understanding of what students see and experience as they interact within Deaf community and culture. Dean, Pollard, Griffin, and Davis (2002) provide evidence that the structure is effective in interpreting education. Forestal (this volume) provides detailed insight into the roles and experiences of deaf interpreters. It is clear that Deaf community and culture must be an explicit part of the interpreting educator’s reality, so that it is infused throughout the now primarily academic approach to teaching interpreting. Any newly designed curriculum will need to include explicit goals and objectives to address this need. Further research about how this is currently being done, and how it can be more effectively accomplished, is needed.

Interpreting education does have a body of knowledge about what interpreters need to know and know how to do. CIT members performed a major task analysis of interpreting (Members, 1984a & b). This document provides lists of terms and descriptions of interpreting tasks like “analysis,” “self-assess,” “analyze content,” “decision making,” “audience assessment,” and “décalage” (Members, 1984a & b). Many of the categories and topics fall into the upper levels of Bloom’s taxonomy; for example, reflecting the expectation that interpreting requires complex types of critical thinking. It is a valuable guide for people who already know how to reach these goals, but it does not provide guidance for a practitioner who is new to interpreting education. And unfortunately, this document was not widely disseminated beyond the membership of CIT and has not been easily accessible until very recently, when CIT made it available electronically through their website.

In 1990, Baker-Shenk led a group of experienced interpreting educators in the publication of a curriculum for teachers of interpreting, the Teaching Interpreting Program (TIP). The curriculum provides insight and information about the skills and competencies that were considered essential for competent interpreters at that time. Most recently, CIT has investigated the idea of reviewing and assessing interpreting programs, with a potential goal of accreditation. A set of National Interpreter Education Standards was developed over a period of years, with input from a broad range of interpreting educators, both deaf and hearing, and was approved unanimously by the membership (Conference, 1995). The domains and subdomains of knowledge and skills outlined in the standards provide a comprehensive description of what programs need to teach and, therefore, what competent graduates of
these programs must be able to demonstrate. These include domains of professional knowledge, language competencies, interpreting knowledge and skills, and the ability to function effectively in diverse settings. They underscore the need for educators and programs to focus on the more complex processes of learning that result in critical thinking skills.

The literature discussed thus far provides a basis for answering the question, "What do interpreters need to know to be competent?" It does not explicitly address how these competencies are to be taught. Interpreting educators must also master these defined skills and competencies; they are essential prerequisites to becoming educators. But they must master much more. They must master effective approaches for developing these competencies, or rather, for guiding students to accept responsibility for learning, constructing their own understandings about them, and applying their understandings critically by assessing their own thinking and actions critically.

In addition to the literature available to inform this study in interpreting education, we can look to related fields and professionals for input about teaching competencies. A sister organization of CIT, the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA), is an organization that assesses the competencies of ASL teachers. Although traditionally interpreting and teaching have been viewed as separate fields, it is unquestionably true that the two are closely related. Given that the specific criteria for ASL teachers will be different from those for interpreting teachers, the mastery of approaches that foster student learning, independence, and life-long learning requires similar understanding. ASLTA has established a portfolio system of assessment (ASLTA, no date). Adopting the use of a portfolio indicates a focus on the need for higher-order cognitive skills by this professional group. In addition to the portfolio, applicants for certification must demonstrate their teaching skills—again, a focus on their ability to think about their teaching, decide what constitutes effective teaching, and assess their own work. Each candidate needs to demonstrate, above all else, their own critical thinking about their work, their decision making in choosing portfolio elements, and their ability to assess their own work in order to determine what elements are included. This approach focuses on the underlying processes that ASL educators and interpreting educators need to master and offers educators of interpreting some ideas about how to assess their own teaching competencies.

The field of interpreting education has been in some ways ahead of the shift in adult education discussed previously. Educators like Colonomos (1992) and Gish (1984) have introduced the field to the ideas of Vygotsky and practiced interactive approaches to education. The TIP curriculum implicitly reflects this approach in the types of class and assessment activities it describes (Baker-Shenk, 1990). Consistent with
the recent emphasis on active learning approaches that focus on the development of critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment, Humphrey (2000) suggests the use of portfolios to address the integration and synthesis needs of graduating interpreting students, and as way to bring them into more valuable and effective contact with the Deaf Community. Cokely (personnel communication, June 2002), in his work on decision making and portfolios, embraces active student learning. His new approach to curriculum design that focuses on communication from a discourse perspective promotes critical thinking (Cokely, 2003).

Yet, as current studies indicate, many educators do not understand these approaches and strategies and are not embracing them as the foundation for teaching the interpreting process. Critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment are still often relegated to secondary importance, focused on only when the “critical” needs of memorizing, testing, knowing, and grading have been accomplished.

