Lesson 5: Hearing

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to increase your awareness of the issues and strategies related specifically to accommodations for students with Hearing Loss.

By reflecting on your own course while reading the Lesson Content, you will be guided to consider possible modifications to your course specifically related to hearing loss. By considering and discussing the access issues in a case study reading, you will develop an awareness of additional strategies and accommodations.

Question to REFLECT upon while reading the CONTENT

What challenges might students with hearing loss face in your selected course? What accommodations might they require?

CONTENT

We are now concentrating on accommodations for students with specific disabilities or impairments. This lesson presents issues and suggestions for accommodating students with hearing loss.

The term "hearing impairment" refers to functional hearing loss that ranges from mild to profound. Often, people who have no functional hearing refer to themselves as "Deaf." When referring to the Deaf culture, “Deaf” is capitalized. Those with milder hearing loss refer to themselves as "Hard of Hearing." Accommodations for students with hearing impairments can be classified as visual and aural. Visual accommodations rely on a person's sight; aural accommodations rely on a person's hearing abilities. Examples of visual accommodations include sign language interpreters, lip reading, and captioning. Examples of aural accommodations include amplification devices such as FM systems.

DEAFNESS

A student who is deaf may have little or no speech depending on the severity of the hearing loss and the age of onset. She will often communicate through a sign language interpreter. American Sign Language (ASL) is widely used and has its own grammar and word order. Other students may use manual English (or signed English), which is sign language in English word order. A certified interpreter is used for translation into either language. A student who is deaf may also benefit from Communication Access RealtimeTranslation (CART), where spoken text is typed and projected onto a screen. It is important to remember that a student who is using an interpreter, who is lip reading, or who is reading off of a screen cannot simultaneously look down at written materials or take notes. Describing written or projected text is therefore helpful
to this student. Handouts that can be read before or after class are useful, but can create challenges when referred to during the class session.

**HARD OF HEARING**

Some students who are hard of hearing may hear only specific frequencies or sounds within a certain volume range. They may rely heavily upon hearing aids and lip reading. Some students who are hard of hearing may never learn, or only occasionally use, sign language. A student who is hard of hearing may have a speech impairment due to the inability to hear his own voice clearly.

Hearing loss can affect students in several ways. They may have difficulty following lectures in large halls, particularly if the acoustics cause echoes or if the speaker talks quietly, rapidly, or unclearly. People who have hearing loss may find it difficult to simultaneously watch demonstrations and follow verbal descriptions, particularly if they are watching a sign language interpreter, a captioning screen, or a speaker's lips. In-class discussions may also be difficult to follow or participate in, particularly if the discussion is fast-paced and unmoderated, since there is often lag time between a speaker's comments and interpretation.

Students who are hard of hearing may use hearing aids. Students who use hearing aids will likely benefit from amplification in other forms such as assistive listening devices (ALD's) like hearing aid compatible telephones, personal neck loops, and audio induction loop assistive listening systems. Some students use an FM amplification system that requires the instructor to wear a small microphone to transmit amplified sound to the student; this accommodation may also be used in small group discussions with the microphone handed from speaker to speaker. ALDs can provide clear sound over distances, eliminate echoes and reduce the distraction of surrounding noises, allowing the student to more easily attend to the instructor.

**Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)**

People with APD may intermittently experience an inability to process verbal information. When people with APD have a processing failure, they do not process what is being said to them. People with APD do not often recognize subtle differences between sounds in words, even though the sounds themselves may be loud and clear. Problems in processing information are more likely to occur when a person with APD is in a noisy environment or when he or she is listening to complex information. Therefore, it is important to reduce background noise in the classroom whenever possible. As with other hearing impairments, supplemental text materials that accompany a lecture may be helpful.

**Examples of accommodations for students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or who have APD**

- Interpreters/CART Providers – for more information about using a Sign Language Interpreter or CART provider click here
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's), sound amplification systems
- Eligible for a Note-taker
- Preferential seating for optimal listening or lip reading
- Reduced Distraction Environment for Testing
Occasionally, a student that is Deaf or hard of hearing may be accompanied by a service animal. To read more on the University’s Service Animal Policy, please visit the Student Conduct Code.

Hearing loss does not interfere with the physical aspects of writing. However, students who use American Sign Language may have poor grammar because of differences between English and American Sign Language; English is considered a second language for many individuals who are Deaf and use sign language. Suggestions that can be used to facilitate maximum participation in writing assignments include:

- Examples of writing expectations (e.g., sample of a completed assignment of acceptable quality, including content and grammar/syntax).
- Rubric which states the objective to be measured (performance, behavior or quality), uses a range to rate the objective, contains specific objective characteristics.
- An accommodation may be extended time for essay exams or any in-class writing assignments.

