

RATING FORMS AND CHECK LISTS FOR INTERPRETERS

RALPH F. NEESAM

INTRODUCTION

While the formation of the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (RID) was probably the most significant step taken in the past century insofar as putting interpreting services for deaf people on a professional level is concerned, another extremely important step was taken when the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration sponsored a workshop in Portland, Maine, July 7-27, 1965. From this workshop came the book, *Interpreting for Deaf People* (1966).

This book has since been in great demand. It discusses interpreting in a variety of situations, sets forth the RID's Code of Ethics for interpreters, and goes into much detail in deliberating the various factors that may enter into any interpreting situation. It serves as a guidepost to which interpreters may look for assistance in situations which may be novel to them.

While the author takes pride in being one of those who contributed to the book, there remains a need for something that will serve the interpreter as "on the spot" reminders of the points covered in the book during the actual interpreting situation. The interpreter, the persons responsible for calling in the interpreter and the deaf audience all would be able to make use of some form of checklist or rating sheet prior to, during and immediately after the interpreting situation. Such material can be used constructively to improve future interpreting services. All too often, the interpreter and the situation are "here today and gone tomorrow." Those who were in the audience may have some remarks about the quality of the interpreting done which the interpreter would very much like to have for his future guidance. The interpreter may notice factors in the room, such as the lighting, which should be improved if the room is to be used for interpreting again in the future. Sponsors

RALPH F. NEESAM is a high school supervising teacher in the California School for the Deaf at Berkeley, Calif.

of the event may—especially if they are relatively unfamiliar with the provision of interpreting services for deaf people—wish to have some sort of checklist ahead of time that will assist them in making sure that they have done as much as possible to provide a setting that will please both the deaf audience and the interpreter whom they call.

For these reasons, it was felt desirable to design several checklists or rating forms for use by the persons concerned with interpreting services. These forms, and detailed discussions of the uses of each, are given below.

RATING THE ROOM

The interpreter frequently is asked to evaluate the physical factors of a room as to its adaptability for an interpreting situation. With the aid of a rating form, he may better determine, in advance, the difficulties that are likely to be encountered in future interpreting situations.

The fact that a room is being rated in this manner does not mean that the room is an "80 per cent or 50 per cent proper room" for interpreting, but that one factor rated as faulty may cause 100 per cent ineffectiveness and should be of deep concern to those who are handling the affairs of deaf people. The rating should be a personal reference for the person using the form in evaluating a room and can be used to form a basis for recommendations in considering the physical changes that might be necessary for the benefit of a deaf audience.

After a rating has been made and the actual interpreting has begun, the interpreter may occasionally be surprised to find the facilities of the room are not being used as he understood they were to be used and that an entirely different situation is present. For example, he may find that the stage is not being used because it is too distant from the audience or too elevated. The speaker and the interpreter may have been moved to floor level in front of the seats. This may have solved the problem of distance and or elevation but also may have created other problems of ineffective lighting for the interpreter and or much stretching and twisting by the deaf audience to see the interpreter. Such problems may be avoided if the sponsors of the event are given the Physical Factors Checklist as well as the Administrator's Checklist.

Further, the rating form may be used a second time to evaluate the physical factors of the room after an interpreting situation. Such use can help to eliminate recurrence of the same problems.

**RATING FORM OF PHYSICAL FACTORS IN
A ROOM USED FOR INTERPRETING**

Location of room: _____

Type of situation in which interpreting is to be done:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> one to one | <input type="checkbox"/> one or two in a large audience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round table | <input type="checkbox"/> small group in a large audience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> panel | <input type="checkbox"/> large deaf audience |