TEACHING INTERPRETING: RECENT INVESTIGATIONS

The remainder of this chapter focuses on current knowledge, attitudes, and philosophies of interpreting educators. In order to design and develop a curriculum for interpreting educators that meets the needs of the field, it is essential that a deliberative approach be followed. Data collection from a broad spectrum of stakeholders is essential (Peterson, 2003). Participation and ownership are important features of a successful curriculum at this point in the field.

Three separate investigations in an ongoing deliberative process of curriculum development are reported. The three studies incorporate data gathered through open-ended surveys, a roundtable conference, and focus groups. In each study, input was gathered from instructors who are or have worked in interpreting education and in ASL. They range in experience from first-year teachers to those with many years of experience. They have a range of educational backgrounds and a variety of teaching experiences, ranging from many years in structured classrooms to workshop presentations. They include educators who learned sign language at home from deaf parents or family members and then naturally fell into interpreting and teaching. There are others who learned ASL through academic programs in order to become interpreters. Some have educational backgrounds in curriculum design, second language teaching, adult education, linguistics, and English as a second language. Others have little academic training but a tremendous wealth of experience and insight. Data were collected in a variety of ways from a variety of participants. The following section describes the data collection approaches for each study and discusses the findings.
Study 1: Open-Ended Survey about Teaching Interpreting

Data Collection

Cogen, Monikowski, Peterson, and Winston (2002) developed and distributed a survey for interpreting and ASL instructors. The survey consisted of two sections. The first section posed a series of demographic questions for respondents, including length of time teaching; status as a teacher (full or part time); if they were affiliated with an institution; what academic degree(s), if any, they held; and in what field(s). The second section of the survey asked participants to respond to four open-ended questions. The questions were designed to elicit explanations of activities and the reasons that people used them.

1. Describe your favorite/most effective teaching activity, discuss why, and describe how you assess it.
2. Describe your least favorite/effective activity and discuss why.
3. Tell us about how you grade your courses.
4. Are there other things you want to share about your teaching?

Data collection began in 2002, when the researchers solicited the first group of participants by sending an announcement to CIT, the only interpreting educator organization in the United States. The announcement was sent to their listserv, which is distributed to all members of the organization. The number of members was listed as 272 in 2001–2002 (Directory, 2003–2004). However, many interpreter educators report anecdotally that other faculty in their program, especially adjunct faculty and independent educators, do not belong to CIT, and this number is not considered an accurate reflection of the actual number of interpreting educators in the United States. Although there is no actual count of interpreting educators in the United States at this time, the RID website states that there are approximately 150 interpreting programs (Registry, retrieved March, 2004). Estimates from educators indicate that there may be an average of one to two full-time instructors and one to eight part-time instructors in many programs. Therefore, the members were encouraged to share the information and invite any other educators involved with teaching interpreting, whether as faculty or as workshop presenters and independent consultants.

Over the course of a 3-month period, 21 surveys were submitted. Quantitative analysis of the results is problematic because access to the survey was not restricted by password or other criteria, so the real number of possible respondents is unknown. However, qualitative analysis provides insight into the philosophies of those who did respond.

A second group of participants were recruited in the spring of 2003. A national online roundtable discussion was sponsored by Project
TIEM.Online, entitled "Teaching Interpreting: What Do We Need to Know?" The survey was linked to the website for the roundtable discussion, and registrants of the roundtable were encouraged to respond if they had not done so previously. There were 299 registered participants of the roundtable, and 19 participants chose to respond to the survey. Although access to the survey was restricted to registered participants of the roundtable, registration to the roundtable was not restricted. As with the first round of recruitment, the conditions for collecting these surveys were not controlled adequately for strict quantitative analysis.

In all, 40 surveys were available for analysis. This research collated the demographic information collected from the first section of the survey and analyzed comments made in response to open-ended questions 1, 2, and 4. Participants ranged in teaching experience from 0–5 years: 14; 6–10 years: 13; 11–15 years: 5; and 16+ years: 8. There were 23 full-time faculty members and 17 adjunct or independent educators. Their places of employment ranged from 17 at 2-year institutions, 13 at 4-year institutions, and 10 independent educators not affiliated with any institution. Participants held a variety of academic degrees, including 3 with Associate’s degrees, 8 with Bachelor’s degrees, 22 with Master’s Degrees, 6 with Ph.D.s, and 1 with a high school diploma. Of these, some reported working on advanced degrees in areas such as linguistics, interpreting, teaching interpreting, special education, and adult education.

Respondents were not asked if they were deaf or hearing, nor were they asked about race or ethnicity. Future versions of the survey may include those questions. A few participants self-identified as deaf or hearing. The format of a written English survey, combined with the online environment, meant that some educators did not participate.

