

2002

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Recommended Citation

Johnson, Julia R.; Pliner, Susan M.; and Burkhart, Tom (2002) "d/Deafness and the Basic Course: A Case Study of Universal Instructional Design and Students Who are d/Deaf in the (aural) Communication Classroom," *Basic Communication Course Annual*: Vol. 14 , Article 12.

Available at: <http://ecommons.udayton.edu/bcca/vol14/iss1/12>

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d/Deafness and the Basic Course: A Case Study of Universal Instructional Design and Students Who are d/Deaf in the Oral (aural) Communication Classroom

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Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence.

— Paulo Freire, 1970

Hart and Williams (1995) argue that "students with physical disabilities are often treated differently," particularly by able-bodied instructors, "and thus receive a different level of education" than their able-bodied counterparts (p. 152). In part, the differential treatment students with disabilities receive can be attributed to the discomfort able-bodied persons experience when interacting with persons with disabilities (Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 1997; Hart & Williams, 1995). Discomfort does not occur in a vacuum, however. Comfort and discomfort are responses to our ways of understanding the world and educational contexts. Furthermore, our limited understandings and the academic structures that support those understandings — howeve, benign in

our/their intentions — prevent students from accessing the process of inquiry. When our teaching practices deny students access to learning, we are engaging in the epistemic violence Freire (1970) describes above.

An important step educators can take to make classrooms and educational institutions accessible to all students is to unpack our assumptions about who we are, about how we teach, and about the students who populate our classrooms. Most important, we need to examine our relationship to privilege, particularly those moments we feel discomfort as we face/meet difference. Because, in spite of a teacher's conscious desire to treat students fairly, when a teacher is a member of a dominant social group, the experience of discomfort is evidence of (able-bodied) privilege: To be uncomfortable interacting with persons with disability reflects a privilege of not having had to previously address ability as a social norm. Even in cases of able-bodied people having more knowledge of people with disabilities, interactions between able-bodied persons and persons with disabilities may reduce "uncertainty of the ablebodied person", it doesn't "increase their *acceptance*" of the person with a disability, nor may it benefit persons with disabilities (Braithwaite, 1991, p. 271).

The purpose of this essay is to share our experience expanding our curriculum to address the learning needs of one d/Deaf¹ student (and thus all students) enrolled in Oral Communication (public speaking), a general

¹ "d/D" is used to highlight the distinction between the audio-logical condition of deafness and Deafness as a cultural identity constructed around the use of a common language, ASL. Persons who identify as Deaf do not believe that deafness is a deficit to be remedied.

education requirement at a Southern California University where the first and third authors taught². Based on our experience accommodating³ one student's learning needs, we challenged our assumptions about ability both in terms of dominant cultural constructions of ability and also in terms of d/Deaf cultures. Furthermore, we learned to better create curriculum that is universally accessible to all students, regardless of their disability status.

The starting point for this case study is the assumption that Deafness is a cultural identity as much as an audiological condition. As we address in subsequent portions of this paper, creating universally inclusive curricula⁴ and classroom spaces for all students, including those with disabilities, is best accomplished when the cultural identifications associated with the body are examined so that difference can be addressed respectfully. In the case of this study, by sharing our experience of including d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing (hoh) students in presentation classes populated primarily by hearing teachers and students, we call into

² The first version of this paper was based on research conducted by Johnson and Burkhart. Since that time, this paper has undergone major revisions based on collaborations between Johnson and Pliner, a disability identity scholar, educator and administrator.

³ We use the term accommodation within the framework of the 1991 American's With Disabilities Act; however, our goal was to create a universally inclusive curriculum that supported the needs of all students regardless of their disability status.

⁴ By universally inclusive curriculum, we mean curriculum that, at its inception, is designed to provide equal access to learning to all students regardless of their disability status.

question not only how accommodations are provided students with disabilities, but also how culture, power and identity are central to understanding the relationship between communication and instruction.

