



efsli trainers' seminar

October 29 & 30 Helsinki, Finland



Marjukka Nisula has been working as a sign language interpreter in Finland since 1984 and has been involved in interpreter education since the early 1990s. She received her MA degree in Adult Education 2001 from University of Jyväskylä. Nisula works as a lecturer in HUMAK University of Applied Sciences, Degree Programme in SL Interpreting (since 1999). Nisula's basic responsibility in the sign language interpreter training program is teaching the interpreting process. Nisula is a part time student in Jyväskylä University, her major subject is Finnish Sign Language.

Hanna-Kaisa Turja works as Lecturer in Humak University of Applied Science, Degree Programme in SL Interpreting. Turja's basic responsibility is Finnish language and Communications. She received her MA degree in University of Jyväskylä in 1999. She has worked in Humak Kuopio campus since 2007. Before this Turja has worked as an analyst and account manager in the field of communications and business intelligence.

Interpreter in a cultural clash – workshop

What skills interpreters need when hearing person meets Deaf people for the first time?

Deaf people and interpreters are largely unknown to the public and the mainstream audience. Interpreters have become the public voice of Deaf. It is very important to be aware of that this profession is not well known. This is a challenge for trainers as well as for the public. Students need to realize that they will represent unknown minority members. What does this require from their professional behavior – particularly voicing and being seen? What does it mean and what kind of challenges do trainers meet?

We will introduce a few exercises that we have experimented with students who are only starting to learn sign-to-voice interpreting. The purpose of our exercises is to point out to students that they will need to be aware of cultural differences in a professional way. We hope that our workshop will give tools for teaching intercultural communication skills as a part of sign-to-voice interpreting.

Cultural competence can mean a large variety of things to people, and we hope our workshop will be able capture the many views of sign-to-voice interpreting expressed both by students and their trainers. One particular goal is to change ideas of intercultural communication, and the way it should be taught to interpreter students. We hope that our workshop will also inspire new pedagogical ideas for trainers.

Do we need to have a method to draw away the attention from interpreter and sign language to the subject of Deaf? Is there a need to discuss low and high cultural context as we try to find a way to balance between these two cultures? How should cultural competence be evaluated? Should be evaluated as a part of sign-to-voice interpreting?

The final question: Are interpreter students allowed to graduate with poor skills?

In HUMAK the assessment scale is from 1 to 5. On the other hand there are needs and expectations from Deaf community and customers of Interpreters. Do we have similar goals or different aims within Deaf Association and Interpreter Training or is there a cultural crash ahead?