Data Analysis

Of the four open-ended questions about teaching interpreting, the responses to three informed this study. The questions about favorite/effective activities, least favorite/effective activities, and additional thoughts provided insight into educators’ philosophies and needs for teaching. The question about grading yielded specific information about syllabi and grading policies; responses to this question were not analyzed for this study.

Question 1. Describe your favorite/most effective teaching activity, discuss why, and describe how you assess it? Of the 40 surveys, 33 people responded to this question. All but one described an activity that developed critical thinking, decision making, and/or self-assessment skills. Only one activity described was teacher-centered, designed to simply transfer factual information to a passive student group.
activities included students working together to analyze problems (either texts or situational questions), self-assessment of interpreting skills, and educator/student interaction that led students to construct knowledge for themselves.

Educators reported that these types of activities were essential in developing the higher-order thinking and analysis skills that interpreters need to be competent practitioners. Although the comments overwhelmingly indicate a sense of the value of these types of activities, they also reflect a range of meta-knowledge about this understanding. Some comments were very articulate statements about the need for developing these skills. Respondent #14, for example, did not describe a specific activity; instead, she wrote: "I think the most beneficial activities in the classroom are grounded in self-analysis. No matter what I am teaching (almost), I go back to asking the students about their experiences, what their challenges were, how they managed the challenges, what they learned in the process, etc. I use this at all levels, and I think it speaks to self-directed growth."

Other comments do not explicitly discuss why these activities promote critical thinking. They merely state that critical thinking and self-analysis are the goal of the activity. For example, Respondent #11 discusses an activity that is videotaped, writing: "The student receives feedback from the instructor and fellow classmates, but, more importantly, they get the opportunity to view and provide a self-critique of their own work." Respondent #30 begins her comment very succinctly by stating, "Student self-analysis."

Other comments reflect an understanding that these types of learning activities are effective, but do not identify the underlying processes they foster. Respondent #3 describes two activities that are effective. The first is an interpreting activity where the students "use process mediation" (i.e., engage in a discussion of their processing, etc.) using a fishbowl technique in class; the second is an activity that has students "engage in role plays with Deaf Community members and get direct feedback from these Deaf people and process the experience." Although there is no explanation of why this is important or what process the activity fosters, she adds, "Both course evaluations and student comments (in class) attest to the benefit of these activities."

These comments indicate some level of understanding of the essential need to develop critical thinking and self-assessment in interpreters. More important, they also reflect a need to better understand how to structure and assess the activities. While some participants described their assessment approaches knowledgeably, others were clearly at a loss as to how to do this. Several, after describing their most effective activity, bemoaned the fact that it is too hard to assess, or that they do not assess it at all. Respondent #14, quoted above with a very
articulate explanation of the need to develop self-assessment and critical thinking skills, ends her comments by writing: "There is difficulty in assessment with this method, and I feel fortunate that I mainly teach in the workshop setting, so assessment is based less on grading and more on personal growth and movement."

This indicates a possible conflation of assessment and grading and raises the question of whether this educator is aware of approaches to assessment that could be effective in her teaching, regardless of the setting, and of the possibility that effective assessment of these activities could be relevant to grading and teaching.

The comments of two respondents about assessing these activities are striking in their similarity—the activities they describe are central to interpreting, yet they are not evaluated. Respondent #20 describes an activity that pairs students for interactive practice with interpreting skills. She concludes by writing: "This gives the students practice in dual tasking as well as short term memory... There is really no assessment—this is primarily for skill building." It is revealing that this educator does not assess this activity, which focuses on an essential aspect of our work-skill building.

Respondent #29 describes an effective interactive activity in translation, ending with this thought: "I did not grade the final performance of this activity. This was more for them to get a feeling of the process of changing messages from one language to another." It is interesting to see that the basic, underlying skill of interpreting (i.e., transferring a message), is not assessed in a translation activity.

Comments like these indicate that these participants value activities that lead students toward constructing their own knowledge through critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment. It is also apparent that both the ability to assess these activities, and the awareness that these are the activities that need to be assessed, need to be developed for some educators. That respondents report their most fun or effective activities as unassessed reflects the need for educators to learn how to approach assessment more effectively, both for the growth of their students and for their own growth as educators.