The topic of d/Deafness offers important contributions to an understanding of how public speaking is taught. Clearly, public speaking is one of the most important courses taught in (Speech) Communication departments. Not only is public speaking a premiere service course, it is also a well-established location of disciplinary identification. By examining how we engage diverse experiences and languages in public speaking, we help ensure its healthy development and survival. In addition, ableist⁵ beliefs influence the ability of people with and without disabilities from recognizing that d/Deaf persons are as skilled with communication as their hearing counterparts (Grupido, 1994). More careful engagement of d/Deafness provides opportunity to challenge assumptions about communication competence theoretically and practically. Finally, the Americans With Disabilities Act clearly outlines the imperative for educators to provide equal access to the educational environment for students with disabilities. Despite this legal imperative, many teachers do not know how to develop a curriculum that is universally designed to be inclusive for all students and many teachers remain resistant to serving the learning needs of students with disabilities.

⁵ Ableism is the discourse that privileges able-bodied persons and pathologizes persons whose bodies, cognitive function, physiology or mental state does not conform to dominant constructions of "full functioning" (i.e. those labeled disabled).

This essay is organized as follows: First, we contextualize this case study in a discussion of d/Deafness as a cultural identity and in the philosophy of Universal Instructional Design (UID). Second, we explain our process of researching appropriate accommodations, followed by an articulation of how the process was implemented in our public speaking/oral communication classroom. Finally, we offer some specific suggestions for making classrooms accessible to all students.

DEAFNESS AS A CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION: COMMUNICATION AND EMBODIMENT

As educators committed to humane and rigorous teaching, we believe it is imperative that we consider the cultural logics that influence our curriculum design as well as how we engage our roles as educators. One way — perhaps one of the most important ways — we can create empowering learning experiences for our students and for ourselves is to approach teaching and learning as a cultural process. At this historical juncture, educators are more compelled than ever before to address issues of culture in the classroom, if only because classrooms are becoming more and more diverse. The approach we advocate in this paper is not to treat culture *ex post facto*, but to assess the cultural (i.e. ideological) assumptions that give rise to the very choices we make about what we teach and how to teach it as we design curricula.⁶ Assessing cultural assump-

⁶ For a discussion of the ideological dimensions of communication education, see Cooks (1993), Johnson (1997), or Sprague (1992a;

tions means that we interrogate the process of our own socialization to discern how our gendered, racialized, classed or, in this case, ableized social locations influence how we teach. As McIntyre (1997) notes in her examination of racial identity among white teachers,

Reflections on [our] attitudes, beliefs and life experiences, and an examination of how these forces can oftentimes work to limit [our] understanding of the multiple forms of discriminatory educational practices that exist in our schools, is an important "first step" in understanding how we can teach more effectively. (p. 5)

In the same way that whiteness has been naturalized, resulting in the attitude among many whites that our color does not shape our experience, ableism often results in the attitude among able-bodied people that they are "normal." To challenge the hegemony of ableism, we contend that the visible and non-visible differences that are the basis for defining ability and disability must be considered.

As with members of any dominant cultural group, the way able-bodied people move through the world is naturalized. As Gramsci (1971) and others so compellingly argue, we consent, usually unconsciously to the standards of the dominant (able-bodied) culture. The able-bodied learn that our bodies function "appropri-

1992b, 1994). Extensive research has been conducted into the ideological dimensions of education in Cultural Studies, specifically in the "field" of Critical Pedagogy. Germinal studies from this "tradition" include Bowles & Gintis (1976) and Freire (1970). More contemporary examinations of the ideological dimensions of education include Gore (1993), Giroux (1992), Gonzalez Gaudiano & Alba (1994) and hooks (1994), to name only a few.

ately" and are rarely, if ever, confronted with situations that call our ability into question.⁷ The ideology of ableism is often reflected in the construction of persons with disabilities as "handicapped." Although it is politically important to define disabilities culturally and legally, by defining disability as deprivation or inferiority, we are perpetuating the "othering" of people who are visibly or non-visibly disabled. In the case of d/Deafness, it reflects a kind of hearing hegemony to imagine that d/Deafness is a matter of what Wrigley (1996) calls "sensory 'deprivation'".

