Examining the Challenges of Trilingual (Spanish-English-ASL) VRS Interpreting
David Quinto-Pozos, Kristie Casanova de Canales, & Rafael Treviño

A more complete account of this work:
Editors: Rachel McKee & Jeff Davis

Brief History of Trilingual VRS
• Pilot in Austin
1995
• Approved in Texas
• Request for compensation
2000
• FCC reimburses VRS
2002
• Spanish-ASL Not Compensable
2004
• FCC Reverses its Decision
2005
• Providers must offer services 24/7
2006

Outline for our presentation
• Brief history of trilingual VRS
• Data from our survey research
  – Info about our interpreter sample
  – Linguistics topics
  – Working conditions
  – Information from VRS providers
• Implications and suggestions for future

Gallaudet Research Institute (GRI)
2007-08 national data of deaf & hard of hearing children:
Language used in the home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Percentage of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>29,947</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>7,948</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>1,385</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background on Interpreters

• 37 Responded
• Language Proficiency
• Experience in Interpreting
• Assessment of Skills

Language Proficiency of Interpreters

Years of Trilingual Experience

Assessment of Skills

Survey: Spanish Gendered Nouns

If your Deaf client uses signs whose Spanish counterparts have gendered variants, which variant do you choose if you do not know the sex of the person who is being described?

Responses: Spanish Gendered Nouns

#1
• Use masculine variant (n=17, 46%)

#2
• Request clarification (n=13, 35%)

Other
• Avoid using gendered nouns
• Use "traditional" variant
• Context clues

DQP: davidqp@mail.utexas.edu
KCC: atyourfingertipsinterpreting@yahoo.com
RT: rafael.trevino@me.com
Some Dialects of Spanish
- Bolivian Spanish
- Caribbean Spanish
- Central American Spanish
- Colombian-Ecuadorian Spanish
- Mexican Spanish
- Northern Mexican Spanish
- Puerto Rican Spanish

Differences at the Lexical Level

- refresco (English: "soda")
- gaseosa (Peru)
- guagua

Differences at the Lexical Level
- pastel
- torta
- queque
- biscocho

Survey: Lexical Differences
How do you handle words that have one meaning in one Spanish-speaking country and another meaning in a different Spanish-speaking country?

Survey: Pronunciation
If your Deaf client has a Spanish or Spanish-influenced name, how do you normally pronounce that name to hearing individuals who speak English on the VRS calls?

Responses: Lexical differences

#1
- Context clues (n=14, 38%)

#2
- Request clarification (n=12, 32%)

Other
- Use a generic term
- Explain and compare

Maria
Español: [Mah-ree-ah]
English: [Muh-ree-uh]
Responses: Pronunciation

#1
- Spanish (n=14, 38%)

#2
- English (n=13, 35%)

Other
- Use suggestion from caller
- Listening for clues

Model of trilingual VRS interpretation

From: Quinto-Pozos, Casanova de Canales, & Treviño (2010)

Interpreters’ Working Conditions

- Length of calls
  - Average length based on survey results
    - Average = 40 min
    - Most common = 20 min
  - Compared to English
  - Multiple calls with the same caller

- Average percentage of time spent teaming with another interpreter
  - Average = 10%
  - Most common = 0%

Interpreters’ Working Conditions

- Transferring calls
  - Technological limitations
  - Supply and demand issues

- Impact on trilingual VRS work on interpreter health
  - Mental fatigue (1/5)
  - Physical fatigue (almost 1/2)
  - No impact (1/3)
VRS Providers’ Input

- How Spanish competency is assessed
  - Third party assessment
  - In-house assessment

VRS Providers’ Input

- Trilingual-specific Training
  – Mentoring workshop
  – Observations

VRS Providers’ Input

- Compensation
  - Three out of four providers interviewed say trilingual interpreters receive more compensation

VRS Providers’ Input

- Length of calls
  - 3 out of 4 claim longer than English-ASL calls
  - Cited times:
    - 5 min
    - 15 min
    - 17 min

VRS Providers’ Input

- Teaming
  – “possible”
- Transferring

VRS Providers’ Input

- Where do calls originate or terminate?
  – Mexico
  – Colombia
  – Puerto Rico
  – Cuba
  – Costa Rica

VRS Providers’ Input

- Additional comments or concerns
  - This field is growing
  - Need for RID’s support of this specialization
  - Demand exceeds supply, Hispanic community underserved
  - Need certification exams and training opportunities for trilingual interpreters

DQP: davidqp@mail.utexas.edu
KCC: atyourfingertipsinterpreting@yahoo.com
RT: rafael.trevino@me.com
Implications for the future

- Provide more training opportunities for interpreters
- Engage in dialogues with stakeholders about pre-call synopses
- Provide additional support during calls

We would like to thank the interpreters, VRS agencies, and Deaf consumers who participated in this research.