Question 2. Describe your least favorite/effective activity and discuss why. When asked to describe a least favorite or effective activity, another interesting insight is revealed. Of the 40 participants, 33 responded to this question. Of these, seven did not answer the question specifically enough to be included in the analysis. One such response stated that travel to practicum was the least effective activity (but that once she arrived, the travel was worth it). Another stated that "[m]ost of the theory and foundation courses" were least effective. And one person wrote: "Hard to say. It was my first teaching experience so everything seemed daunting."
Of the remaining 26 responses, all but 2 described an activity that was either primarily teacher-centered or that resulted in a teacher-centered grading of some interactive, student-centered assignment. The activities described here included testing, grading videotapes, rote memorization, grading written papers, scoring journals, and lecturing. The following comment from Respondent #38 reflects the attitude of most: “Watching videotapes of student-interpreted performances...I just find it incredibly tedious to watch all these tapes and provide written feedback.”

Several of the participants who mentioned grading tapes go on to state that students benefit from getting written feedback. Unlike the expanded comments about the most effective activities, which included discussions about the value of building critical thinking, none of the comments in this section included a student-learning rationale to support the belief that students benefited from the tedious grading. No one substantiated their statements that they know students use it, learn from it in some way, or even read it.

Several respondents reflect a sense that these teacher-centered activities are being done to satisfy some type of institutional requirement. Respondent #37 reflects this sense, writing: “The only activity I did not like was having to grade when I was teaching some courses as an adjunct. It did not accomplish much other than satisfying university requirements.” There is an overall sense that the valuable activities of Question 1 are not assessable, and that the least favorite activities are conducted because they have to be. There is little sense that it is possible to assess the valued learner-centered activities and learning, or that assessment in general provides some valuable benefit for students. As this research and our understanding of interpreting processes goes forward, we clearly need to explore teachers’ perceptions of grading and assessment.

Question 3: Are there other things you want to share about your teaching? This question elicited more responses about teaching and learning philosophies and reinforced the sometimes implied philosophies in the previous two sections. Of the 40 participants, 26 responded to this question. Of the responses, not all the comments were relevant to teaching philosophy. For example, Respondent #23 wrote: “I am really more interested in concerns that need to be addressed in establishing an ITP at a 4-year institution.”

However, some took the opportunity to explicitly discuss their teaching philosophies. The most common thread expressed was that student-centered learning was the end goal—with critical thinking, an ability to continue learning after the teacher is gone, and ability to make decisions essential to the mastery of interpreting. Participant #3 writes: “I think that the most important thing for students to learn is
critical thinking skills. We cannot attempt to provide an absolute model of what an interpreter can/should be; however, we need to instill in students an ability to think quickly... As the saying goes, you can give a person a fish or you can teach the person to fish.”

Respondent #33 shared: “I believe that teaching is a discovery and problem-solving process. Sheer fact information, while necessary, is not the optimal goal... Learning how to solve a problem is better than knowing a lot of answers.” These comments reflect a philosophy of student-centered learning that builds critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment. The comments from these surveys indicate that educators recognize the value of learning-centered activities that lead the students to construct knowledge for themselves, learn to think critically, make decisions, and assess themselves. Some participants demonstrate an explicit awareness of this philosophy, while others “know” it but are not articulating the reasons for the value. The ability to express this awareness is fundamental in an educator’s repertoire of teaching expertise. An essential part of this is the development of an understanding of assessment as a tool to measure growth, as opposed to simply satisfying institutional expectations.

**Study 2: Roundtable Discussion of Educators’ Needs**

The second study that informs this discussion analyzes input and data from an international online roundtable held in February 2003: “Teaching Interpreting: What Do We Need to Know?” It was designed to collect input for this study by raising the questions and providing a forum for discussion. Experts in the field of interpreter education were identified through their own work in the field of educating interpreters and interpreting educators. Approximately 20 people were invited to submit papers in their areas of expertise, including deaf and hearing educators, ASL and interpreting educators, and U.S. and international educators. Not all were able to submit papers in time for the roundtable, but all were supportive and interested in the topic. In addition, educators were invited to submit papers for discussion. A call for papers was distributed to a variety of e-mail distribution lists in the hopes of contacting as many potential educators as possible. These include the list of CIT members; a list from Project TIEM.Online, which has been collecting and distributing distance information nationally and internationally (approximately 235 addresses); and a list distributed by Direct Learn, Inc., a British consulting firm that offers online learning and discussions on deafness and interpreting (approximately 7,000 recipients worldwide). List members were encouraged to share the information regionally and locally. In all, 299 people registered for the roundtable discussion.

Participants were able to read and discuss the ideas and concepts raised in the papers. Authors went online regularly to respond to and
comment on topics and issues raised, and the discussions were summarized. The papers, discussions, and summaries that were produced via the roundtable discussion have been analyzed for input to this discussion.