A more inclusive and critical approach to conceptualizing identity is to imagine Deafness as a socially constructed identity as opposed to a biologically determined reality.⁸ Wrigley (1996) continues,

. . . a contrasting view might see a world built around the valence of visual rather than aural channels for processing languages — not just semiotic signs, but languages of visual modality...in a political framing

⁷Most often, if persons born "fully abled" confront the naturalization of able-bodiedness, it is usually through illness, such as cancer or as a result of an accident that transforms able-bodiedness into disability.

⁸The construction of d/Deafness as deprivation is enmeshed in a logic of biological determinism in which the body is essentialized and thus addressed as a stagnate geographical space. Within this discourse of ableism, deafness can only be imagined as a condition to be controlled and/or erased. We contend that it is more theoretically useful and politically astute to theorize the body (reality) as a social construction, "made real" through language. When we combine the interpretive study of the body with the critical concern with power, we can begin to theorize the body as a site of meaning construction on which power is inscribed and meaning/reality (re)constructed through individual agency.

this shift rejects the site of the body and relocates meaning and its production onto the social. (p. 3)⁹

In other words, the visual mode influences the "structure" (i.e. construction and performance) of Deaf culture.

In 1972, James Woodward proposed that a distinction be made between those who are "deaf" – people whose hearing was impaired – and "Deaf" – a particular group of people who share a language and a culture (Pelka, 1997). Padden and Humphries (1988), who have written extensively on Deaf culture, clarify:

We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase *Deaf* when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language — American Sign Language (ASL) — and a culture. The members of this group have inherited their sign language, use it as a primary means of communication among themselves, and hold a set of beliefs about themselves and their connection to the larger society. We distinguish them from, for example, those who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age; although these people share the condition of not hearing, they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up the culture of Deaf people. (p. 88).

By expanding a definition of deafness to include cultural identification (Deafness), we can begin to move beyond an emphasis on biology to examine what it means to be Deaf in a world where hearing is normalized.

⁹To take Wrigley's point beyond the trappings of the visual, we must also consider that a "visual" language can also be used and communicated through touch, as evidenced by the communication of persons who are d/Deaf and b/Blind.

As scholars of culture and communication claim, a defining feature of cultural group membership is the use of a shared language. For members of Deaf culture and communities, the use of American Sign Language marks their cultural membership. While there are other sign systems used by d/Deaf and hoh people (Reagan, 1988), a defining feature of Deafness is the use of hands, arms, eyes and the face as hearing people would use the larynx.¹⁰ Wrigley (1996) further clarifies the importance of language in Deaf culture:

Those within Deaf communities differentiate between the simple inability to hear and their self-identification as Deaf. The degree of hearing loss matters relatively little. What is important, and what is deemed primary evidence for membership within the broader community, is the use of sign language. (p. 15)

Embodiment means something quite different in Deaf cultures and communities. On a very basic level, the use of ASL and other signed languages transforms how the body is used and conceptualized as people communicate; words are articulated through the hands, arms, eyes and face.¹¹ To be articulate in ASL requires a highly developed use of the face, use of sign space (that space used to speak using the arms and hands) and increased

¹⁰Additional modes of signed language are used as manual codes of English, such as Seeing Essential English, Signing Exact English or Pidgin Signed English. These modes refer "to a wide range of signing behaviors which incorporate varying amounts of ASL and English" (Reagan, 1988, p. 2).

¹¹It is not enough to say that nonverbal communication takes precedence in signed languages. In fact, the very use of the term nonverbal assumes aural/oral communication. In ASL, the body does not compliment sound, language is articulated through the body.

visual acuity to pick up nuances of meaning encoded by a speaker.

In order to fully address the learning needs of all students, including the specific needs of students who are d/Deaf or hoh, requires a non-traditional approach to pedagogy. Quite simply, the dominant instructional modalities used on college classrooms generally (such as a reliance on lecture/banking information) and public speaking classrooms specifically (public speaking requires the use of audiological voice) cannot meet the complex learning styles and needs many students bring with them to a classroom. The educational philosophy of UID offers useful and practical guidelines for creating inclusive curricula and instructional strategies.

