



efsli trainers' seminar

October 29 & 30 Helsinki, Finland



## Presenters:

**Isabelle Heyerick**, Flemish Sign Language interpreter - Flemish Sign Language researcher - Vice-president of Tenuto vzw (continued training for Flemish Sign Language interpreters)

**Maartje de Meulder**, Flemish Deaf Association lobbyist - co-founder of Tenuto vzw – MA Deaf Studies

**Renaat van Hende**, Flemish Sign Language instructor - Tenuto workshop moderator - President of Flemish Sign Language interpreting service - Bachelor of Science in Applied Sciences and Arts

## Abstract – plenary presentation

Generally, interpreters are more comfortable when interpreting into their native language. For Sign Language interpreters the opposite seems true. They cope well when interpreting from a spoken language, their native language, into a signed language, a language mostly acquired during adulthood. In a sign-to-voice situation, interpreters tend to make more errors, feel less confident and do not convey satisfactory quality.

Tenuto, founded in 2008 by a deaf professional and two interpreters, offers continued training for certified Flemish Sign Language (VGT) interpreters. In 2008 and 2009 three experimental workshops on sign-to-voice interpreting were organized in different parts in Flanders.

Traditionally, voice interpreting courses are led by hearing trainers, the argument being that deaf persons are unable to compare the input to the output message, since they have no access to spoken messages. The method Tenuto applied in the workshops was both innovative and empowering: a deaf VGT native monitors the interpreting process and gives feedback. The inaccessibility of the spoken message was overcome by providing scroll-up captions of the voice interpretations. During the presentation we will focus in great detail on the specific methodology used. The applied approach offers many advantages. It empowers deaf people by putting them in control of the sign-to-voice interpreting process, allowing them to directly give feedback about the quality of the sign-to-voice

interpreting. The deaf person offers advice about how to cope with the challenges. The fact that interpreters get direct feedback sometimes required some attitudinal changes before they could feel confident with this method. We will analyze this process during the presentation.

The fact that the success of the approach depends on the word-for-word capability of the captionist and the deaf moderator's knowledge of the written language can be considered as disadvantages. During the workshops it became clear that interpreters struggle with issues on different levels, namely the grammatical level, lexical level and the cognitive interpreting process. In the presentation we will present the different kinds of linguistic and cognitive challenges interpreters meet when voice interpreting and suggest possible solutions.

Another topic which surfaced, was the fact that awareness on what the interpreting process really is and what it requires, needs to be raised, both in interpreters and deaf persons. The co-operation between the deaf presenter and the interpreter proved to be a major key to successful sign-to-voice interpreting. How this can be achieved will be incorporated in the presentation.