Discussion Topics. The comments and questions raised in the papers and ensuing discussions return time and again to two common themes: critical thinking and participation of the Deaf Community in all aspects of interpreter education. Only discussions related to the first theme are discussed here. The second theme was infused throughout the discussions and has been addressed in other chapters in this volume. As noted previously, this is an essential need in the development and implementation of interpreting programs, and therefore in the needs of interpreting educators. Further investigation about how this is being done and can be done is essential. Throughout the discussions, participants stressed the need to bring deaf people and the Deaf Community more deeply into the education of interpreters, emphasizing that students need to experience, interact with, and learn directly from those encounters. This recognition of the power of active student learning in comparison to a more passive, teacher-centered approach comes out in the discussions of each paper, regardless of the topic. Examples of practicums, service learning, and interacting with community groups all reinforce the underlying understanding that students need, first and foremost, to learn through interactive, collaborative experiences with others. These are the types of student-centered learning activities that foster the development of critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment that are essential to interpreting effectively and competently.

Of the eight papers that constituted the core of the discussions, six directly reflected the understanding that critical thinking is an essential core process that interpreters need to master. Each author discussed the need for this in relation to the topic he or she presented. Peterson, in his opening keynote, “Perspectives on Curriculum Making,” discussed different approaches to curriculum design and the impact curriculum design can have on the ability of students and faculty to promote critical thinking, active interaction, and learning. He advocated the idea of curriculum as deliberation—as an explicit focus on what all stakeholders believe to be important in the education of competent interpreters: critical thinking.

Responses to Peterson’s paper reinforced the need for educators, both ASL teachers and interpreting educators, to develop a meta-awareness of their knowledge and skill before they can adequately teach it. The need for teachers to have critical thinking skills about their own teaching in order to develop these skills in their students was emphasized.
Gordon, in “Do Students Need to Fail to Succeed?” (2003), examined the traditional behaviorist model of assessing interpreting students, focusing on product rather than process and on dualistic labels of right and wrong. She advocated instead approaches that will lead students to self-assessment, constructing their own learning, and actively incorporating what they learn into a structured, cohesive understanding of interpreting. She thus supported a philosophy of education that fosters “mindful growth.”

The discussion about Gordon’s paper emphasized again the traditional perspective of education that makes students fit the model or curriculum, an approach that places content above learning. The comments also implicitly raised the issue of guiding students to learn, as participants recognized that value of explicitly helping students to integrate each step of the process of interpreting, rather than simply telling them to do it because the course objectives state it and the grading requires it. Further discussion of Gordon’s paper focused on teaching strategies that encourage student learning, while also recognizing that not only educators, but the academic culture itself, do not value student learning above test scores. Developing skills in self-assessment, critical analysis, and decision making were emphasized repeatedly throughout this discussion, as was the critical need for educators to know how to develop these skills.

Winston posted a reading from Forster (1993) that raised the basic questions of “What is teaching?” and “What is learning?” challenging participants to examine their own understandings of these ideas as they think about whether they are teaching at students or leading students to learning. Responses to the Forster reading again recognized and emphasized the need for interpreting educators to focus on student learning rather than teaching. Discussion continued around the need for educators to meet student needs, to provide opportunities for learning to occur, and to recognize the differing levels of growth in each student. Discussants also raised the question of the need to link curriculum design more effectively to support student learning goals and to convince institutions to support more focus on higher-order cognitive skills that are the basis for interpreting.

Cokely’s keynote paper, “Curriculum Revision in the Twenty-First Century: Northeastern’s Experience,” described the curriculum reform undertaken at his program—one that analyzes types of discourse so that interpreting students think critically about the goals and functions of the participants, rather than on the setting, number of participants, and topic. Approaches that encourage underlying assessment of discourse rather than surface-observable factors can lead students to think critically and to make effective decisions about their work. His approach also advocates helping students make critical decisions about their work.
Discussion about Cokely’s curriculum included a variety of topics, such as teaching materials, valuing consecutive interpretation, and the underpinnings of the approach. It was noted that the approach reflects thinking and educational practices that are changing as we learn more about second language acquisition and cognitive processing. One thread in this discussion focused on educational interpreting and the growing focus in K–12 education on student learning, collaborative activities, and other approaches intended to stimulate critical thinking. It was suggested that unless educational interpreters also have these skills, they can neither recognize the goals and objectives of the activities, nor can they interpret them effectively either.

Swabey’s paper (2003), “Critical Thinking and Writing to Learn in ASL and Interpreter Education,” directly addressed the need to develop critical thinking skills for interpreters. She articulated the sense that many educators (and institutions) have that time spent on developing critical thinking will detract from time spent on content. She advocated a focus on the process of developing critical thinking as an essential skill for all interpreters, noting that as students learn to think critically, they begin to assume responsibility for their own learning and analysis.