Principles of UID

Universal curriculum design is defined as “a design of instructional materials and activities that allows learning goals to be attainable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, attend, organize engage and remember” (Orkwis, 1999, p. 3). The benefit of making curriculum accessible through UID for learning is that the “physical, sensory, affective, or cognitive barriers” often built into our curriculum are mitigated and educators can provide all students access to curriculum “without having to adapt the curriculum repeatedly to meet special needs” (p. 3).

Orkwis (1999) outlines several “essential features” for creating accessible curriculum for all students. The essential features of UID include “multiple means of representation,” “multiple means of expression,” and

“multiple means of engagement” (p. 3). Multiple means of representation refers to the presentation of subject matter in ways that appeal to students “who learn best from visual or auditory information, or for those who need differing levels of complexity” (p. 3). Orkwis describes multiple means of expression as allowing students to respond to course material using “their preferred means of control,” including different cognitive styles and motor-system controls (p. 3). Multiple means of engagement refers to the relationship between student interest in learning combined with “the mode of presentation and their preferred means of expression” (p. 3). More simply, Orkwis argues that curricular materials have to be flexible, diverse, and sufficiently challenging (difficult).

In many ways, Orkwis’ (1999) description of UID sounds like what we might consider good pedagogy. And, in the most general sense, UID is good pedagogy. But, more importantly, UID does not privilege one particular modality over another or one kind of cognitive function over another. Rather, creating a universally inclusive curriculum requires actively engaging all students in learning regardless of the disability status.

In Silver, Bourke and Strehorn’s (1998) survey of faculty response to UID, surveyed faculty believed that the principals of UID that were useful for students with disabilities were also consistent with a trend in higher education to create curriculum which appeals to a broader base of learning styles. The principles/strategies mentioned by faculty included:

...cooperative learning, team approach, contextual learning, computer-assisted instruction, constructive learning, scaffolding, on-line instruction and assess-

ment, prepared materials and advance organizers before class, multi-modal instruction, peer editing/peer groups, criterion-based learning, extended time for exams and projects, putting all materials on reserve, testing in the same manner as teaching, modeling, prompting, and cueing. (p. 49)

While certain of these principles/strategies might be of particular benefit to some students, integrating these modalities in the classroom enhances the performance of students overall.

The aforementioned are essential components of UID; however, there are a variety of ways to incorporate these principles and strategies into a specific classroom. In what follows, we explain our process of implementing UID, including the specific elements of the public speaking curriculum we attempted to make inclusive and what, in retrospect, we might have done to further enhance our inclusiveness.

THE CASE

In January 1997, the Office of Students with Disabilities contacted our department to request a course substitution for a deaf student, "Joseph."¹² Because public speaking was a general education requirement at our institution, Joseph needed to take public speaking in order to graduate; however, he was concerned that he could not be fairly assessed in a public speaking course because his ideas would be audilogically voiced

¹²The student and his case-manager have been assigned pseudonyms.

through a sign interpreter. Joseph's case manager, "Maria," shared his concern.¹³

The first step in addressing this case included researching how to include¹⁴ students who are d/Deaf or hoh in a public speaking classroom and including the student in discussions about how accommodations would be provided. Based on conversations with disability service providers at several local universities, we confirmed that in schools with majority hearing populations, d/Deaf and hoh students are usually required to enroll in public speaking classes and provided sign interpreters for class sessions and presentations. Second, in line with Braithwaite and Braithwaite's (1997) recommendation that persons with disabilities should define if and how accommodations are provided, we met with Joseph and Maria to learn about Joseph's specific concerns and learning needs. In that meeting, Joseph shared his desire to be assessed according to how *he* gave voice to ideas. We agreed to research appropriate accommodations with the caveat that if Joseph and Maria did not agree to the fairness of the finalized accommodations, Joseph could substitute another course for the course in public speaking.

¹³Maria initially served as Joseph's case manager and contacted our department to request accommodations on his behalf. Her role in this process was primarily that of an advocate for Joseph and as a resource for explaining her experience working with/in Deaf communities.

¹⁴ In line with our efforts to create universally inclusive curriculum, we use the terms included or inclusive instead of "mainstreamed".