| | | Comments |
|---|--|----------|
| 1. LIGHTING | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> dim | _____ |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> too bright | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> in audience's eyes | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> in interpreter's eyes | _____ |
| 2. BACKGROUND | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> contrasting | <input type="checkbox"/> too bright | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> plain | <input type="checkbox"/> blends with hands | _____ |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> patterned | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> distant | _____ |
| 3. ELEVATION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tiered | <input type="checkbox"/> causes neck | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> platform | <input type="checkbox"/> stretching | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> too high | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good, without | <input type="checkbox"/> platform too small | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> elevation | <input type="checkbox"/> platform not safe | _____ |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> platform creaks | _____ |
| 4. PROXIMITY (Speaker to audience) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> distant | _____ |
| _____ | | _____ |
| 5. CLEARANCE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> permanent obstacles | _____ |
| _____ | (pillars, walls, etc.) | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> movable obstacles | _____ |
| | (table displays, etc.) | _____ |
| 6. SEATING | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> spread out, not | _____ |
| _____ | compact | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> all participants not | _____ |
| | in view | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> too close to | _____ |
| | interpreter | _____ |
| 7. LOCATION OF INTERPRETER | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> within vision | <input type="checkbox"/> causes head turning | _____ |
| _____ | | _____ |

8. PROVISION FOR REVERSE INTERPRETING

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> none | _____ |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> microphone in wrong position | _____ |
| 9. _____ | | _____ |

ADMINISTRATOR'S CHECK LIST

A great many of the physical factors that may upset an interpreting situation can be eliminated through careful planning by the person in charge of the event. In the case that the planner is unfamiliar with the physical factors necessary for good interpretation to take place, a checklist should be provided beforehand. Further, the checklist provides a quick check by which the chairman of the event is enabled to determine whether the following needs of the deaf audience are being met: the right type of interpreter, the right type of speaker when a choice is available (as at graduation exercises at schools for the deaf, at conventions involving the deaf, etc.), and additional services.

To clarify, the selection of an interpreter skilled in some situations does not justify his selection as an interpreter in all situations. For example, a skilled interpreter may still not possess the proper skills for interpreting in an area in which he is unfamiliar, i.e., religion, mathematics, science, etc.

When considering the selection of a speaker, recognition must be made of the fact that the speaker must be chosen with the needs and capabilities of the audience in mind. The person thought of as an excellent speaker by a hearing audience may have a delivery which is difficult for the interpreter to translate to the deaf audience and thereby be rated by the deaf audience as a poor speaker.

Some provision should be made to eliminate disturbances made by children at meetings of adults. Children running in and out of meeting rooms to make necessary and unnecessary trips, to play with each other, to discuss their problems with parents, etc., are distracting and an infringement upon the respect due the speaker, the interpreter and the rest of the audience. Baby sitters and or recreational personnel, if provided, can relieve the problem. In like manner, other services such as visiting areas, telephone interpreters, proper notifications, etc. are listed to provide the responsible personnel with a list of solutions to other problems that may occur.

ADMINISTRATOR'S CHECK LIST

Event: _____
 Date: _____
 Place: _____

Comments

INTERPRETER:

- ___ is an R.I.D. member
- ___ is familiar with the topic
- ___ has been contacted well in advance
- ___ has been given opportunity for acquaintance
- ___ with the speaker
- ___ with the audience

SPEAKER AND/OR CHAIRMAN:

- ___ understands deaf people (when a choice is available)
- ___ is not a rapid-fire type speaker
- ___ is not a play-on-words type speaker
- ___ has been told of the topic desired
- ___ has been told of the type of audience
- ___ has been asked for an advance copy
- ___ has been introduced to the interpreter
- ___ has been told of question-answer periods:
 - ___ The raise of hands
 - ___ Recognition of 'non-vocal' deaf
 - ___ The need to repeat question-answers

AREAS PROVIDED:

- ___ Visiting areas
- ___ Children's areas
- ___ Telephone area for deaf people
- ___ Reserved seating area for deaf people

NOTICES:

- ___ that interpreting services will be provided
- ___ naming interpreters in programs posted, indicating direction
 - ___ to visiting areas
 - ___ to children's areas
 - ___ to the telephone area
 - ___ to the reserved seating area

ASSISTANTS:

- ___ ushers
- ___ baby sitters/recreational leaders
- ___ telephone operator/interpreter
- ___ clerks alerted and instructed
- ___ relief interpreter

INTERPRETER'S CHECKLIST

A checklist has been provided to remind the interpreter of his needs in better preparing himself. He should consider each point carefully and remember that a point lightly taken may be a point of considerable distraction later on. For example, a lady's dress which is considered attractive for a social occasion, such as a dinner-dance, may be conspicuous and inappropriate for an interpreting situation.