Swabey’s paper elicited discussion supporting the use of writing to develop critical thinking skills for interpreters. Writing was reported to help students learn to organize, analyze, assess, and evaluate not only their own thinking, but also the thinking and subsequent text structure of discourse they will someday interpret. Discussants recognized the process of developing these skills as being highly related to the skills needed by competent interpreters.

Mindess (2003) presented arguments for focusing on intercultural communication in her paper, “Building a Firm Foundation: Intercultural Communication for Sign Language Interpreters.” Her discussion of activities that stress student action and practice emphasized the need for interpreters to be able to actively apply their critical-thinking, decision-making, and assessment skills within the Deaf Community and its multiple cultures. Simply presenting students with the facts and information related to such interactions is not enough.

Discussion about Mindess’s paper recognized that interpreters need to be able to think critically and assess cultural interactions not only between deaf and hearing interactants, but also among the many cultural, ethnic, religious, and other groups with whom they work. It was also recognized that many white middle-class interpreters do not adequately analyze their own culture and end up learning about other cultures as oddities—something different from normal—while never understanding that their own cultural beliefs, attitudes, and experiences are also essential for understanding communication.

Although each paper and the ensuing discussions approached the question of what we need to know as interpreting educators from a
different perspective, the need for student learning rather than teacher "teaching" as the focus of educators was emphasized.

**Study 3. Focus Groups of Educators and Consumers**

Because both Studies 1 and 2 were text- and technology-based, two face-to-face focus groups were conducted to gather input from those who were not comfortable with these other formats; ASL was the language of communication used in the face-to-face groups.

Data Collection—Focus Group 1. Focus Group 1 was conducted at the ASLTA convention in Spring 2003. It was one of several concurrent workshops. Attendants were voluntary participants, having chosen to attend the discussion, "What Do Interpreting Educators Need to Know?" The group session was scheduled for 1 hour and was attended by approximately 30 people. It was not possible to determine exactly how many participants were deaf and how many were hearing. However, many of the participants were known to the researcher and to others in the room, and it appeared that participants were evenly divided between hearing and deaf people.

In an opening presentation, the researcher talked about her own background and connections to the Deaf Community and interpreting, the history and background of the questions being asked, the information and input that had been collected up to that point, and the goals of the hoped-for discussion. Participants were then asked to think individually about what interpreting educators need to know and were invited to make written notes on cards if they liked. They were then asked form small groups of three to five people to share their ideas and discuss the ideas of others in the group. Finally, participants came together in the large group to report about what their groups had discussed. The researcher took notes as the participants reported, writing the ideas on an overhead and verifying that her note reflected the intention of the participant. After the discussion closed, participants were invited to leave their written notes.

Input from this group raised the parallel threads of previous input: (1) involving deaf educators in the interpreting curriculum and process and (2) developing higher-order cognitive skills. The majority of this discussion was on the first topic, integrating and infusing Deaf culture and deaf input into interpreting education. Participants discussed the need for interpreters to interact in the Deaf Community, to learn how to effectively assess their work and the context of their work, and to understand the people they work with. Participants also stressed the need for more materials and information that would support teachers who are working in interpreting. The belief that deaf educators are not widely teaching interpreting, and often do not know how to become involved in academic programs, was raised as a concern by many
participants. Each of these areas supports the belief that critical thinking is essential for interpreters and for those who participate in their education.

Data Collection—Focus Group 2. Focus Group 2 had 16 participants. Eleven of the participants were identified and invited based on their current participation in learning and teaching of interpreting, research that focuses on student learning, and involvement of deaf faculty. This group was invited to attend a 2-day meeting with a group of five interpreting faculty who wanted to revise their own curriculum to incorporate the most effective approaches to interpreting education. Of the 16 participants, 3 were deaf and 13 were hearing.

Prior to the face-to-face meeting, each participant contributed a paper, article, or document about their individual focus during the meeting. These written texts were posted in an online conference area, and each participant was expected to read all the postings before arriving at the meeting.

At the face-to-face meeting, a set of questions was offered to the participants, with the understanding that other questions, approaches, and topics were welcome as well. The original questions were as follows: (1) What is the difference between a B.A. and an M.A. program in sign language interpreting? (2) What are entry- and exit-level skills for those programs? (3) What are the requirements for interpreting faculty in general? The group focused on one question at a time, for approximately 1.5–2 hours. For each discussion period, the participants divided into four groups, discussed the topic, and returned at the end of each period to report back to the larger group. Note takers were chosen in each group, and the notes were later typed up for dissemination to the group.