The second phase of our research process took us to the National Center on Deafness (NCOD).¹⁵ Established in 1964, the National Center on Deafness is a nationally recognized organization designed to provide “quality education to the deaf and hard-of-hearing in a mainstream university environment,” including “student support services,” “technical assistance and training to schools,” and “transition and career services” (National Center on Deafness Homepage). At the NCOD, we met with a Student Personnel Specialist and Public Speaking Instructor to learn how d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing students are assessed in public speaking classes designed specifically for students who use American Sign Language (ASL) and other sign systems.

We gained preliminary understanding of the culture of ASL classrooms as we participated in a public speaking class designed for d/Deaf students. That brief observation experience proved extremely useful in enhancing our understanding of the complexity of speaking through sign interpreters. Two sign language interpreters were provided as an accommodation for us during the observation; one interpreted for the professor and the other interpreted for the students. The interpreters also gave voice to our communication for the class. We had two significant experiences that influenced our structuring of the class and assessment protocol that warrant description here.

First, we were unexpectedly asked to give a brief presentation explaining our educational backgrounds

¹⁵Special thanks go to Barbara Boyd at the NCOD for her conversations with us, her recommendations for the assessment protocol and for allowing us to visit her public speaking classroom.

and interest in attending the class. As people used to speaking to predominantly hearing audiences, it took time to get used to the experience of speaking and having our words “translated”¹⁶ into ASL. We were not accustomed to the interpretation process, including how to adapt to various patterns of speech without hearing the words people were saying. Furthermore, our embodiment was transformed; we were no longer in a context where our physical tools such as our voice, gestures, or even eye contact were useful. The dominant mode of communication was ASL, a language we did not speak. As seasoned public speakers, we became more keenly aware of the value we placed on tonality, inflection and body language — skills that we had learned to use strategically were no longer within our control. Because we couldn’t read the ways that the interpreters used inflection and tone, our authority was displaced, which is (grossly) uncomfortable for professors.

Second, as the sign interpreters worked together, we gained insight into the challenges to communication that often occur when speaking through an interpreter (Liu, 1995). One interpreter would translate a sentence only to have the second interpreter correct her/him, for example. This kind of “correction” was often followed by a brief discussion of what was being communicated by a

¹⁶It is important, here, to distinguish between possible descriptions of what we are defining as the translation process. We use the term translation deliberately to indicate that we consider ASL a language, as opposed to a transliteration of English such as conceptual signed English or literal Signed English (Hayes, 1993). While the term “translate” provides conceptual clarity in this sentence, the preferred term to describe the communication of meaning from ASL to another language is “interpret”.

given speaker.¹⁷ In short, we learned that it was often difficult to glean the meaning of a speaker through an interpreter, even though those persons acting as sign interpreters were highly qualified and proficient in both English and ASL.

In sum, the visit to the NCOD provided insight into the cultural and linguistic dimensions of Deafness, particularly how the public speaking curriculum would need to be further (re)conceptualized for a diverse student body. We were also reminded of the ways that culture and power are intrinsic to how we learn, what counts as knowledge, the purpose of schooling, and how identities are positioned in the classroom. We felt more empowered to create an inclusive public speaking classroom, and now needed to create a curriculum that empowered *all* of our students.

Based on this field research, we generated a speech assessment protocol and scheduled another meeting with Joseph. Because Joseph felt comfortable that he would be graded according to how he gave voice to ideas (as did his case manager), he enrolled in a public speaking class the following term. In what follows, we explain the specific choices we made in expanding the public speaking curriculum and offer specific suggestions for how to utilize UID.

¹⁷ It is important to note that the interpreters were interpreters-in-training, so some behaviors described here might well be attributed to their status as students.

THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

The Partially Inclusive Oral Communication Curriculum

It is important to explain our department's general approach to Oral Communication in order to address what we did to expand the inclusiveness of our curriculum the semester Joseph enrolled in public speaking. Our faculty and departmental teaching assistants worked collaboratively to construct a curriculum for our public speaking course that engaged a variety of presentational styles, organizational patterns and cultural logics. We expanded our curriculum to include various organizational patterns that reflected both linear and non-linear logic. Furthermore, we required that students read essays that examine how multiple linguistic realities are negotiated (Lee, 1993), and essays that address language and oracy skills in African education (Reagan, 1995). One of the first articles we had students read is the essay "Movimientos de rebeldia y las culturas que traicionan" from Gloria Anzaldua's book, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, in which Anzaldua interrogates the many cultural identifications she negotiates as a Chicana lesbian feminist. Not only does this article offer a meaningful framework for discussing the ways culture is influenced by and gives rise to communication, but Anzaldua's discussion of borderlands offers class participants a metaphor for examining the lived reality of intercultural exchange.¹⁸ All of these articles were se-

¹⁸ The metaphor of the borderland is relevant for any of us who experience the reality of negotiating multiple cultural realities

lected because they opened our approach to teaching public speaking so that we might substantively include the needs and interests of an ethnically and linguistically diverse student body. We had already begun a process of creating a universally inclusive curriculum, although we were remiss in assessing the needs of students who were d/Deaf. Yet, because this framework was already in place, we felt that we would be better able to avoid essentializing or fetishizing Joseph's deafness¹⁹ as we expanded our curriculum.

Creating an Interactive and "Safe" Classroom Culture

Many public speaking teachers are interested in creating highly interactive classroom environments that encourage participation from even the most apprehensive student. For Joseph's instructor, this meant dedicating a large portion of class time to activities and discussion. Furthermore, the instructor's class collaboratively established several ground rules by which they

(Valenzuela, 1998), including people who are d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing interacting in predominantly hearing contexts. Although we recognize border metaphors can essentialize differences, instructors problematized the metaphor in class discussions and assignments as well. Furthermore, this essay is presented in both Spanish and English, which afforded us an opportunity to have bi/multi-lingual students engage multiple languages in the classroom.

¹⁹ At no point in our research process did Joseph claim Deafness as an identity. When he was asked about this identification, Joseph discussed deafness as an audiological condition. It was unclear to us whether Joseph's response was about maintaining a sense of distance, a lack of identification, where he was in developing a Deaf identity or a combination thereof.

would operate. Specific ground rules included the following: First, Joseph should be addressed directly (i.e., don't speak to the interpreter). Second, everyone should attend to Joseph as he was speaking rather than looking at the interpreter as the primary speaker (Siple, 1993). Third, students would need to raise their hands prior to speaking so that the interpreter could identify the person speaking, thereby allowing Joseph to follow the flow of the conversation more readily and, as a result, respond appropriately. Additionally, the instructor pointed out that the interpreter would need to stand beside any speaker at the front of the room so that Joseph would be able to observe the speaker's performance as well as see the interpreter.

Two primary challenges emerged in the classroom community. To begin, early during the course, students had a difficult time speaking in front of the room with someone standing next to them (the movement of hands immediately next to them affected concentration levels), but their discomfort seemed to diminish with each speech. Second, a challenge to the classroom culture emerged when Joseph and the sign interpreters chose to sit on one side of the room. His physical positioning in the class mirrored the distance created by the contrast between the use of ASL and spoken English. Although the hearing students were generally "good" about adapting to the Joseph's use of language, the gap between d/Deaf and hearing remained.²⁰

²⁰ Perhaps the gap between Joseph and his hearing peers was a reflection of the translation process, Joseph's personal communication style and/or the discomfort hearing students felt interacting with Joseph. Many times, Joseph and his classmates avoided interpersonal interaction with each other. It is important to question the possible

Suggestions for Creating and Inclusive Community: In order to create a more inclusive classroom community generally, and classrooms inclusive of students who are d/Deaf or hoh, we offer four suggestions: First and foremost, class guidelines should highlight the needs of all students. Our mistake was that we focused on what Joseph would need, thus singling him out as "the different one." Second, have a conversation with the student and interpreter to learn what interpreter-speaker positioning is appropriate. All the students in class would have been well served by having the interpreter positioned so that Joseph could read the sign and positioned so that speaking space was maintained. Third, instructors should structure communication so that students from diverse backgrounds interact with each other one-on-one. For example, instructors could form and rotate working groups for class activities so more students are given an opportunity to interact directly. Another option would be to arrange the class in a circle so that it is more difficult for a student to be distanced from the class interaction. Fourth, in an inclusive system, students have time to raise their hands to ask a question and time is negotiated so that all students can process information. When an interpreter is in a classroom, space needs to be made for information