Effective Communication Strategies
There are also several ways you can direct your speaking style and adjust the pace of the classroom to make information more accessible to a student with a hearing loss:

- When speaking, make sure the student can see your face and avoid unnecessary pacing and moving.
- When speaking, avoid obscuring your lips or face with hands, books, etc. as much as possible.
- Repeat discussion questions and statements made by other students.
- Write discussion questions/answers on the board or overhead projector.
- Speak clearly and at a normal rate.
- Use visual aids with few words and large images and fonts.
- Provide written lecture outlines, class assignments, lab instructions, and demonstration summaries and distribute them before class when possible.
- One speaker at a time when having a group discussion or class participation.

There are several ways to speak with the student outside of class as well.

- Schedule an interpreter through DSS for in-person appointments/meetings.
- Type back and forth on a computer or phone.
- Use a pen and paper for short question and answers.
- Communicate via email.
- TTY or Video Relay Calls

There are three different kinds of technology used for telephone communication.
1. The TTY, TDD, and TT acronyms are used interchangeably for the same mechanical teleprinter equipment. TTY means "TeleTYpe." TDD stands for "Telecommunications Device for the Deaf," and TT stands for "Text Telephone." A TTY is used by a person who does not have enough functional hearing to understand speech even with amplification. Users of this system communicate through typed text.

2. Amplification devices can be added to telephones that allow people who are hard of hearing to benefit from enhanced volume and can be provided through the handset, headset, in-line amplifier, portable amplifier, or a control on a telephone base. Cellular telephones can also be used with amplification devices.

3. A third and more popular method is through a relay system. A relay service is used when only the person with a hearing loss has a TTY/TDD/TT or Video Relay (VR). The person with a hearing loss types her part of the conversation into a TTY and the message is read by a relay operator who also has a TTY or the person signs their message which is interpreted by the relay operator and voiced to the intended party. As the other party responds orally, the relay operator either signs or types what is spoken into the TTY/VR unit which is read or viewed by the person who is Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

**SUMMARY**

Hearing Loss and ADP can make it difficult or impossible to hear lecturers, access multi-media materials, and participate in discussions. It is important to remember that a student who is using an interpreter, who is lip reading, or who is reading real-time captioning will have difficulty looking at another resource at the same time. Writing assignments may also be a challenge.

Examples of accommodations for students who have hearing loss include:

- Interpreters/CART Providers – for more information about using a Sign Language Interpreter or CART provider click here
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's), sound amplification systems
- Eligible for a Note-taker
- Preferential seating for optimal listening or lip reading
- Reduced Distraction Environment for Testing
- Extended Time for Quizzes and Exams
- Captioned Videos for Equal Accessibility
- Copies of handouts/power points/overheads

Remember also that there are several ways you can adjust your speaking style and the pace of the classroom to make information more accessible to a student with a hearing loss.

Flexibility and effective communication between you, the student, and the Disability Support Services Office are key in approaching accommodations. With this basic knowledge you will be better prepared to ask students with Hearing Loss to clarify their needs and to discuss accommodation requests.
POSSIBLE DISCUSSION
After reading the following case study, provide strategies and accommodations to the access issue questions.

BACKGROUND
My name is Michael and I am a graduate student in Rehabilitation Counseling at San Diego State University. I have a severe-profound, bilateral hearing loss and use hearing aids and speech reading (watching the movement of a person's lips) to maximize my communication abilities. I have some knowledge of American Sign Language but not enough to effectively use a sign language interpreter as an accommodation.

ACCESS ISSUES
Graduate level courses emphasize student participation and the development of critical thinking skills. In addition to using a note-taker and real-time captioning, in what ways can instructors create a fully inclusive classroom environment that meets and maximizes Michael’s communication needs?

Read Possible Solutions

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Read answers to frequently asked questions, explore case studies or access additional resources regarding working with students with hearing disabilities
- Learn more at Pepnet 2 - an excellent resource for more information about individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing in the postsecondary setting
- Learn more at UCO’s Disability Support Services website
- Learn more at UCO’s DSS Handbook for Faculty & Staff
- View resources for helping instructors accommodate students with disabilities in specific academic activities

This lesson has been developed in part by © 2001 DO-IT at the University of Washington where permission has been granted to copy material for educational, non-commercial purposes. The information has been edited as needed by the University of Central Oklahoma Disability Support Services’ Staff (2012) in an effort to meet UCO’s need, purpose, and intent of faculty development regarding students with disabilities.