Discussion of Input. The discussions focused on the general questions of this chapter: What do interpreters need to know and what do faculty need to know? Discussion about the first two questions (what is the difference between a B.A. and an M.A. program, and what are entry- and exit-level skills) resulted in two threads of discussion: specific needs and underlying competencies. The specific needs reflected and expanded on existing information, such as the CIT Task Analysis (Members, 1984a&b), the CIT Standards (Conference, 1995), and the Teaching Interpreting Curriculum (Baker-Shenk, 1990). The participants emphasized that the fundamental requirement for students entering interpreting programs is cultural and communicative competency in each language they will work in. Entering students must already be able to use their skills for critical thinking and self-assessment of those language skills. Thus, they should be able to analyze their own languages and be able to understand what they are doing with them. Likewise, they
must be able to think critically about deaf/hearing and other multicultural interactions from a participant’s perspective on entry, expanding those critical-thinking skills to apply to interpreting contexts throughout their interpreting program. As one group wrote: “Exiting students must be ‘mature—able to reflect on their experiences [as an interpreter].’” All four groups also repeatedly emphasized the need for focus on Community interaction, with service learning, practica, or other interaction being essential. They all expressed the importance of graduating students knowing their own abilities and being able to critically assess which interpreting settings were appropriate for them to work in. And they emphasized the need for exiting students to be able to focus on meaning; for several that meant adding much more translation or consecutive interpretation activities into interpreting programs. All four groups listed the ability to demonstrate students’ abilities to think, judge, and assess in some way—either through a portfolio or through other assessment approaches that demonstrate their skills as essential skills at program graduation.

The third question was most directly relevant to this project, asking: What are the requirements for interpreting faculty? The input from all groups served to reinforce the content domains described by previous studies and groups. Educators need to be bilingual, experienced interpreters, experienced educators, and hold some type of advanced degrees. Interspersed with the content areas, knowledge, and skills needed as interpreters, they also emphasized the need for educators to understand adult education and student-learning approaches and to have the ability to foster critical thinking, self-assessment, and decision making. One thing that each group included was an ability to conduct and to read and understand research findings of others. This need reflects the epitome of critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment—this is what research is all about.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examined the following question: What do interpreting educators need to know how to do in order to foster the development of competent interpreters? The question is really twofold—in order to answer it, we must answer both its parts:

- What do competent interpreters need to know how to do?
- What do educators need to know how to do to develop that competence?

The existing literature and the data reveal what a few already know, and what many more need to learn about and bring to their students. Documentation of the domains of knowledge and observable skills is available. The task analysis of 20 years ago at CIT, the Western
Maryland TIP curriculum of 1990, and the current CIT Educational Standards provide guidelines. Missing from these resources, however, is an explicit focus on developing the underlying processes for critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment as the core foundational processes that interpreters must develop and that interpreting educators must learn how to develop in interpreting students.

The frequent focus on content in courses—on the “things” that educators believe need to be taught—has led many to panic and backpeddle when students are allowed to enter interpreting programs without prerequisite language and critical-thinking skills. The allotted educational time during programs is often spent bringing interpreting students up to minimum expectations of language performance and instilling basic information about the field instead of on developing more complex interpreting skills and processes. Educators may try hard to help students develop these; some try to provide learning opportunities that develop decision-making and self-assessment skills. But these goals are often not reached because so much time must be spent building foundational language skills that should be prerequisite to entry. When push comes to shove, the interpreting students must pass a test, get an A on a true/false exam, and spew correct answers on tests. Many educators believe that this is required by the system. Even workshop presenters reflect this attitude, expressing relief that they don’t have to worry about “that,” they just work with students.

What needs to be made explicit is the understanding that critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment underlie competency in all areas of competent interpreting. Content, specific texts, and settings are the areas where these abilities need to be applied. Educators need to understand how to develop these skills and processes in interpreting students. This research indicates that many have that “gut feeling.” Now it is important for educators to demystify that gut feeling and actively apply this understanding to the teaching and development of competent interpreters.

One goal of this volume is to consider how interpreting educators’ needs apply to interpreting and interpreters in education. What are the implications for interpreted educations? Simply put, if educators are not helping interpreters develop their own sense of learning, of critical thinking, and of lifelong learning, and if educators are not demanding that interpreters be able to apply those processes across all knowledge and skill domains of interpreting, then interpreting educators are failing the deaf students in the classroom who ultimately depend on those interpreters. Most observers in the field believe that the least experienced interpreters usually go into K–12 interpreting. The standards for those interpreters in the K–12 setting are low, when they are not lacking completely (Jones, in press; Schick, Williams, & Bolster, 1999;
Winston, 2004). While the expected competence and standards may be higher for post-secondary interpreting, many beginning interpreters do not have adequate processing skills; are unable or unwilling to assess situations, make decisions, and then assess their own work; and may not be adequately competent in assessing the skills and abilities they need to accept or turn down assignments (Jones, in press; Jones, Clark, & Soltz, 1997; Schick, Williams, & Bolster, 1999; Yarger, 2001). Hearing students in the ideal classroom are learning how to construct knowledge, make learning their own, and critically self-assess. If the interpreters mediating between the teacher and the deaf student are not knowledgeable about these processes, they cannot effectively interpret them. Educators who place a primary focus on content, fact, hand movement, and correct grammar instead of on helping interpreters learn to develop the underlying essential processes are failing both the interpreters and the deaf students whose interpreted educations are inadequate and incomplete.