reasons why communication between Joseph and his peers was hindered, including the instructor's role in perpetuating cultural divisions. Perhaps Joseph's personal communication style shaped interactions. It is imperative, however, to recognize that d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing students in inclusive environments are constrained in their ability to "shape or control their communication environment" (Foster, Barefoot & DeCaro, 1989, p. 566), which constrains their ability to connect with hearing counterparts.

processing and for time between student contributions. In a public speaking class, this means that time needs to be reconceptualized for general class discussions and for question and answer periods following speeches. Furthermore, students who are d/Deaf should be given equal speaking time; in other words, some additional time should be given to account for the time needed for ideas to be interpreted and communicated to a hearing audience.

Assessing Presentations

For instructors teaching the basic course in public speaking, a primary challenge will be to create grading criteria that can be used to evaluate all students fairly. Because public speaking has from its inception privileged orality, it can feel challenging to reconceptualize an assessment protocol so that it can be used to evaluate multiple voicings of ideas. After meeting with teachers and students at the NCOD, we learned that the only areas of the assessment protocol that required revision pertained to delivery.

Generally, we measured delivery using five categories: Posture, eye contact, volume, clarity (enunciation) and speed. Because posture, eye-contact, use of hands (in Joseph's case, use of sign space) and facial expressions are instrumental to communication in ASL, we did not have to revise measures for assessing posture and eye contact. What we needed to consider more fully were the nonverbal differences expressed by sign-speakers and oral communicators. As we note above, use of the body is significantly different for ASL-speakers. For example, persons using ASL rely on visual acuity to de-

code messages and attend differently (more carefully) to the nuances of eye-contact, use of sign space and posture than their hearing counterparts. To create a more inclusive assessment protocol, we should have better educated ourselves about how to read differences in body language so that Joseph's nonverbal performance could have been better assessed. Discussions with disability services specialists, ASL speakers and/or sign interpreters would have been useful to this end.

In order to evaluate Joseph's language use, assessment measures needed to be adapted so that Joseph would be evaluated according to the ways he used language as opposed to what was *heard* through the sign interpreters. As we note above, the complexity of the interpretation process often results in a transformation of the ideas spoken by a speaker. Therefore, all students' use of language was measured by assessing written work (i.e. outlines) for all speeches presented according to their shared language, English. Clearly, when a student gives voice to her/his own ideas as they speak, public speaking instructors attend to inflection, tone and word choice.

Suggestions for Creating Inclusive Assessment Protocols: We offer two suggestions for creating an inclusive assessment process. First, we would have been better able to assess Joseph's delivery inclusively had factors such as facial expression, general appearance, gestures and movement been incorporated into the assessment of Joseph. The absence of these elements pointed to a flaw in the adapted evaluation protocol generally, which has subsequently been revised to include these items. Second, if an interpreter is provided for a student, the instructor should support student re-

quests for rehearsal time with an interpreter. At most colleges and universities, interpreters are paid by the class hour. Because students will often need time to rehearse with an interpreter in order to practice placing proper emphasis on language, instructors may need to help students substantiate the claim for this need.

Additional Suggestions

Overall, our process of creating a UID curriculum was productive, both in terms of being able to meet the learning needs of a wider variety of students and because of what we learned about our assumptions about teaching and learning. The knowledge gained by teaching Joseph and subsequent study suggests the following:

1. Be open to the idea that creating inclusive curriculum to support all students, including students with disabilities, can change the way one teaches. Teaching diverse student populations will and should offer continual opportunities to change our teaching.
2. Be willing to examine your teaching style and make appropriate changes that meet student needs, but do not isolate or punish any student for her/his learning needs. There is value for all students in creating an inclusive curriculum.
3. Be open to constructive feedback. Joseph and Maria offered important suggestions for creating a universally inclusive curriculum and feedback about the classroom assignments and process. By actively involving them in our process, we believe

a more humane and practical classroom experience emerged.

