

Visual interpretation for deaf clients: A portrait of the profession and a state of the field review on the training needs of interpreters

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Abstract

Visual interpretation training is a complex process. One must consider the large scope of the profession (school setting, social setting, etc.), as well as its characteristics, the different disciplines involved in the interpretation activity (linguistics, communication, psychology, law, didactics, etc.), the workers' geographical distribution on the territory (rural and urban regions), the credentials acknowledgement problem, and the diversity of tools (sign language, transliteration, transcoding), etc.

In order to meet professionals', employers', and users' needs, the state of the field report presented here is intended to gain a better understanding of the visual interpreter's task and profession, as well as a definition of the appropriate components for the development of a training program that integrates all the specific elements of this profession. Because of the diversity of training programs, a working group was formed in 2005 by the *Office des personnes handicapées du Québec* in order to study visual interpretation training. This was possible thanks to Quebec's leaders in this field.

A census of all interpreters in Quebec ($n = 263$) was conducted to investigate their needs and perceptions towards visual interpretation training. The statistical analysis of this census is presented in five parts: demographic situation, characteristics of the job, perceptions on the received and wished for training with regards to the structure and content level, and finally, the process of professional evaluation.

In order to understand the context in the province of Quebec, we present a literature review on the profession's aspects that are likely to have an impact on the training of visual interpreters in terms of content or structure, as well as a synthesis of the description of 122 visual interpretation training programs, distributed as follows: Canada ($n=6$), United States ($n=97$), Europe ($n=14$), and Australia ($n=5$).