If interpreting education is to lead interpreters to competence, there are several implications for prerequisite skills. Incoming students must be competent in each language before entering an interpreting program and must be able to demonstrate critical-thinking, decision-making, and self-assessment skills using each of the languages or communication modes they intend to use as working languages or modes. Educators must insist that incoming students demonstrate higher-order skills in each language. If this means saying “no” to open door policies, so be it. Educators cannot support the illusion that students can learn both language and interpreting in 2 years and at the same time. When potential interpreters enter interpreting programs, they must be ready to build on pre-existing language skills in order to develop the complex competencies needed for interpreting. If existing programs are not allowed to require sufficient requisite language skills, they need to seriously consider the quality and competence of the graduates they are sending to the Community.

Interpreters graduating from programs need to demonstrate consistent competence in the application of critical thinking, decision making, and self-assessment in each domain of interpreting. Mastery of knowledge, remembering, and understanding are essential foundations for critical thinking. But we must demand that this knowledge and understanding be developed into critical thinking throughout every activity, workshop, course, and curriculum. Activities that begin with memory must still explicitly lead to critical thinking. Activities that focus on text analysis must lead students to learning about the text, constructing their own knowledge, and making effective decisions about that text. Simply telling students what is or is not working through one-way diagnostic work is not enough. The purpose of education is defeated when students are given activities that are graded
by the teacher but are not given the opportunity to learn from and through the assessment. Equally important, interpreting education needs to bring the Deaf Community into the academic education that is currently the norm. Competent interpreters need to think critically, make decisions, and assess the consequences of their work within the context of the Deaf Community. They need to understand how interpreting affects the many differing cultures within and outside of the Deaf Community and must be culturally and communicatively competent.

In spite of years of teaching interpreting, in spite of curriculum changes, in spite of a recognized failure to adequately educate interpreters, we continue to do what we do. We accept students into interpreting programs because we are told to, ignoring evidence that it does not result in competent interpreters. We graduate students into the Community, acknowledging that they are not qualified, that there is a gap, and that they need at least a year or two to achieve even "entry level" competence. We recognize that we are barely able to teach them the facts, when what we need are interpreters who can go far beyond the facts; who can go beyond the most simple cognitive skills of remembering and understanding. We recognize that we do not provide enough relevant opportunities for the Deaf Community to influence our work, nor do we provide enough relevant opportunities for interpreting students to learn through and from the Deaf Community. Interpreters need to be able to apply the facts they remember; they need to analyze the situations and interactions they encounter; they need to evaluate the effectiveness of their work; and they need to create an ongoing cycle of learning, critical thinking, and self-assessment that continues throughout their careers. Interpreting educators need to focus on leading students toward developing these essential processes, and interpreting education must be intertwined with the input of the Deaf Community in order to succeed.

NOTES

1. There is no real evidence that hearing educators can do that, either. Many who evaluate effective interpretations attend to only one message at a time; comparing the meaning dynamics sequentially. An important direction for future research is investigating the effectiveness of on-site assessment of interpreting quality compared to studied assessment after the fact.

2. Public discussions in the past have often been ignored unless reported in writing. With the advent of electronic online-discussion formats, the presentations and discussions survive to document the topics and trends discussed. These online discussions have the advantage, as well, of providing a forum for international input from a broad spectrum of participants. Some recent examples include “What Do Interpreting Educators Need to Know to Teach Interpreting?,” “Mentoring,” and “Service Learning in Interpreting Education,”
sponsored by Project TIEM. Online, and the "Supporting Deaf People," conferences sponsored by Direct Learn, Inc.

3. Although the dates for Colonosmos and Gish may appear to indicate that Gish's work occurred first, in fact, Colonosmos presented her work much earlier. The 1992 date is the first published version of her work presented and distributed in the field.

4. Although the response rate was low, the results were informative. More information about how advertising for participants was conducted is included in the next section, which reports specifically on the Roundtable discussions.

5. Question 3 about course-wide evaluation did not elicit information directed to the more narrow focus of this study.

REFERENCES