4. Finally, provide extra time for clarifying concepts either before or after class and/or be available through email. While it is important to be available to all students, the interpretation process helped us better understand the value of communicating with students outside of class.

Additional suggestions for improving communication with students about course content include:

1. Make class notes available to students outside of class. This can be done by placing notes on reserve in the library, in your office, or on a course website.
2. Provide outlines of lectures prior to class so that students can follow your lecture/discussion and take more thorough notes.
3. Utilize technologically inclusive pedagogy and integrate technology into the course. For example, students can be required to engage in on-line discussions of concepts posted to a faculty webpage. By having students discuss/post messages about course concepts in cyberspace once a week, apprehensive students have a more anonymous forum for participating and, in the case of a student who is d/Deaf or hoh, s/he can communicate without the use of an interpreter. It is important to note that not all students have equal access to technology, which may limit the applicability of this suggestion.

CONCLUSION

Assessing the process of providing Joseph accommodations was complex and wrought with contradictions. On one level, we acknowledge the reality of working in a predominantly hearing community, which necessitates a process for including d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Accommodations are often the best (or only) option to provide to students with disabilities. It is also important to acknowledge that for d/Deaf students, being included in a predominantly hearing classroom has specific constraints. Liu (1995) argues, for example, that while the logic and practice of mainstreaming may provide students with "equal access to school facilities, it does not provide equal opportunity to obtain knowledge" (p. 243). Furthermore, Holcomb, Coryell & Rosenfield (1992) explain that "inclusive deaf students frequently experience social isolation, loneliness and rejection" or poor self concept (p. 18). Being aware of these constraints can help instructors include all students in curriculum design and implementation and assist instructors in engaging students respectfully.

As Silver, Bourke and Strehorn (1998) contend, if UID becomes "part of the institution's instructional methodologies, students with disabilities in higher education will no longer need to rely as heavily on support systems that are secondary to the primary instructional programs" (p. 47). By addressing accessibility as a part of all instructional planning, we can transform the classroom space and curriculum from one that privileges ableism into one that is inherently accessible and, therefore, inherently more likely to empower all stu-

dents to succeed. When we design curriculum that at its inception includes the multiple modalities that appeal to a broad range of learning needs, we communicate to our students and each other that there are multiple ways of knowing — multiple intelligences — all of which have a place in life-long learning. Furthermore, implementing strategies such as study guides, class notes, untimed examinations, discussion groups for studying and so forth are “representative of effective instructional practices” (p. 48). And, even more importantly, if we accept the challenge to create inclusive curriculum in all ways, we are more likely to create respectful learning environments for our increasingly diverse student populations.

Joseph offered important feedback about our particular efforts to design a universally inclusive curriculum. Joseph stated that he benefited from learning in an inclusive environment: “After I took the class I realized that that’s what I’m going to be confronting in the real world is I’m going to be giving presentations through an interpreter.” Furthermore, he felt that he learned valuable skills by taking a public speaking course. In spite of the challenges of learning in a predominantly hearing environment, Joseph said that he “was able to communicate clearly with the people, they were able to understand me.” He also noted, “I was able to develop my confidence. I was able to communicate — use eye contact, use vocabulary — so that I am more clearly understood . . .” He also gained confidence in his “physical appearance” and the way he “approached individuals.”

Our experience creating a UID curriculum prompted by Joseph’s request for accommodation provided us an

important opportunity to assess our assumptions about teaching and learning. The case detailed herein validates the usefulness of critical approaches to teaching for analyzing and evaluating the linguistic and cultural spaces of our public speaking classrooms. Furthermore, to the extent that we create curriculum that is inaccessible to particular student populations, we are not only precluding equal access to education, we are perpetuating a form of epistemic violence. To substantiate this point, we return to the quotation included at the beginning of this essay: "Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are unimportant; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects" (Freire, 1970, p. 66). By creating UID curriculum, we mitigate the risk of objectifying students as we create a space for all students to inquire and to develop some of the skills that will help them become beings-for-themselves.

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