An important check is *self appraisal*, difficult for any person. However, it is incumbent upon the interpreter to critically analyze himself and place a true and factual appraisal upon his capabilities.

In addition, the interpreter should check to see that he is completely prepared. To familiarize himself with a speaker's manner and conversational speech prior to the interpretation may not be sufficient. The speaker's manner and speech may alter radically when he reads from a prepared script and the interpreter may not be able to meet this unfamiliar situation.

INTERPRETER'S CHECK LIST

Event: _____ Time and date of event: _____
 Location of event: _____

| | Comments |
|--|----------|
| SELF APPRAISAL: The interpreter | |
| — is an R.I.D. member | _____ |
| — has judged his own ability to handle the situation | _____ |
| — is familiar with the topic | _____ |
| — is physically capable to handle the situation | _____ |
| — is mentally adjusted to handle the situation | _____ |
| — has notified proper persons of acceptance/regret | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| CLOTHING OF THE INTERPRETER: | |
| — is plain | _____ |
| — is contrasting to the skin color. | _____ |
| — is not conspicuous | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| APPEARANCE OF THE INTERPRETER: | |
| — is neat | _____ |
| — indicates clear lip movement | _____ |
| — is not conspicuous | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| PREPARATION: The interpreter | |
| — has asked for an advance copy | _____ |
| — has rehearsed beforehand | _____ |
| — has met the speaker | _____ |
| is familiar with: | _____ |
| the speaker's voice | _____ |
| the speaker's reading delivery | _____ |
| the type of audience | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

RATING AN INTERPRETER

Most interpreters would like to know how they appear as an interpreter. They can ask friends to act as observers to aid them. A rating form of the physical aspects of an interpreter has been included. It should lessen a haphazard evaluation and facilitate a quick appraisal.

Great care should be taken with this particular rating form. It should be used constructively and only when the interpreter asks for the rating. The rating is a check (✓) used to indicate when improvement is needed.

It is important to identify the place and type of interpreting situation at the top of the form. A check to show that improvement is needed in one particular facet of interpreting applies to that specific place or type of situation only and may not apply in a different place or situation. For example, a check that an interpreter's posture appears "too relaxed" could apply in a lecture hall but not necessarily at a banquet.

RATING FORM OF THE INTERPRETER

Name of the Interpreter: _____ Place: _____
 Name of the observer: _____ Type of interpreting Situation: _____
 Time and date of event: _____

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. PROXIMITY TO SPEAKER: _____ — Within vision — causes head turning</p> <p>2. POSTURE: _____ — appropriate for occasion — stiff — too relaxed</p> <p>3. SIGN POSITION: _____ — good — too high for audience — obscures the lips — blends into clothing</p> <p>4. SIZE OF SIGNS: _____ — appropriate for occasion — too small — too large</p> <p>5. LEVEL OF INTERPRETING: _____ — proper for type of audience — over audience level — below audience level</p> <p>6. EXPRESSIONS: _____ — good — expressionless — overly expressive — eyes do not contact the audience</p> <p>7. PERSONAL DISTRACTIONS: _____ — none — hold objects — has unusual mannerisms</p> <p>8. ASIDES: _____ — handled well — did not respond — said "not important"</p> | <p>9. NOISES: _____ — handled well — did not inform of noise interference — did not signal deaf speaker to raise or lower his voice — uses slapping sounds while singing — breathes heavily while singing</p> <p>10. PERSONAL FEELINGS: _____ — neutral — gives likes and dislikes — says "not important"</p> <p>11. QUESTION-ANSWER SESSION: _____ — handled well — does not repeat questions/answers — uses voice only while repeating</p> <p>12. FAMILIAR WITH SIGNS: _____ — good — has only basic knowledge of signs — fingerspelling</p> <p>13. _____</p> <p>14. _____</p> |
|--|--|

REFERENCES

Quigley, S. P., Editor. *Interpreting for Deaf People*. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1966